

New Places for New People

Starting new Christian
communities:
A practical guide

Chapter 13

One-to-One
Meetings as
a Pioneer

One-to-One Meetings as a Pioneer

We spend a lot of our time in 'what' conversations: we exchange pleasantries, talk about the weather, discuss our activities, seek or provide advice, etc. The one-to-one meeting may start here but quickly aims to go deeper than these normal patterns. It's not a commercial for our new project, an interview, or a pastoral counselling session. The one-to-one conversation is an opportunity to listen, build trust, and learn what the other person values.

What is a one-to-one meeting?

The one-to-one meeting is a short (30-45 minute), memorable, in-person conversation between two people to uncover, explore, and share the stories, core values, and motivating interests of each conversation partner. The goal of a one-to-one is to figure out the 'why' of the person you are talking to by inviting them to tell you – a significant piece of building a connection and a relationship.

One-to-ones are essential in ensuring your NPNP is contextually relevant, and in connecting with new people and building the pioneering team (see page 55).

Before the one-to-one

- 1) **Make a list of everyone you know in your city, town, village, or whatever the ministry context is.**

That's right: why not start with everyone? Put everyone you know on your list. These will be the people you reach out to first. If the idea of that list is simply too overwhelming, make a list of the leaders of important organisations in your community – schools, voluntary organisations, businesses, cultural groups, etc.

- 2) **Choose ten of these people and email (or phone) them to ask for a meeting.**

Invite a range of people. Explain who you are and your connection, clarify what you're inviting them to and why, and ask them to respond if they're available. Some of them will immediately respond: some of them won't. You could follow up on an email invitation a week later. Schedule the meeting and the meeting location. A public space such as a coffee shop could be an ideal place to meet.

During the one-to-one

- 3) **At the beginning of the meeting, thank the person for their time.**

Restate who you are and your context, and be clear that you will stick to the time set aside.

- 4) **Then move into the main part of the meeting: the conversation itself.**

Don't default to the previously mentioned conversational patterns that this relational meeting is not. Your goal is for the conversation to be memorable – for it to stand out from the hundreds of other conversations that happen in a week. So ask good questions, and follow up with more good questions

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that invite people to consider the 'why' of the answers they just gave. Share meaningfully too about your own commitments. At first, navigating the balance of deep listening, probing questioning, follow-up, and story sharing will feel clunky. But don't worry. The more relational meetings you do, the more natural they will become to your practice of ministry.

Here are some potential starter questions:

- Tell me the story of how you became a _____. Biography is the best place to start but push hard on the particulars; don't let it stay superficial.
- What does that mean for your life now?
- What's the main thing you're up to in your organisation?
- Who are your s/heroes?
- You seem angry/passionate/deeply committed to that. Where did that come from?
- What are you going to do about that anger/passion/conviction?
- If money were no object, what would you do?
- What's next for you?

Go for a probing question that risks troubling the easy, polite information exchange that we're used to. For example, 'What do you value about this community?' Ask big questions that have focus and spark. Don't forget, during the conversation you should find natural places to speak about your story, interests, and values. The one-to-one is not an interview.

Ending the one-to-one

5) **Five minutes before the end of the meeting, move to finish meaningfully.**

Resist the temptation to stay at the table for a long time. Finishing the meeting at the time agreed and on a high note increases the likelihood that you'll meet again in the future.

- Ask your conversation partner if they have any last questions for you.
- This is essential: ask your conversation partner if they know anyone else that you should be talking to. Ask the question and then be quiet and wait. More often than not, they'll suggest a couple of people. Then ask if they'd be willing to e-connect you with them. This is how you get more one-to-ones for the future.
- If you sense that there is some potential for future connection with your conversation partner, mention how interesting the meeting has been and then ask if you could follow up in a couple of months for another conversation.

After the one-to-one

6) **Record your conversation partner's basic information.**

Use whatever technology works for you to keep track of contacts. Follow the guidance on good practice in recording at www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/pastoral-care/confidentiality-guidelines

7) **Follow up with an email the next day.**

Thank your conversation partner, reiterate how helpful/enjoyable the conversation was, and ask whether anyone else has come to mind that you should reach out to. If they haven't yet e-connected you with the people they mentioned at the end of the one-to-one, ask them to do that.

8) **As you're doing one-to-ones regularly, figure out how to scan and organise the increasing 'data' you're getting from the meetings.**

This will help you to order to discern next steps for current and future projects.

9) **Repeat.**

Keep reaching out with more invitations for more one-to-ones. You should never run out of people to talk with.