

### Overview

As disciples of Christ, we invited to become caught up in His work of renewal and transformation - change is part of the Christian life. Starting something new can be both exciting and daunting at the same time. For some, this may involve a significant change in their life and work. For others, it can be something apparently very small. However, we never quite know what the long term impact will be, of even something small. In this topic we will explore how God might be pointing us to something new and consider how we might respond.

***This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions***

### Facilitator

*In this topic there is an exercise called 'People with a Mission' that group members need to complete beforehand.*

*Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members*

### Facilitator

*Invite the group to reflect on the 4 biblical stories about calling. These readings are available as a separate handout, or the group can use their own bibles. Take each in turn and briefly draw out any observations from the group about what was involved for each of the people involved and their close relationships in these stories.*

### Activity

**Take a look at these bible stories of new beginnings.**

The Call of Abraham	Genesis 12
The Call of Jeremiah	Jeremiah 1:4-10
The Call of Mary	Luke 1:26-38
The Call of Peter	John 21:15-19

### Discussion

**What was involved for each of these people as they embarked on their new beginning?**

### Facilitator

*Encourage the group to make any connections between their experience and the experience of these four people.*

### Facilitator

*Introduce the 'People with a Mission' exercise and ask the group to share their chosen people in turn. See if there are any themes that connect the different people that each person has chosen. What does the choice say about the group member and their interest?*

### Activity

**Talk about your heroes /heroines and what you have learned about them and what it means to engage with a mission.**

### Facilitator

*Having heard from each member of the group about their heroes or heroines, summarise any general conclusions and invite the group to draw together any themes that have emerged.*

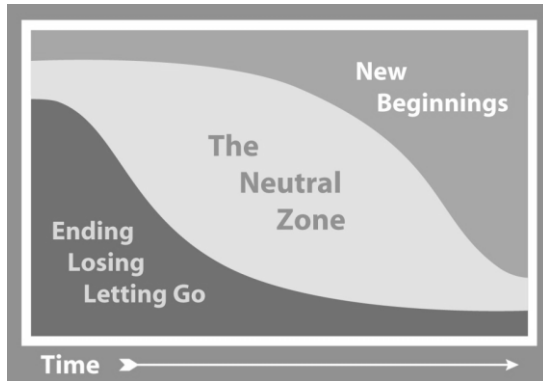
### Facilitator

*Re-introduce the theme of Transition that was discussed in 'My Story' (Topic VOC3) assuming the group has used that session. When we looked at the model of transitions previously, we asked the group to consider where they were in the model at the present time. Now we want to explore some of the issues relating to starting new beginning. Talk through the main elements of transition briefly again. There are a number of points to note*

*about new beginning e.g. they may have been there dormant for some time, you have to let go sufficient to enable them to begin, the neutral zone is a creative period in which we explore possible new beginnings – sometime fruitlessly.*

### Perspective

### Exploring New Beginnings



*From 'Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change' by William Bridges, (2009 Nicholas Brealey Publishing)*

Transition is the process of letting go of the way things used to be and taking hold of the way they will become. In between letting go and taking hold again, there is a chaotic but potentially creative 'neutral zone' when things aren't the old way, but aren't really a new way either yet.

#### Ending / Letting Go

To enable us to move on to new beginning there invariably have to be some endings. In the ending phase we lose or let go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old attitudes, even our self-image. We may resist this ending for a while. We may try to talk ourselves out of what we are feeling and then we give in, we may be swept by feelings of sadness and anger.

#### Neutral Zone

The neutral zone can either be a period of disorientation or a highly creative period of new possibilities. We can feel caught between old and new and can end up immobilised. Dangers of the neutral zone are that anxiety rises and motivation falls, we doubt ourselves, energy is drained into coping tactics and our effectiveness falls. This is also however a time ripe for creative opportunity.

#### New Beginnings

Finally, we take hold of and identify with some new outlook and some new reality as well as new attitudes and a new self-image. When we have done this, we feel that we are finally starting a new chapter in our lives. No matter how impossible it was to imagine a future earlier, life now feels as though it is back on its track again. We have a new sense of ourselves, a new outlook, a new sense of purpose and possibility.

### Facilitator

*Introduce the following question and invite the group to consider their experience for a moment..*

**Question** **What is your experience of new beginnings? How does it feel to start something new?**

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**Facilitator** *Ask the group to share their responses. Introduce the perspective 'New Actions' from Francis Dewar at a suitable point in the discussion.*

**Perspective** **New Actions**

Francis Dewar suggests that any 'new actions' might also be 'of God' if they are

- A generous giving of who and what we are
- A new departure, fresh initiative or doing the same thing but in a different way
- Risky
- Beyond our unaided powers
- A step, however small, to a more just and equitable world

*From 'Live for a Change: Discovering and Using Your Gifts' by Francis Dewar (1999, Darton, Longman and Todd)*

**Facilitator** *Introduce the following checklist about False Assumptions about Mission by Laurie Beth Jones. We have not used the term mission much before now. Mission is the sense of being sent out to engage with the world in a purposeful way. This clearly relates to the sense of new beginnings that we are exploring here. These assumptions are helpful challenges to some of the limitations we might impose on ourselves.*

**Perspective** **False Assumptions about Mission**

- 1. My job is my mission**  
Your job may be and ideally should be part of your mission but your mission is always larger than your job  
Career and jobs change. Danger of losing your sense of identity when your job changes.
- 2. My role is my mission**  
Being a mother, father, husband, wife etc
- 3. My To-Do list is my mission**  
Can be a list of busyness which is urgent but not important
- 4. I am not currently living my mission**  
It is highly probable that you are already living your mission at some level. You are standing on holy ground
- 5. I am not important enough to have a mission**  
Don't underestimate the impact of small actions - butterfly effect
- 6. My mission has to be grand one to help a lot of people**  
Raise or teach or heal one creature and your life can be considered a success

## 7. A mission must be full of suffering

Common assumption that a mission must be hard - My yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matthew 11:29-30). Don't take on a mission that fits someone else's needs

## 8. My mission has to be the same as that of my peers

Be prepared to be different and stand out from the crowd

## 9. Geography is destiny

Look beyond the borders or boundaries that geography might seem to impose on you

## 10. What I am doing is as close as I can get to my real mission

Living in the shadow of your real dream. Go for what you want directly. Beware of parallel imitations that look like but are not the 'real thing.'

## 11. Life is random

Don't get too obsessed with planning life - prepare to be surprised

*From 'The Path : Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and Life' by Laurie Beth Jones, (1998, Hyperion)*

### Facilitator

*Invite the members of the group to indicate which of these assumptions they think might apply to themselves and have a discussion about what to do to avoid the pitfalls of false assumptions.*

### Discussion

**Which of these assumptions about mission might apply to you and how might you avoid the pitfalls of false assumptions?**

### Facilitator

*Encourage group members to set some specific steps for the new beginnings that they feel may be appropriate at this time. It would be helpful to use the SMART framework and to suggest that the group comes back next week with some ideas worked out. If you have time and feel it is worth beginning this exercise this week then please do so. People may need time to reflect. Explain the SMART idea and emphasise the value of small steps and prevent people from falling into some of the traps as listed in the false assumptions.*

### Perspective

#### SMART Steps

When setting goals or deciding on a new course of action, it can be helpful to think about what you might do under 5 broad areas. This is a useful framework to think through to help to clarify where you want to go, how you will know when you have got there and what the next practical steps might be

**S** - specific

**M** - measurable

**A** - attainable

**R** - relevant

**T** - time-bound




## Activity

Take a look back at the activities in 'Turning Outward' (Topic VOC5). Is there anything in your Four Ps that you could develop a 'SMART' step towards?

<p><b>S</b></p> <p>If you feel comfortable doing so, work collaboratively either with the group or with a partner.</p>	<p>What <b>specifically</b> might I do now, to respond to God's call?</p>
<p><b>M</b></p> <p>How would I know that progress is being made?</p>	<p>How would I <b>measure</b>, or know that, progress is being made?</p>
<p><b>A</b></p> <p>What can be realistically attained?</p>	<p>What can be realistically <b>attained</b>?</p>
<p><b>R</b></p> <p>How is this relevant to God, me and others?</p>	<p>How is this <b>relevant</b> to God, me and others?</p>
<p><b>T</b></p> <p>What is my time frame? When, where, who...</p>	<p>What is my <b>time</b> frame? When, where, who...</p>

**Facilitator**

*During the week, you might like to reflect on :*



**Where do you sense that new beginnings may be emerging for you and for others?**

**Facilitator**

*Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session and ask them to share quickly 1 or 2 points.*

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**Ponder**

**What did you learn from this session?**

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**Prayer**

God of the guiding star, the bush that blazes.  
Show us your way.  
God of the stormy seas, the bread that nourishes us.  
Teach us your truth.  
God of the still small voice, the wind that blows where it chooses.  
Fill us with life  
God of the elements of our inward and outward journeys  
Set our feet on your road today.  
May God bless us with a safe journey  
May the angels and saints travel with us  
May we live this day in justice and joy.  
Amen

*From 'This is the Day : Readings and mediations from the Iona Community'  
(2002, Wild Goose)*