

# READY STEADY GO

How to start a church based  
community project

By *Matt Bird*



The Cinnamon Network

# INTRODUCTION

**The Cinnamon Network** is trying to make it as easy as possible for the average local church to serve those people most at need in the community.

We promote an approach of being 'faith based but not faith biased' - of being motivated by the unconditional love of Jesus Christ and therefore the services are available to people of all faiths and none.

The Cinnamon Network signposts local churches to a menu of over 30 best practice church based community projects and provides lots of support around starting them including grants of £1,500-2,000.

As a leader or activist the following pathway may be helpful as you journey from where you are currently to where you want to be in the future. It may be that in your situation some steps are already complete, or unnecessary, or approached in a different order.

**Step 1.** Discuss your desire to start a church based social action project with your local churches leadership and gain their commitment and support.

**Step 2.** Read **ReadySteadyGo** then begin researching the greatest social needs in your community and reviewing the resources of your local church.

**Step 3.** Inspire people to offer to help start a social action project by showing them some of the short inspiring volunteer films **Ordinary Hero's**, or instigating a preaching or small group series on social action using a resource like **ReadySteadyGo**.

**Step 4.** If you are unsure at this step, or any step of this journey, please ask the advice of a Cinnamon Network **Ambassador**.

**Step 5.** Connect with the local **Church Network** in your area to see what social action projects others are running or about to start so that you can collaborate with them.

**Step 6.** Attend a Cinnamon Network **Network Event** in your region or in London which will connect you with other people on this same journey.

**Step 7.** Consider hosting a **Civic Engagement** event to develop greater partnership with your local council, local police and other key stakeholders.

**Step 8.** Watch some of the short **Project Films** on social action projects that address the social need you have identified in your community.

**Step 9.** Make your choice of social action project and confirm the ongoing support of your local church leadership.

**Step 10.** Talk to the organisation who provides the social action project you are interested in starting and register for their next introduction or training event.

**Step 11.** If needed access funding by downloading the application form for a Cinnamon Network **Micro-Grant of £1,500-2,000**. You may also like to consider funding for other projects via the Christian Funders Forum.

**Step 12.** Complete planning and then start the project!

# READY

A church was getting ready to launch a new community project to work with the homeless, and called a meeting with members who might be interested in volunteering, praying or making a donation. There was a strong sense of purpose; there was energy to get involved and readiness to make a start. Towards the end of the evening someone asked, "Do we know if there are any homeless people in our community?" The gathering went very quiet.

The starting place for getting involved in the community is to know the people who live there: their hearts, minds and needs.

The Bible is the story of God's endeavour to have a relationship with humanity to the point when he chose to become human and to live amongst us. One take on John chapter 1 verse 14 says that God became man and "moved into the neighbourhood" (The Message). If we want to make God's love known to our communities we must move into the neighbourhood and love and serve as Jesus Christ modelled for us.

There are many ways we can develop our understanding of the heart, mind and needs of our communities which may include:

- Listening to our neighbours;
- Becoming a regular at a local pub and engaging in the 'bar talk';
- If you have children, talking to parents at the school gate;
- Walking the streets and chatting to shop keepers and business leaders;
- Reading the local paper and listening to the local radio;
- Studying the local authorities strategic plan, their research and priorities;
- Finding and using readily available published data;
- Praying and seeking the heart and mind of God.

It is also important to understand the financial, building and people resources within your church. If you are working in a partnership of churches then those across the community, whether city, village or town.

The challenge is then how the needs of the community are met by the resources of the church.

Get READY by understanding those people who are most at need in our communities.

# STEADY

As I sat in my arm chair, I visualised what the perfect rocking horse would look like. I considered what sort of wood to use, the dimensions needed and how it could be joined together. I pondered where I would make the rocking horse and what additional tools I would need to acquire. I set myself a budget and then took a trip to the local timber merchants. I didn't write a plan down but it was very clear in my mind. After two days of creating, a rocking horse emerged from my shed that has now been the love of all three of my children.

Someone once said 'everything is created twice'. Firstly, something is conceived in the mind and often – but not always – on paper. Secondly, that something is then made physically.

A church who wants to start a new community project desires a great thing, but it must be created twice. A wise church always has a community project plan. The plan may answer some of the following questions:

- What are the needs of your community?
- What are the resources and assets of the church?
- What need, or needs, are you going to address?
- Are you going to use an best practice or a bespoke project?
- What finances are required to launch and how will they be raised?
- How will the project become financially sustainable?
- What volunteers are needed, and how are they going to be recruited, trained and managed?
- What other resources are going to be needed? Such as venue, equipment etc.
- Who are the key stakeholders and how are you going to communicate with them?
- What are your next steps?

As Christians, we are at risk of believing that since we have prayed about something, it is God's obligation to realise what we have requested. However it is clear in the Bible that it is people who pray passionately, plan thoroughly and work diligently who will succeed.

Get STEADY by developing a plan to help those people most at need in our communities.

# GO

Procrastination distracts and misdirects the church from its mission to have an even greater social impact. There is a lot of listening and talking. There is a lot of scheming and planning. There is a lot of prophesying and praying. As critical as these dynamics are, they should lead the church to action.

The author of the book of James declares "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (chapter 2, verse 17). It doesn't get much simpler than that. If your faith is real then it will demonstrate itself in action. Faith and action are partners who are both very much needed in the Church.

As you step out to launch your community project, you may want to consider the following:

- Inviting your Member of Parliament to launch your project – a photograph with them together with a simple new release is likely to get you into the local paper;
- Measuring the outcomes that matter the most – this will help you to prioritise the most important thing and also to secure future funding;
- Asking volunteers and beneficiaries to provide feedback – this will enable you to gather learning and continually improve the quality of the project;
- How you keep Jesus Christ at the centre of the project – to ensure that your inspiration, motivation and aspiration is always clear;
- Using your project to help others churches to start a community project - if done in the right way your success can be inspiration for others.

The welfare state as we have known it is history. There is significantly less public sector provision. There is increasing hardship within our communities. This is an unprecedented historical opportunity for the Church to step up and step out.

For some of the people in our communities, our lives are the only Bible they will have read and possibly the only Jesus they will have meet... so far! So let's not procrastinate.

Let's GO help those people most at need in your community.

# MATT BIRD

Matt Bird helps leaders and organisations build the relationships they need in order to achieve greater success. He has created Relationology about the art and science of relationships and how they drive life significance and business success.

He is an international keynote speaker and leadership development consultant who inspires people to believe they can and imparts insights to enable them to succeed. His programmes are renowned for creating lasting change. He is a specialist in:

- Relational leadership
- New business development
- Client relationship management
- Strategic stakeholder management
- Employee engagement

His clients have included: PwC, KPMG, Charles Russell, Manches, Lloyds Banking Group, BHP Billiton, Oxfam and Metropolitan Police.

*"Matt Bird is an excellent speaker - thought provoking, engaging and different. His sessions provided an effective platform to facilitate cross-practice area discussion in mixed groups. A genuine help in building relationships both internally and externally."*

**David Savage, Head of Property Service at Charles Russell LLP**

Matt is an award winning author, magazine columnist and popular blogger whose thought leadership is read globally by thousands of leaders each week [www.relationology.co.uk](http://www.relationology.co.uk)

*"When Malcolm Gladwell sat at his typewriter and wrote the chapter on connectors in The Tipping Point, he must have just finished a slap-up lunch with Matt Bird"*

**Campaign Magazine**

Matt is also a philanthropist who has raised millions for good causes including through his Dragon's Den style events for charity. His charitable work has received commendations and awards from successive British Governments and Prime Ministers.

*"I'm pleased to be able to give The Cinnamon Network this Big Society Award in recognition of the huge difference they have made across the country"*

**Prime Minister David Cameron**

He has co-chaired the 10 Downing Street Community Advisory Group, is a Task Force member of Department for Communities & Local Government 'Together in Service' and is a strategic partner of the Cabinet Offices 'Social Action Fund'. In his 'spare time' he is the Chair of The Cinnamon Network which helps the local church serve those people most at need in their community.

Matt lives in Wimbledon with his wife Esther and their three young children. They are part of Bless Community Church, Matt is also an honorary Elder at a black Pentecostal Church in Hackney, Oblate at a Benedictine Monastery in Alton.