

## Shared Outcomes Framework

# Number of new worshipping communities - Definition guidance

### Definition summary

1. **Funded projects should count the number of new worshipping communities started in the last year and provide this information to the national church.**
2. A New Worshipping Community is:
3. **New** - The aim of the New Worshipping Community is to reach people who are currently not attending church and to make new Christian disciples.
4. **Worshipping** – The purpose of the community is the worship of Jesus Christ and to help people grow in the maturity of their faith. This can be seen through its practices which will have multiple of the hallmarks of worship from: prayer, scripture, praise, sacrament, and acts of service.
5. **Community** – Meets together in person or online regularly (i.e. at least once a month), and is connected with the wider Church through the parish church, deanery or diocese.

### Why?

6. New worshipping communities is important as a measure of creativity, energy, and generative impact. Measuring new worshipping communities will:
  - Demonstrate growth, life and creativity of mission in the church as a measure of people seeking to reach their communities in innovative ways
  - Show how the Church is adapting to trends in population and society by having the distribution of congregations better reflect how people live today
  - Support a mixed ecology of Church in which everyone in England will have an accessible pathway to faith through new or inherited forms of church
7. With good data on new worshipping communities, there are a range of tools that could be developed to enable high quality planning and understanding what works. For dioceses starting a project, we will provide scenarios on the numbers of new worshipping communities seen in similar projects over time. The better the data, the more context-specific this can be.
8. Information on the number of new worshipping communities can be combined with other measures such as attendance change, new leaders, financial sustainability, and numbers new to faith. This can give a sense of the likely impact of starting new worshipping communities.

### How?

9. This definition has come from discussions at national working groups.
10. The project team of a funded project (e.g. project or programme manager, data analyst, project administrator) should keep a list of new worshipping communities which have been started in the last year.
11. For some new worshipping communities, the project team will have had a significant role in their establishment and it will be part of their core business.

12. Other new worshipping communities might emerge in local contexts without the diocesan project team being involved or aware. There will be different ways that project teams communicate with their local leaders.

### When should New Worshipping Communities be counted?

13. Communities should be counted when they first meet the definition of a new worshipping community. Many groups evolve over time between different stages – for example the Fresh Expressions Journey has six steps, of which worship may come at step 4 or 5. It is at that point that the community should be counted in this metric.

### Can traditional services be New Worshipping Communities?

14. The communities counted should include both new forms of church, and existing forms of church at a new time or location. For example, a parish may start new worshipping community as a 4pm service to reach families, or a midweek lunchtime service for workers.

15. This indicator is a count of NWCs started in the last year, so will not include more longstanding worship services.

### What does it mean for the churches to aim to reach new people?

16. The aim to reach people who are currently not attending church is about purpose, rather than outcome. So if a community is trying to reach new people, but isn't reaching many as it stands, it still counts as a new worshipping community.

17. This aim to reach new people should be reflected in the community being open to new joiners. One rule of thumb would be if the service is should be open to the public, but it may be open in other ways. Something like a home group would not be included.

18. The stated aim to make new Christian disciples would mean that many community groups or social transformation activities would not be included in the measure.

### How do we know if the purpose is worship?

19. The purpose of the community's meetings should be the worship of Jesus Christ, and the listed hallmarks give indicators of what worship entails. They should be seen as indicators of the purpose of worship, and not used to 'prove' something is worship. There will be gatherings that demonstrate some of these hallmarks, but for which the purpose isn't worship.

### What about online or hybrid communities, missional work, or ecumenical communities?

20. For online or hybrid communities, it can be more challenging to define what 'meeting' means. The important aspect is regular participation in worship. Online church can provide more creativity around this, but shouldn't be a reason to lower the bar.

21. There are lots of good, missional groups of Christians in the country – we should only include in our counts ones which are clearly under Church of England oversight, and so are connected to the local parish deanery and diocese. Ecumenical work is good and where there is a significant Anglican connection it should be included, but we don't want to claim others' successes.

### Do we have to capture this in our project if we're not aiming to start new worshipping communities?

22. Every project will be asked what they could do to feed back on their impact against each of the measures of the outcome framework. It is likely that for a large number of projects, the number of new worshipping communities will be relevant to their work. 79% of SDF projects had at least one indicator relating to the number of new worshipping communities.

23. Where the measure would mean significant additional work without providing much about whether a project has been fruitful, it may be that the measure isn't reported on.