

XPRESSIONS CAFÉ

INTRODUCTION—WHY DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Church is not always welcoming to outsiders. Even when the congregation is warm and friendly, many people hesitate to come across the threshold. There are a number of reasons for this:

- *Worry about being 'preached at' or 'evangelised'*—Christians are often seen as manipulative, only concerned with converting people and not interested in forging genuine relationships with non-believers.
- *Fear of commitment*—many people worry that they are going to get 'sucked in', that well-meaning Christians will try to get them to make commitments before they are ready.
- *Concern about 'doing things right'*—even experienced Christians prefer to sit at the back when in an unfamiliar church service. Imagine how it must be for those with no experience of church.
- *It's a different world*—the simple fact is that much of what goes on in church is completely different from the culture and experience of most people today. Why should they come?

So, if we believe that we are called to share the good news of Jesus and the kingdom of God with others we have two choices: we can go out to where the people are or we can make the experience of church one which is accessible to non-church goers (actually we must do both).

XPRESSIONS CAFÉ is an attempt to provide a form of church which will be welcoming and accessible to all—even those who don't want anything to do with Christianity at present.

This leaflet outlines our current thinking and invites you to become involved in this benefice-wide initiative to share the love of Jesus.

Nigel, Richard & Janet.

WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE?

Our plan is to start **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** on the first Sunday of each month at Chedgrave. If it is successful we want to add a second **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** at St John's on a different Sunday. Ultimately we hope to be able to offer café church somewhere in the benefice each Sunday.

Our plan is to build upon the success of **XPRESSIONS** and use the 'brand' to identify the different aspects of **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ**. What we will offer is tailored to the space we have at Chedgrave. Because there are three spaces (church, upstairs, and downstairs in the church centre) we are thinking of having three zones, each with a different function:

XRESSO

The actual café will be held on the ground floor of the church centre. It is important to note a few characteristics of cafés, and how they differ from conventional church services:

- There is no beginning or end to a café—just an opening and closing.
- People come and go when they want.
- A café is a safe space where you can do your own thing or chat with others as you please.
- There is no 'front' in a café; no space on which everybody is focused.

The café area will be called **XRESSO** and will feature tables set out café-style. It will serve excellent tea and coffee—we will probably buy an espresso machine—as well as soft drinks. We may also offer croissants, etc. All drinks and food will be free of charge as a simple expression of the free gift of love we have from God. We will also have the Sunday papers available for people to read.

XPRESSIONS

Upstairs we are hoping to have **XPRESSIONS**. There have been two very successful **XPRESSIONS AM** services at Chedgrave and we hope that we can build on this. **XPRESSIONS** is committed to providing meaningful and

accessible worship for families, especially families with younger children.

This is an important ministry and we are working to find ways to integrate it into the whole XPRESSIONS CAFÉ project. We do not want the upstairs to simply become a kind of childcare zone or an extended Sunday School but are looking for ways to continue and extend the XPRESSIONS work already begun.

XPRESSIONS will not necessarily run for the whole two hours; there may be a number of short events or activities, or perhaps two sessions, or it may provide an 'environment' where parents and children can go and explore together. The possibilities are many, limited only by our imagination and the resources we have to put them into practice.

XPLORE

In the church building we will run XPLORE, a zone which will offer people a chance to worship in different ways. On each table in the café there will be a 'menu' giving the times when different things will happen in the XPLORE area. These could include:

- BCP Morning Prayer
- Praise & Worship Songs
- Talk or reflection on a current topic
- Prayer for Healing
- 'Silent Time' with aids to quiet meditation
- 'Agnostics Anonymous' – no-pressure exploration
- Videos to aid worship or provoke discussion

Once again, we are limited only by imagination and resources.

We might also have a number of five-minute slots in XRESSO (perhaps on the half hour) which could include a simple song, video, 'open mike' session where anyone can say anything, and so on. This is still under consideration as we don't want to anything which will make the café unfriendly to those who don't do church.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

To be a Christian is to be a missionary – that is the consequence of Jesus' great commission, "As the Father sent me, so I send you..." (John 20:21). **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** is something which involves everyone in the benefice and we hope that as many people as possible will be able to play an active part in it. In particular we need three teams of people to work on the project:

SERVICE TEAM

The most important part of **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** is the café. By offering free food and drink in a warm and welcoming environment we will be demonstrating the good news of Jesus in a very practical way. As St Francis said, "Preach the gospel at all times; use words if you have to." Those who prepare and serve the coffee and tea will be at the front line of this mission. By showing loving service to those who come, sharing a friendly word with them and creating a warm welcome the role of the service team will be vital. If visitors feel safe and secure they are more likely to step into the other zones.

XPLORE TEAM

For some time Neil Wade, Richard and Margaret McPhee have been leading All Age Worship at Chedgrave. The experience they have gained from this means that they are ideal folk to form the nucleus of the **XPLORE** team, responsible for the events in the church as well as any 'five minute slots' in **XPRESSO**. We need others to work with them to spread the load, add to the range of skills and develop their own ministries.

XPRESSIONS TEAM

The existing **XPRESSIONS** team has done great work. Yet if they are to continue their work as part of **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** they, too, need more workers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please consider prayerfully what role you might have in the **XPRESSIONS CAFÉ** project. Contact the clergy with your offers.