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ENGAGING
THE CHURCH
FOR ADVENTURE



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INTRODUCTION

Every now and then, something of God's grace, which is overwhelming and compelling, emerges in the life and destiny of a local church that has the potential to shift the entire church community permanently into a new season of adventure, maturity and spirituality. How wonderful it is when this happens! For the essence of the church, is to create a counter-cultural environment in the family of God, where all members are deeply impacted by the reality of God's love, grace and glory. This is the kind of church that's engaged together for the adventure of obeying God and extending His Kingdom.

Despite the best efforts of many theologians and church leaders, God's favour and glory can't be manipulated or coerced. It is not ethically feasible to simply manipulate or import something in order to trigger or mimic a spiritual dynamic akin to a church-wide revival. So most of us don't get to experience the deeply transformational work of God reviving or renewing our churches. Consequently, we settle for second best, hoping that things might change, yet never believing that we will actually experience a powerful and passionate move of God in our lifetime.

It's frustrating when we hope for something, only to discover that we are stuck or unsure as to what happens next. Many churches find themselves in this place, not intentionally, but because they fail to understand why the church exists.

History is helpful, in that it alerts us to the reality of church life in Australia. The church is slowly losing its influence in mainstream culture. The UK philosopher Os Guinness highlights this trend with the metaphor of 'city skylines' where the church spires which were once the dominating architectural image, are now long overshadowed by corporate, IT and banking tower blocks.

Australians are fast becoming sceptical of anything religious. We loathe organised and institutionalised religion, yet maintain a subtle and important fascination with everything spiritual. Recently, on national television there was even a debate around 'Is it OK to tell our children there is no God?' The secularisation of our multi-ethnic nation is fast accelerating to the extent that our Christian values or roots no longer take precedence.

Something must change, something must shift, something must initiate, and something even explode, if we are to explore the future of a deeply dynamic community of faith, that lives in the context of the Kingdom of God, engaging meaningfully with its surrounding community.

The church in Australia is facing a significant transition. We are approaching an acute tipping point, that perhaps we are aware of, but we are unsure as to its implications. The tipping point is so significant that it threatens to undermine the very existence of the church in its present form.

We are seeking out 6-8 churches across the nation that are willing to fully engage in a transformational journey of prayer, teaching, discipleship, spiritual mentoring and learning for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom. This is a journey of adventure, risk and challenge! If your church is interested, you are invited to prayerfully engage with this document and express your interest and your church's leadership to consider this journey.



FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL

Most church leaders across Australia find themselves time poor with respect to their own leadership and personal learning as they benchmark their effectiveness in ministry. Consequently, the last two decades have seen church leaders manage their ministry from a primarily pragmatic base; that is, find what works, and seek to implement the idea or program.

Strategically this might make sense in terms of some short-term gains, but longer term the church might simply run out of ideas. If we don't take time to do the important cultural/contextual work of re-shaping the church within the unique context of its community, we run the risk of creating something that is ultimately irrelevant.

Across the Western world, the future shape of the church is somewhat fuzzy. There is no one method or program or strategy or 'one-size fits all' approach that is guaranteed to work. We must move from maintenance in ministry (what we refer to here as transactional ministry) into mission in ministry (transformational living).

THIS POSES A QUESTION:

Where does one go to learn the principles necessary to re-shape the church into transformational life and practice? This is not something, so far, that has been naturally modelled or mentored for us as ministers and volunteer leaders.

There is now a 'window of opportunity' for a small cohort of churches within the Fresh Hope network that are willing to commit to a two-year transformational leadership journey of discovery and discipleship to re frame the church under the Kingdom of God. This journey is for the church's leadership community and so it includes elders and key staff.

This journey involves the church examining its ministry as 'transactional activity' but then deliberately seeks to shift the entire team into strategic 'transformational living'. It's very easy for the church to become consumed with the activity of 'doing church', without seeing the necessity to be re-oriented for moving onto a transformational frontier.

IF WE COMMIT, WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

Given the nature of this journey, you should firstly prayerfully consider your church's capacity to embark upon this adventure. There is a cost to pay both financially and in terms of time and resources. Your leadership team will need to be willing to commit two years into strategic and transformational ministry.

You will also need to be willing to participate in peer learning with leaders in other churches, and at the end of this period, be willing to mentor at least one other church through the same process.



YEAR 1 - 2019

Your church team will re-examine your theology and foundations around what you believe. We will help facilitate conversations with you, to help you clarify why your church exists. This will include important work to lay foundations that are biblical, and reflective of the values you will espouse to move your church forward.

Your team (up to 8 leaders) must be willing to participate in a live-in facilitation at The Tops Conference Centre from 15-17 March 2019. This weekend is the orientation for the entire program, where we will help settle your leadership into the processes and framework that we will use during this two-year period. Note: We expect key staff and elders to attend this weekend. Should you apply, you will need to plan now for your leadership team to be away from your church on this weekend.

During this year, we will also initiate two extra visits with your leadership team to strategically map your church's history in order to ascertain if there are systemic issues impacting the future health and growth of the church. These visits are somewhat akin to an external audit, where we help you to build the best foundation for future growth.

YEAR 2 - 2020

For a significant proportion of this year there will be a focus on discipleship, and how mature followers of Jesus learn to understand the priority of the Kingdom of God. We will examine leadership practice as modelled behaviour, discuss the implications of change management, and focus principally on spiritual leadership.

During year two, church leaders (both paid and volunteer) will be asked to examine their own leadership styles with respect to how they empower others in ministry. Each leader will be asked to commit to mentor at least one other potential leader within the life of the church, and resourced to assist others in the church community.

YEAR - 2021 ???

This year builds on previous foundations to help you converge into a future frontier of community engagement. A significant portion of the year is about leadership replication and multiplication, including examining the church's goals and aspirations for community transformation and evangelism.

At the end of this year, the church will be fully aligned to shape its future under God with a unique calling that's specific to your community.

Church leaders will be expected to attend a graduating event where together, all 6-8 churches will share their learning and celebrate God's grace and goodness.



EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

If you become a successful participating church in this journey, please be aware of the following expectations:

- **YOUR COMMITMENT** to a two year journey 2019-2020.
- **YOUR LEADERSHIP** community must engage together in team learning. Wherever possible, the team should stay unchanged for the 2 years.
- **YOUR WILLINGNESS** to partner/mentor one new church at the end of the three year journey.
- **YOUR PARTICIPATION** in peer/cohort learning modules. (electronic and face to face)
- **YOUR ONGOING** costs per church. For the first year it will be \$4500 per church. This includes your attendance at the orientation at **The Tops 15-17 March 2019**. (Please note: If you have fewer than 8 leaders attending **The Tops**, the cost of year one will be adjusted accordingly. Fresh Hope network churches in NSW & ACT may be eligible to apply for an **Mission & Ministry** grant to cover the cost of this investment.)

INTERESTED?

Applications must be completed by the 31st December 2018 in order for you to qualify for selection into this cohort. Please fill out and submit your application by using the A4 insert here, or by visiting our website at missionandministry.freshhope.org.au/

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHURCH

