

Faith And Society Files: Re:focus - For Associations and Facilitators

Re:focus is an updated, more flexible version of the BUGB Mission Consultancy scheme developed in 2003. It has been developed in modules to make it suitable for a wide variety of churches. User-friendly, it assumes two external facilitators will work with each church on the re:focus journey that may take 6 to 12 months. This resource contains information to assist Associations and Facilitators.





celebrating who you are and
developing your **crossing**places

Guidance for Associations in Developing Facilitators

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
- develop new and existing *crossingplaces*
- share the Christian message in actions and words.

Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
- be guided by experienced external facilitators

Guidance for Associations in Developing Facilitators



To help associations identify and equip facilitators.

In order that **re:focus** can be an effective tool to help churches focus on their mission, including evangelism, it is necessary to recruit and equip sufficient facilitators (the preferred name replacing 'consultants'). **re:focus** has been planned assuming that two outside facilitators will be assigned to go through the journey with a church. So to serve all the churches wanting or needing help in this way, an adequate number is important. However, equally important is the need to recruit appropriate people for the task, also enabling each pair of facilitators to have complementary skills and experience.

For **re:focus** to work well, the facilitators do not need prior knowledge of the church, but they do need the ability to relate easily to people, to listen well and discern what is being said, and to be in tune with God as well as the people in the church.

What is the role of the facilitators?

When we talk about being a facilitator it can mean different things to different people, often based on our experience either of delivering or receiving consultancy. Indeed there are many forms and styles of consultancy. It may be that you have had experience of a technical facilitator; for instance, on a building project a church may invite an architect in to offer their expertise on what you might do to extend or improve your building.

The ethos and style of **re:focus** however is based on a non-directive model. This fits well with our Baptist ecclesiology as it recognises that in mission the local church are the key people in their own context. So what is the point of a non-directive facilitator? It has been described as a person who steals your watch to tell you the time. Not a completely accurate picture, but it has some truth in it.

A facilitator draws out of a church what it already knows, listens and is able to reflect back what is said in order for the church to hear it. In the process the facilitator may help the church think about the practical and theological implications of what they have said and how that might impact future practice. In other words the facilitator helps the church to become more reflective in their practice.

A good facilitator is someone who can do more than help a church go through the prescribed **re:focus** programme. They will need a whole range of skills, some of which can be learnt, but it is necessary to start with the right character and attitude.



Who could be a facilitator?

As already stated, **re:focus** is not about offering technical consultancy; however, a facilitator with relevant experience can be beneficial. This does not necessarily mean the facilitator needs to be a church leader. However, they should have some understanding from real life experience. There are some gifted and experienced church leaders, who have great wisdom to offer in their own context. Those skills and experience are not always transferable; the minister of a large established church may not be equipped to understand the values and priorities of a pioneering missional context. In all circumstances the facilitator needs to be aware that they are not going in as the expert and their experience may limit as well as facilitate.

The facilitator needs to remember that essentially it is God's mission. The facilitator does not bring the Holy Spirit into the situation; the Holy Spirit is already there. It is not the facilitator's job to offer God's approval to the plans of the church. Rather it is the facilitator's task to work with the local church to help discern where God is already at work.

There are no prescribed ways or blueprints of how to go about mission or what church should look like. The facilitator needs to approach each situation with humility, being prepared to find God in new and unexpected ways. This may challenge the theology, tradition and ecclesiology of a facilitator. The facilitator is not there to impose their understanding and belief but to help discern the work of the Holy Spirit in each situation. A facilitator must be humble enough to recognise other approaches may be better or more appropriate than their own.

The local church must own their vision and ideas. The facilitator is there to empower the church to think and act for themselves. They should ask searching and powerful questions to help the church evaluate its mission and ministry. They should not fall into the trap of imposing their own ideas or solutions. The facilitator needs to help the church find its own way to the next stage. It is the job of the facilitator to help the local church identify the issues and opportunities for mission.

There may be occasions where answering questions or offering solutions to problems can be helpful. However this should be done in an open-ended manner that is clearly non-directive. So the facilitator might offer it as a solution from their own experience as one option for the church to consider. The hope, and often the reality, is that the facilitator reflecting back to the church what they hear, is enough for the church to develop their own solutions.

As a church planter of a 'cafe style' church I once went into an established church as a facilitator and before I had said anything the minister said to me, "You're not turning us into fresh expression of church!" Of course I had no intention of doing so as consultancy should never be about the facilitator's agenda.

*Barney Barron,
Incarnate Development Worker and Consultant*



The skills and personality traits of a facilitator

From consideration of the role of a good facilitator, some of the skills and personality traits to look for in identifying those who would be suitable include:

- A good listener
- A reflector; able to ask good and far-reaching questions.
- Theologically articulate
- Humble
- Experienced; practical hands-on experience of mission, ideally in a variety of contexts
- Open
- Self-aware
- Discerning; able to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying
- An encourager
- A desire to facilitate

Some of these skills can be learnt and others are about the characteristics and attitude of the individual. A good facilitator will have these gifts, even if in a raw form, which can be developed with the right training.



Support for the facilitator

In equipping facilitators for their role it is important to offer ongoing support and training from the association. This is necessary for the development of the facilitator in order that they might continue to reflect and learn together, improving and growing as facilitators. They may also find some challenging, and even emotionally demanding, situations and it is essential that the facilitator feels supported in this role.

There is great advantage in facilitators working in pairs rather than on their own. The mutual support and opportunity to reflect together on their practice as facilitators is an important element to partnership working. Another advantage is that two facilitators bring double the measure of external experience to the **re:focus** process.

It is also helpful when a facilitator is taking a lead role in facilitating a meeting to have another facilitator act as an observer, both of what is said but also the body language and atmosphere in the meeting. This can be very revealing in how the church is feeling and functioning. This can be useful information to feed back in an appropriate way to the church and can offer further insight.

Networking and regularly bringing together all facilitators in your association for a time of learning new skills and reflecting together is essential in providing the necessary support for facilitators. A useful way of facilitating this learning is through co-consultancies. This exercise should be done in groups of three. Each person should submit a real life issue from their own ministry or church before they meet. As with any consultancy there is an agreed contract of confidentiality amongst the group. Then the three work alternatively as facilitator, client and observer. At the end of each conversation each member feeds back how it felt and how useful they found the process. This exercise is helpful in honing the facilitators' skills; it also gives insight into how it feels to be on the receiving end of **re:focus**.

Occasionally it will be helpful to bring in a speaker with expertise on aspects of mission when the facilitators are all together.



The initial training of facilitators

All new facilitators should be taken through an initial training session. This should help the facilitator become familiar with the **re:focus** material as well as understanding the nature of this style of consultancy. George Lovell's book *Consultancy, Mission and Ministry* (2000) is a comprehensive resource. It is important that facilitators have an understanding of the overall journey of **re:focus** and the relevance of each stage.

It is also essential in the training of facilitators that some of the basic skills of listening and reflection are developed so that it becomes a natural reflex. It is important, particularly for facilitators who have limited experience in terms of context, to learn how to do 'theology in the vernacular'. In other words the facilitator needs to recognise that theology is culturally located and the gospel cannot exist independent of particular, embodied expressions. If this isn't recognised the danger of imposing inappropriate values and priorities is increased.

re:focus can be enormously beneficial for a church and rewarding for the facilitator. However, as with any helper there is potential to be incompetent and endanger a local church. It is essential that the identification and training of potential facilitators takes this into consideration. It is also necessary for the facilitator to be humble and self-aware enough to recognise when they face issues in a church that are outside of their competence. In such cases the facilitator needs to be clear about the procedure for referral.

We are indebted to the Revd Barney Barron, whose master's degree is in *Consultancy in Mission and Ministry*, for supplying this guidance.

Setting boundaries

Any kind of consultancy can put the client in a vulnerable position, which needs to be understood in setting clear boundaries. It is important that what is discussed in the **re:focus** journey is kept confidential. Understandably, what a facilitator experiences in one setting often provides useful information for another. However, it is essential that information is shared in a way that will not reveal the identity of the church. It can be surprising the wide stretch of church networks and links made from the smallest piece of information. Again it is worth noting that many of the potential dangers of **re:focus** are reduced when working alongside another facilitator.

The importance of training

The more people properly trained, equipped and supported to offer a service like **re:focus** to the local church the better. This should not however dumb down the quality of what we offer in **re:focus**. It is often difficult to ask already busy people, not only to commit to being facilitators but also, to attend training and regular development sessions. However as with most things in life there are no short-cuts to being a good facilitator, and offering a second-rate service doesn't benefit anyone.

People who have become facilitators working across associations find that their own ministries are enhanced. This is true for them both in their own church contexts as well as in secular contexts.

Other models

re:focus is one model of consultancy. It is helpful, as the facilitator develops and grows in confidence, to have some training about other models of consultancy. Sometimes a particular situation may call for a different approach and it is useful for the facilitator to have other models to draw from. In time the facilitator may even want to develop their own model of consultancy.

A useful resource to explore other models of consultancy is George Lovell's book *Consultancy Modes and Models* (2005).



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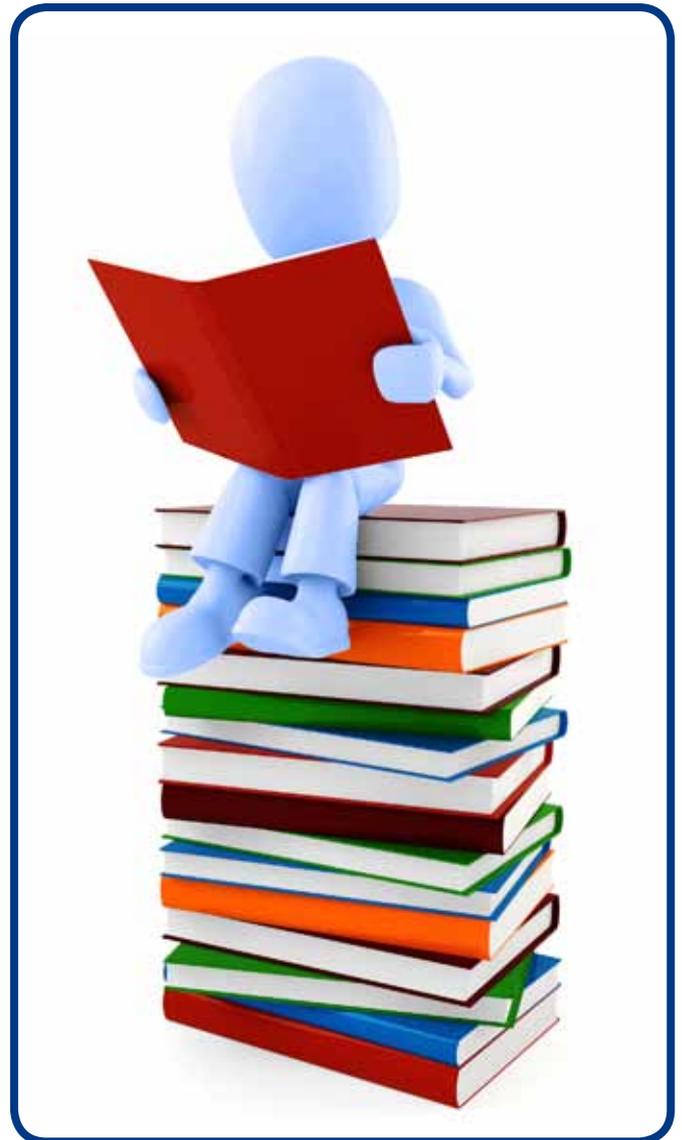
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MA Level Course:

York St John – Consultancy in Mission and Ministry





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Guidelines for Facilitators



To give an overview of the facilitator's role, and details for using the modules.

Introduction

re:focus is a flexible tool to help churches assess their life, especially their interaction with the wider community. It is designed to help individuals in being missionary disciples and to help the church in being more fruitful for God as a local Christian community.

With the help of outside facilitators, **re:focus** takes a church on a journey over a period of six to twelve months during which:

- through various exercises people listen to God and to each other
- the wider community is considered
- charts of mission issues and opportunities are developed and prioritised
- an Action Plan of objectives is produced and agreed by the church
- using some **re:focus** resource modules and in other ways, the church takes steps towards the objectives
- the facilitators meet the leaders and/or congregation for a final time to celebrate the progress so far.



The role of the association

The association regional ministers, or someone appointed by them, will oversee the whole process. The association will take the decision about a church starting on the process and will appoint the facilitators. The module *Guidance for Associations in Developing Facilitators* discusses ways of identifying and equipping facilitators. Usually, two facilitators will be appointed for each **re:focus** journey with a church, one of them being regarded as the 'lead' facilitator for purposes of being the contact person for the church and the association.

Usually the association will want to check on the progress of the church after a further one or two years. The facilitators may be asked to revisit, or this follow-up may be undertaken by a regional minister.

The leadership of the church

The term 'leadership' is used throughout to mean the minister(s), if the church has them, plus whoever is regarded as the main leadership group in the church. Sometimes these people will be called elders, deacons or another name. The leadership must take responsibility for the promotion and implementation of **re:focus**.

crossingplaces

The language of *crossingplaces* is used in **re:focus** and so it is important for facilitators to be familiar with the *crossingplaces* initiative. Basic information is given in Module 7 and resources for developing *crossingplaces* in Module 13.



re:focus modules

In addition to this module and the *Guidance for Associations*, there is a **re:focus Introduction** leaflet that can be given out to ministers and leaders in churches who are considering going through **re:focus**. This is available in an A5 fold leaflet for overprinting or an A4 download.

The other modules are written in a style for the church leadership to use. They are:

Preparation

- 1 **Sermons:** To provide five weeks of preparation for **re:focus** in services
- 2 **Small Group Studies:** To provide five weeks of preparation for small groups. Separate courses for adults, youth and children (to 11yrs)
- 3 **Leaders' Questionnaire:** To enable the church leaders to provide useful information to the facilitators
- 4 **Congregation Questionnaire:** To enable the church congregation to provide useful information to the facilitators

Main Meetings

- 5 **Main re:focus Meeting with Leaders:** To reflect on the history of the church and explore its hopes for the future
- 6 **Main re:focus Meeting with Congregation:** To go through a process together to discern the local mission issues and opportunities
- 7 **Crossingplaces:** To help develop people's *crossingplaces* and to discover how the church might support them
- 8 **Exercises for the Main re:focus Meetings:** To provide a variety of exercises, in classified groups, which the facilitators can select

Action Plan and Resources

- 9 **Developing an Action Plan:** To give help the in creating an Action Plan that will guide the next 3 - 5 years
- 10 **Sowing, Reaping, Keeping:** To provide a way of developing a framework for mission in the church
- 11 **Local Community Research:** To offer ways to understand the community better through research
- 12 **A Welcoming Place:** To ensure that the building is welcoming, suitable for the mission of the church
- 13 **Resources:** To point to Baptist and other resources that will resource *crossingplaces*
- 14 **Evangelism Resources:** To suggest resources suitable for evangelism for different stages of the faith journey
- 15 **Discipleship Resource: LIFE MOT:** To offer a personal discipleship scheme to be promoted in a church



re:focus

The timetable

It is important that the lead facilitator establishes a good relationship with the minister or the contact person designated from the church leaders as soon as possible. Importantly a timetable needs to be set so that the main congregation meeting can be advertised widely within the church as soon as possible.



The approximate timetable you need to follow is:

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish initial contact with church. • Arrange dates when people will use the sermon series (5 weeks). • Arrange dates when small groups will meet (5 sessions) roughly concurrent with the sermons (dates for youth groups/children's groups). 	Module 1 Module 2
Week 2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the arrangements above are in place. • Give one copy of the Leaders' Questionnaire to the Leadership to be returned to you within a month. • Discuss how Congregation Questionnaire can be given out as widely as possible and/or completed online. If online, help the church set this up. • Work out the dates when the sermon series and small groups will be finishing and fix the main re:focus meeting(s) with the congregation as soon as possible after this. Talk through the different patterns listed. • Fix the date for the main re:focus meeting with the leadership group, about two weeks before the congregation meeting(s). 	Module 3 Module 4 Module 6 Module 5
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the church is having a good 'launch' for re:focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o describing the sermon series o explaining the importance of participating in a small group o giving an invitation for the main congregation meeting o requesting the questionnaire be completed by as many people as possible, giving a return date two weeks before the main meeting with the leadership. • Discuss ways that the congregation, including those involved in mid-week activities, can be reminded regularly about this re:focus journey, creating anticipation for attending the main congregation meeting(s). 	



Week 8-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators meet together to go through the completed Leaders' Questionnaire and start gathering easily obtained community information using online suggestions from Module 11. Facilitators meet together after closing date for Congregation Questionnaires, to go through results and to plan the main meeting with the leadership team. 	Module 3 Module 11 Module 4 Module 5
Week 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main meeting with leadership team – start the large 'Mission Issues' and 'Mission Opportunities' charts. Fix date for presenting final report to leadership. From all the gathered information and prayer, facilitators plan the content of the main congregation re: focus meeting(s). 	Module 5 Modules 6, 7 and 8
Week 12-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main re: focus congregation meeting(s), producing prioritised mission issues and opportunities lists. Facilitators meet together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to write report to be presented to leaders to think about how the Action Plan could be developed and which modules and other resources could help to achieve the agreed objectives. 	Modules 6, 7 and 8 Module 9 Modules 10-15
Week 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitators present report to leadership team and guide them into preparing an Action Plan, utilising some of the remaining modules, for them to present at the Church Meeting 	Module 9 Modules 10-15
Weeks up to 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check on response of the church to the Action Plan Agree dates with leadership to meet to check on progress of Action Plan and offer advice or suggest further resources Agree a time for a facilitator to be with the congregation again to celebrate the progress made in the re: focus journey 	



Using the modules

It is essential that the facilitators become familiar with the content of all the modules. This knowledge, together with the experience gained in working with a variety of churches will allow the modules to be used flexibly to suit any church situation.

Module 1 has enough notes in it for any reasonably competent preacher to deliver the five sermons. They are not meant to be scripts, so that there can be flexibility in style. For churches that normally use PowerPoint, there are downloads to accompany each sermon.

Module 2 has small group notes linked to the sermons. These can stand alone, so they do not have to follow on in the week directly following the related sermon. If a church does not have regular small groups then they should be encouraged to establish them for the **re:focus** journey. There may well be mission issues and opportunities from these groups and the group leaders should be encouraged to keep anonymous notes to pass on to the facilitators. Similarly the material for the youth groups and the children's groups will bring out important insights which also need to be recorded to be fed back into the main congregation meeting.

Module 3 is a single questionnaire to be completed by the minister(s) and leadership together. As well as providing information, this encourages the leadership to have discussion together on the matters raised. If there is a strong point of disagreement regarding any answers then this should be noted.

Module 4 contains a questionnaire to go out to as many people associated with the church as possible, to be filled in individually and anonymously. Facilitators should help the leadership think widely so they also go out to 'fringe' people and to those who only attend a mid-week church activity. The early questions enable differentiation between members, regular church attenders, etc. The *Growth and Decline* exercise, done by many people, gives a good view of attitudes and opinions across the church.

If the majority of people have internet access then it will be easier for this questionnaire to be done online. You may need to tell the church how to set this up, and a simple and free resource to recommend for this purpose is Survey Monkey¹.

If the church has completed paper questionnaires, they will need to be collated. For collating the numerical results in the *Growth and Decline* exercise, you could enter the results on an Excel chart, using the template available from www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/366594/Faith_and_Society.aspx

Module 5 is the main meeting of the facilitators with the whole leadership team, usually in an evening. You should hear their hopes for the **re:focus** journey and continue to build relationships. In going through the questionnaire they have completed, seek further information or explanation as necessary. Share your own community research results and the congregation questionnaires' results and discuss. Be prepared with one or two additional exercises from Module 8 as seem appropriate to you. Start making the lists of 'Mission Issues' and 'Mission Opportunities' with them.

Module 6 is the main **re:focus** meeting for the congregation. The decision whether to spread this over a Friday evening and morning/all-day Saturday, or over a weekend, will have to be taken in an early conversation with the leaders. The module provides patterns for each possibility. The ideal would be a whole weekend, but this is the key time in the **re:focus** journey and it is important that as many people as possible attend.

¹ www.surveymonkey.com



Taking the example of running time option 2, the following outline would be a guideline:

Welcome and Introduction

- This will include a brief time of opening worship and prayer.
- Facilitators are introduced and outline what will take place over the time together. Clearly explain what **re:focus** is and what it is not.
- Outline the rest of the journey and what outcomes are envisaged.

Session 1

- Responses from the leadership are shared as a starting point.
 - The Mission Issues and Mission Opportunities lists are introduced and stuck up for additions, subtractions and modifications through the time together.
 - These lists are a crucial part of the whole process. It is the place where all the findings and conclusions are gathered. This will act as the raw material from which the Action Plan will be devised. This list is provisional. The fact that something appears on the list does not mean that it is agreed but rather that there is a sense of its being important and needing further consideration later. Entries can be, and frequently are, deleted or altered as the process develops.
- *crossingplaces* exercise is started (Module 7)
 - It takes some time to do the individual *crossingplaces* exercise.
 - This exercise will reveal what opportunities members of the congregation have to engage with the community they are a part of everyday. This may highlight areas of ministry that the church has not as yet considered. If so, add them to the Missions Issues list. It is also important to make sure that you encourage each individual to think intentionally and strategically about how to make the most of these opportunities for the sake of mission.
 - You should find a way of collecting the individual *crossingplaces* of people onto the collective chart (suggestions in Module 7).

Facilitators should select exercises to use from Module 8, according to what has already been learned about the church. The choice should give 'balance'. However certain exercises, that are regarded as core to **re:focus**, should be included:

- 1 The 'individual' *crossingplaces* exercises (Module 7)
- 2 Sharing the leadership's chart of the church's *crossingplaces* (Module 3)
- 3 Discussion of *Growth and Decline Assessment* results (part of the Congregation Questionnaire in Module 4)
- 4 Mountains and Valleys Exercise (Module 8)
- 5 Telling our Stories and Dreaming our Dreams (Module 8)
- 6 Report from Children and Youth (from Module 2)

Large sheets of paper with the Mission Issues and Mission Opportunities lists started with the leadership should be on display and ready for writing on. At the end of every session an opportunity to report back will take place and the lists extended.



- If time permits it is useful to add the Merlin Exercise at this point (Module 8), unless it is planned to use this elsewhere in the programme. This will help you hear about people's dreams for the church in, say, five years.
- This is also a good time to present the headline findings to the church from the community information from the Leadership Questionnaire (Module 3), together with on-line information you have found. Ask those gathered to split into small groups and discuss what the implications are for mission. Remind them that they are looking for mission issues or opportunities. After they have discussed these, ask each group to report back one item they think is important and add any new Mission Issues or Opportunities to the list. Go round each group in turn until all suggestions have been exhausted. (If it appears that the wider community should be explored in greater depth then recommend use of Module 11 Local Community Research as part of the Action Plan.)

Session 2 Church *crossingplaces* Exercise

- Share the chart completed by the leadership in Module 3, reproducing it for everyone if necessary.
- This exercise enables the whole church to understand the *crossingplaces* the church has in its life (like a toddler group) and to discuss how to make the most of those opportunities. These should be placed on the Mission Opportunities list. (If there seems to be no strategy for making links between the church's *crossingplaces* and the rest of church life, then Module 10 *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping* could be recommended in the Action Plan.)

Session 3 Growth and Decline Assessment Report Back (from Module 4)

- The collated results of the *Growth and Decline Assessment* exercise done by the congregation should be shared at this point, perhaps by reproducing the graphs, and comments made to enable this to be understood.
- Discussion of the findings will then take place and the issues identified added to the list.
- If you feel that the information from this exercise is already included in the Missions Issues list, then include an additional exercise at this point.

Session 4 Telling our Stories/ Dreaming our Dreams Exercise or Merlin Exercise (Module 8)

- These exercises aim to get at the heart of people's perceptions and aspirations for the church and its engagement with the community. Telling our Stories reveals what is important to people and what has hindered their progress in church. This may highlight an issue that needs to be addressed. Dreaming our Dreams may highlight a mission opportunity. The Merlin Exercise not only highlights these things but also starts the congregation thinking about a strategy to accomplish what is envisaged.

Session 5 Mountains and Valleys Exercise or Fast Fit Exercise (Module 8)

- The mountain and valleys exercise seeks to identify ebbs and flows in the life of the church within living memory. This can be helpful in terms of breaking or promoting these patterns in the future. Fast Fit is an upgraded form of SWOT Analysis.

Session 6 Metaphor Exercise or Cartoon Exercise (Module 8)

- Both of these exercises fall into the intuitive category and are intended to bring out those things that may not already have been perceived.



Session 7 Report from Children and Youth

- It is important to this process to hear from all groups within the church, young and old, those with learning difficulties, those from other ethnic backgrounds. This must be borne in mind throughout the process.
- The Children's and Youth Leaders, together with some of the students, present the findings from the exercises that they have undertaken in groups as part of the preparation for the day (Module 2 and Children and Teens Exercise in Module 8).
- These are then discussed and the findings added to the Mission Issues and Opportunities lists.

Session 8 Final Comments and Close

- This is the wrap-up session
- Look at the Mission Issues and Opportunities lists and invite comment. This is the time for trimming and prioritising the findings. This can be done in a number of ways:
 - o By a simple show of hands they can be prioritised A,B or C. Mark up the sheets with the consensus, using different coloured marker pens. If an issue receives an equal number of votes for say A and B, mark it AB.
 - o Alternatively this could be done using the Prioritising Exercise to seek to prioritise the mission issues and opportunities. (Module 8)
- It is important in this session that what happens next is outlined. There is always a certain degree of fear surrounding processes like this - that the information gathered will be full of promise that is then unrealised. Clearly outline what will happen to the findings and the difference they will make in the ensuing Action Plan that is developed.

17:00 End or Family Type Tea

Module 7 provides the individual *crossingplaces* exercise for the congregational meeting. The chart will need to be copied for each person to use. Check that everyone has a good understanding of the *crossingplaces* concept. A large copy of the collective chart will also need to be made to go on the wall for people to complete.

Module 8 contains the additional exercises for the main meetings with the leadership and with the congregation. It is important to become really familiar with how each exercise works so you can select the appropriate ones in each situation. People will have preferences for factual or intuitive exercises so it is important to provide this variation as well.

Module 9 provides guidance in producing an Action Plan with the leadership after you have given a report of all your findings to them. Some leaders need more help than others in this process. The success of the **re:focus** journey thus far is in producing an Action Plan with objectives and timed steps on the way to achieving them. The steps are likely to include some of Modules 10 – 15. A chart is provided for each objective and these should be completed and then presented by the leadership for agreement by the Members' meeting.

Module 10 is based on the book *Sowing, Reaping, Keeping*. It is a powerful tool in helping a church understand the concept of evangelism when people are on a faith journey towards following Jesus Christ and then continuing to grow in discipleship. It also offers a way of developing a workable strategy for the mission of the church, focused on different groups, eg families or Baby Boomers. The module is accompanied by a downloadable PowerPoint.

Module 11 provides the means of the church finding out about its community in more depth and importantly making valuable contacts within it. The chart on the back page is a helpful summary of what a small research team can achieve. When a recent census is available then this will be worthwhile using as well.



Module 12 is a valuable module covering all aspects of the church being a welcoming place. This ranges from the building being suitable for the mission of the church to the people being properly welcoming to newcomers or people with disabilities. The module gives advice on major structural change as well as refurbishment. It also gives guidance on good maintenance. Most churches will benefit from doing the exercises toward the end to check on all these matters.

Module 13 is a comprehensive list of resources that can support the church and individual *crossingplaces*. You should familiarise yourself with these so that you can recommend them to the church for use as part of the Action Plan. This module will be updated and should be checked out online periodically.

Module 14 provides a comprehensive list of tested evangelism resources. Importantly there is guidance about the circumstances in which each can be used effectively. The module includes some resources for those who have made an initial Christian commitment. Again this module will be updated periodically.

Module 15 is a personal discipleship scheme to be offered to the church. Making missionary disciples does depend on good discipleship being encouraged in the life of the church. Where people are coming to faith with little Christian background, then such discipleship must be actively promoted and this module provides one model.

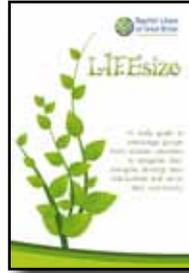
It is important to visit the leadership occasionally to check on the progress of the Action Plan, asking pertinent questions and giving encouragement. It may be necessary to suggest further resources in some circumstances. At some point, up to a year after the beginning of the **re:focus** journey, arrange to spend time with the congregation preferably in a service, to celebrate what has been achieved so far and to pray for the future. Provide, or encourage a leader to write, an article reflecting this to go in the church magazine, or even in the local paper.

Provide your report and the Action Plan to your association, so that the Regional Minister can follow up with the church for a further couple of years.



Does re:focus work in a small church?

re:focus works equally well in all sizes of church. It is flexible to suit each individual church. The experienced facilitators will guide you in this. However for smaller churches (say up to 40 to 50 members) there is an additional resource called *LIFESize* that can be undertaken as a five-week small group study and which will provide an excellent beginning. Electronic copies can be obtained by contacting the Faith and Society Team on faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk



How much does re:focus cost?

All the material required is free and can be downloaded from the BUGB website. The church should offer hospitality to the facilitators on their visits and cover their travelling costs. Facilitators give their time freely, so a parting gift is appropriate. Check with your association about any registration fee they may require to cover some of their administration and training costs for **re:focus**. This is a small financial outlay across a year.

What should we do next?

When you have decided to go ahead with **re:focus**, contact your association. The association will provide you with appropriate facilitators who will contact you to sort out a timetable with you and answer any further questions.

A church that commits to giving its time to the surveys and sessions, to participating and to praying, will gain a renewed mission focus and a deeper level of discipleship.

*Kathryn Morgan
- BUGB Mission
Adviser and
facilitator (retired)*

Contacting your Association



Introduction

re:focus is a journey to help your church:

- focus on its life as a Christian community
- develop new and existing *crossingplaces*
- share the Christian message in actions and words.

Using a selection of the **re:focus** modules, the church will:

- listen to each other and to God
- be guided by experienced external facilitators

Should our church go through re:focus?

Many churches find themselves in changing circumstances. People move on to live elsewhere; sometimes the community changes around where the church meets. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, living life as children of God and impacting the community in the power of the Holy Spirit is the ongoing task. But the task may need to be done differently. Using **re:focus**, facilitators will help you look at your church and community realistically. They will guide you in setting an Action Plan for the next few years.

By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding
it is established;
through knowledge its
rooms are filled with rare
and beautiful treasures.

Proverbs 24:3-4

What are *crossingplaces*?

People you meet regularly who are not Christians provide your *crossingplaces* opportunities. These people may be antagonistic towards hearing about your faith, but more likely they are spiritually open and somewhere on a journey of faith. **re:focus** will help you develop your personal *crossingplaces*. It also helps build on the *crossingplaces* activities your church undertakes.



What will happen?

There will be a couple of months of preparation during which five sermons need to be preached and five sessions of small groups run for adults, young people and children. All the notes are provided. In this time the minister(s) and leaders and everyone in the church completes a questionnaire. This leads on to the main meetings for the leaders and then the congregation with the facilitators. From this information and the mission issues and opportunities charts drawn up together, the facilitators report back and then help make the Action Plan.

The church went through such a process six years ago. But life doesn't stand still and there have been changes ... so we have welcomed the opportunity to review our church life and mission again and see what God is saying to us right now.

*Fleet Meadow Baptist Church,
Oxfordshire*

Preparation

Sermons (5)

Small groups (5)

Leaders' Questionnaire

Congregation Questionnaires

Prayer

Main Meetings

With the leaders

With the congregation
(+ input from children and youth)

Production of mission issues and opportunities lists, prioritised

Output

Report from facilitators

Action Plan
(for church agreement)

Guidance from facilitators in implementation and resources

Who will help us?

Your Baptist association or network will provide experienced facilitators to journey with you through this process. Ministers and church leaders will be involved throughout. Importantly the whole church is fully involved at key points. The journey of discovery and discernment may last from six months to a year. The **re:focus** modules provide the preparation, various discovery tools, as well as guidance about resources. These are listed at the end of this document. The facilitators will discuss the timetable with you early on.

What helps re:focus work well?

Although there is much talking and listening to each other, **re:focus** is only effective if you also talk and listen to God. Pray about whether to do **re:focus** and, as you move ahead, keep on praying. Throughout, commit to being open about the church and the community of which it is part. Don't insist on personal agendas. If you have gone through a process similar to this in recent years, go through **re:focus** now before the previous benefits diminish.

crossingplaces

It was helpful in showing us as a small church not to overstretch ... they didn't come to beat us down but came to encourage us ... all in all we found it useful.

Becontree Avenue Baptist Church, Dagenham



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