

Fresh Expressions and Dinner Church: Moving Outside Traditional Models

EPIC Workshop on November 9, 2025

Pastor John Wertz, Jr. – wertz@vasynod.org

The following concepts are adapted from a presentation to the DEMs by Michael Adam Beck on March 18, 2025.

What is Fresh Expression?

Traditional Religious Identity Sequence

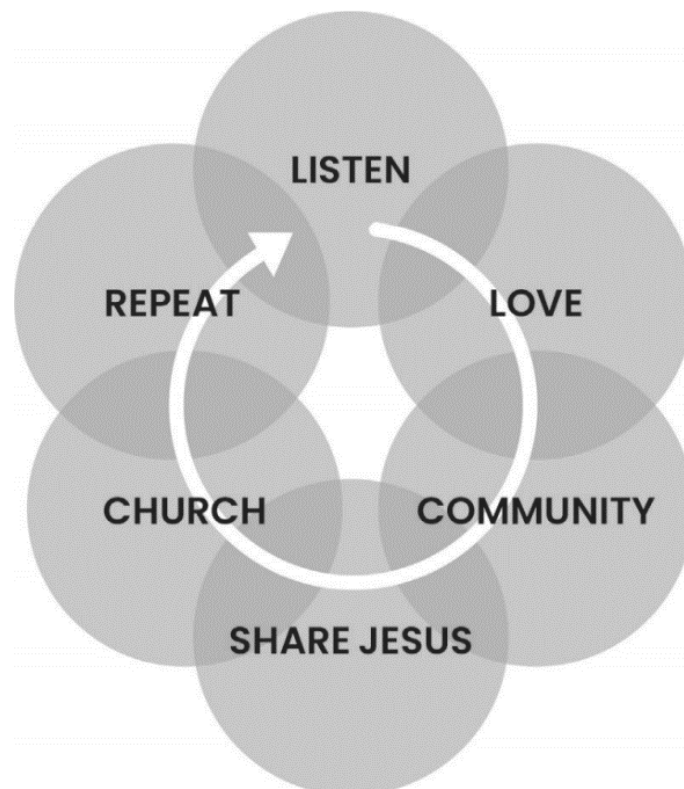
- Believe
- Belong
- Behave

In today's world, the religious identity sequence has broken apart in many places.

- Fresh expressions is about creating communities of belonging first. For many people, believing and behaving only happen through belonging.
- Belonging might eventually lead to believing that then leads to behaving.
- Belonging might eventually lead to behaving that then leads to believing.

Fresh Expressions are about joining people in the life-affirming things they do every week, building relationships, and allowing faith to spring up naturally and organically through the experience.

The Loving First Cycle



One Example of a Fresh Expression: Dinner Church

Why Dinner Church?

- Inherited Congregation and Fresh Expressions

Nuts and Bolts of Implementation

1. Pray and Form a Team
2. Step out into the Community
3. Try, Try, and Try again
4. Use Your Resources
5. Need to have Shared Leadership

Make Sharing Simple

You could choose one Jesus story, read it together, ask one of the following questions and discuss it together.

1. If this story happened today, what would it look like?
2. What does this story say to you?
3. How could this story make a difference in my life?

Simple Dinner Church Outline

- Gather
- Questions for discussion at tables possibly linked to the Jesus story for the day
- Begin eating
- Create space for a Jesus story, ask one of the sharing simple questions to create discussion, include prayer with thanksgiving for the meal
- Whole group announcements
- Sending

Resources

- Dinner Church: Building Bridges by Breaking Bread by Verlon Gosner - <https://freshexpressions.com/product/dinner-church-building-bridges-breaking-bread>
- The Dinner Church Handbook: A Step-by-Step Recipe for Reaching Neighborhoods by Verlon Gosner - <https://freshexpressions.com/product/dinner-church-handbook-step-step-recipe-community-evangelism>
- <https://freshexpressions.com/> - Fresh Expressions offers online dinner church training events across the year. Go to the Events tab to find upcoming events.
- We Will Feast: Rethinking Dinner, Worship, and the Community by Kendall Vanderslice - <https://edibletheology.com/we-will-feast>
- The 21st Century Christian: Following Jesus Where Life Happens by Michael Moynagh and Michael Adam Beck - <https://freshexpressions.com/product/21st-century-christian-following-jesus-where-life-happens>