



Mission  
Follow-up  
Manual

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## Preface: Babies don't just cry on Tuesdays

This is adapted from a leaflet produced by Rev Daniel Cozens, Founder of TFM.

### Treating them seriously

When we have an opportunity to proclaim the good news of Jesus, we believe it is only right to give an invitation to people to respond. This could be at a Night of Colour, in a church service, or even one-to-one. Preachers, leaders and team members alike will try to speak personally with each person after such an event. At that time, we ask the person for their details and mention that someone from the local church will follow them up. We try to gain as good an idea as we can of the kind of response that they have made. The fact that they come to talk personally and give their contact details suggests that *something significant has happened to them. Therefore, churches need to be diligent in following them up.*

### What does the Bible say about follow up?

Paul set up follow-up in all the places where he preached. Read 1 Thessalonians 2.6b-12. Paul describes how he built up the new believers, mimicking the care shown by a mother and a father. The theme that stands out is love, the kind of love that is self-sacrificial. Note:

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*This is not just one visit to a new Christian and then "let them get on with it".  
You need to be prepared to stick with new believers to establish  
them in the faith.*

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After Jesus was raised from the dead, He went among his followers. He didn't "leave them to their own devices". He knew that they needed Him, and that they were full of questions and confusion — like the two on the road to Emmaus.

I hope that you are getting my main point — take follow up seriously.

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*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep".*

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This manual will help you to understand the approach that we have in place on the Walk to make sure that information is passed efficiently and confidentially to the churches. It also explains how to go about making a visit, and the help that your mission team can give to you. I want to address one final issue:

### Church Culture

While some new Christians are keen to come to church and fit in relatively easily, others find it

a totally alien experience. They may not know the words of our services, when to stand or sit, the songs we sing (new or old), etc. In some buildings the sheer weight of the door can be off-putting! In other services, we juggle two or three books effortlessly, but they can be all at sea. Remember too, some people have difficulties with reading, or other issues that they might not like to announce.

What can you do to help new people feel welcome? Be aware of these sorts of issues, especially if you are leading the service. Better still, sit with a new person and in a gentle way show them what they need to know if they get stuck. You need to be aware that some new Christians might not initially come to church. Don't give them a hard time; love them and help them to grow in their faith. If something genuine is planted there, then sooner or later they will want to meet with God's people in some setting.

Daniel H Cozens

## Our long-term aim

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

Matthew 28.18-19

Sometimes people think that evangelists are only interested in converts or “decisions”. Actually, that’s not true. Our aim — just like that of the local church — is to see people:

- Come to a personal living faith in Jesus
- Be incorporated into the life of the local Church
- Grow in their faith — that is: become a disciple

Anything with less than this aim would fall short of the Great Commission that Jesus gave to His followers. Having said that, we need to note that:

- This isn’t an easy task
- This is a task that involves the local church in taking the primary role in caring for those who have made some step of faith

## Stepping Stones

The aim of a Walk mission is to go out to where the people are with the good news of Jesus. Good follow-up is about giving them stepping stones back into the community of faith:



You may ask: but why do they need “stepping stones”? Can’t people just come to church? Some can — and do — but we underestimate just how difficult it is for some people to join us. No-one in their family may have been to church for generations. For them, it is a cross-cultural experience and can be a significant barrier.

## Making Disciples

It is said that Billy Graham noticed a distinct change in his last major series of meetings in the UK. People still “got up out of their seats” and responded in large numbers. However, where most had been definite converts in previous campaigns, far more were enquirers. What do I mean? In this context:

- Convert** = someone who has heard the message, understood it clearly, and made a definite decision to follow Jesus
- Enquirer** = someone who has heard something that has deeply moved them and so responds, but still has a lot to do to work out what it was all about

Doubtless there has always been a spectrum of responses, with people understanding more or less of the message. We must also acknowledge that — as in the parable of the Sower — some seed produces a fantastic response but on other occasions people drift away or never get going.

### Why has the nature of responses shifted?

In a word — lack of knowledge of the Christian faith. In the past, people grew up with a reasonable knowledge of Christianity through school, and often through church attendance too. The curriculum in schools has changed enormously, and input from churches and other Christian organisations has become patchier. Moreover, the number of children and young people involved regularly in church events has plummeted. As children, and also their parents, become more distant from clear teaching about the Christian faith, it is inevitable that they lack the framework in which to understand an evangelistic message.

**We should not be discouraged, however!** The fact that such people make some kind of response is significant. We need to note:

- We must not take anything for granted about their response
- We will need to work harder to help them to make sense of that response
- We will probably also have to do a lot more work to disciple them

### From Within the Congregation

This is the other side of the equation. Sometimes people make a response and the local churches say to us, “But they are already part of the congregation!” The sad thing is when everyone then assumes that they do not need any follow up.

### What is happening here?

Sometimes people have been coming to church for ages but, for some reason, the “penny hasn’t dropped”. They hear the message and — having a framework to understand — they feel that they need to do something. The simple plea we would make is this: **please follow up**

**everyone who has made some step of faith.** You always need to do so appropriately and sensitively, but you shouldn't ignore any response from within the congregation.

## Response Cards

### What do these look like?

Response cards are a simple way to record the necessary information about anyone who makes **a response** to a presentation of the gospel — whether this happens via a talk or in a one-to-one situation. They **should not** be used to record a simple contact.

**RESPONSE CARD**

Date .....

Name .....

Address .....


..... Postcode .....

Tel. No .....

Email .....

Yes, I would like a Church Leader to contact me.

Signed .....



### How are these cards used?

Firstly, these cards should **ONLY** be used where someone has made a genuine response to the gospel message.

They are **not** to be used to indicate “some kind of interest”, as this devalues the whole system. A simple note to the Local Coordinator can suffice to give details of someone who is searching.

#### Key issues:

##### Accuracy

- We noted earlier that it is sometimes difficult to assess how a person has responded. Those making follow-up should **never** assume that they **know** what has happened.
- Sometimes the conversation is brief, or the two people involved mean different things by the words used
- Nevertheless, the team member should strive to give as good an understanding as they can of the response being made. We trust that this gives those doing the follow-up a good starting point.

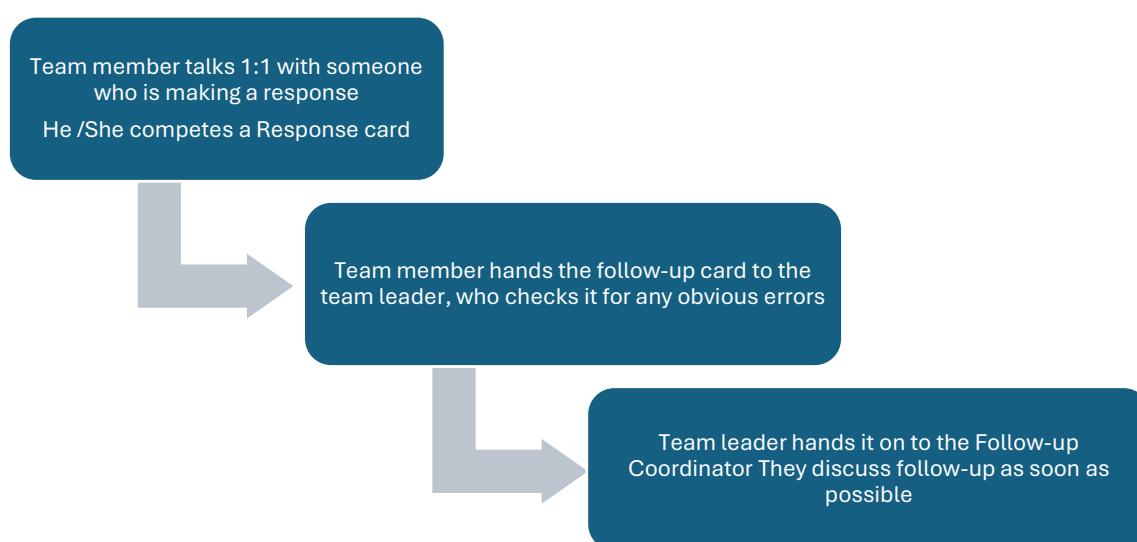


## Confidentiality

- We train team members not to leave completed cards lying around.
- Also, it is not appropriate to discuss individual responses in open meetings or with “just anyone” in the congregation

It is important, particularly in rural communities, to handle this sort of information sensitively. The procedure, set out on the next page, aims to ensure this.

## Response card procedure



### **Note:**

- Team members must not “hold on” to cards, but pass them on swiftly to their team leader
- Similarly, team leaders should aim to get the card to the Follow-up Coordinator as quickly as possible (certainly by the following day from an evening event)

Before we go on to look at what happens next (that is: the initial visit to the person who responded), we need to clear up a couple of questions that often arise.

## Which church?

If several churches are involved in the mission, to whom is the person referred? Often, this is obvious:

- If the person already has a link with one church, then we assume that this is the link to develop. For example, he / she may have come with a friend from one church

- The person may have requested follow-up by a particular church, in which case it makes sense to honour this request
- Where it is not clear, the team leader & Follow-up Coordinator should consult the participating ministers or others in church leadership who know the community well (noting the need for appropriate confidentiality).

### Who handles this if there is no appointed Follow-up Coordinator?

- We very much hope that there will be such a person!
- If there isn't anyone appointed to this role, then the team leader should consult the Local Coordinator and / or participating church leaders.

## Setting up the Initial Visit

### Safeguarding

It should already be a policy within your church, but it needs to be said that anyone doing follow-up, whether with adults, children or young people needs to have been cleared by a DBS check.

### Take the Initiative

We cannot expect the person who has responded to “make the running”. It may have taken them a lot of courage to give voice to their desire to know more about Jesus.

We recommend arranging to **meet the person within 48 hours of receiving the response card**. Why such a fast response?

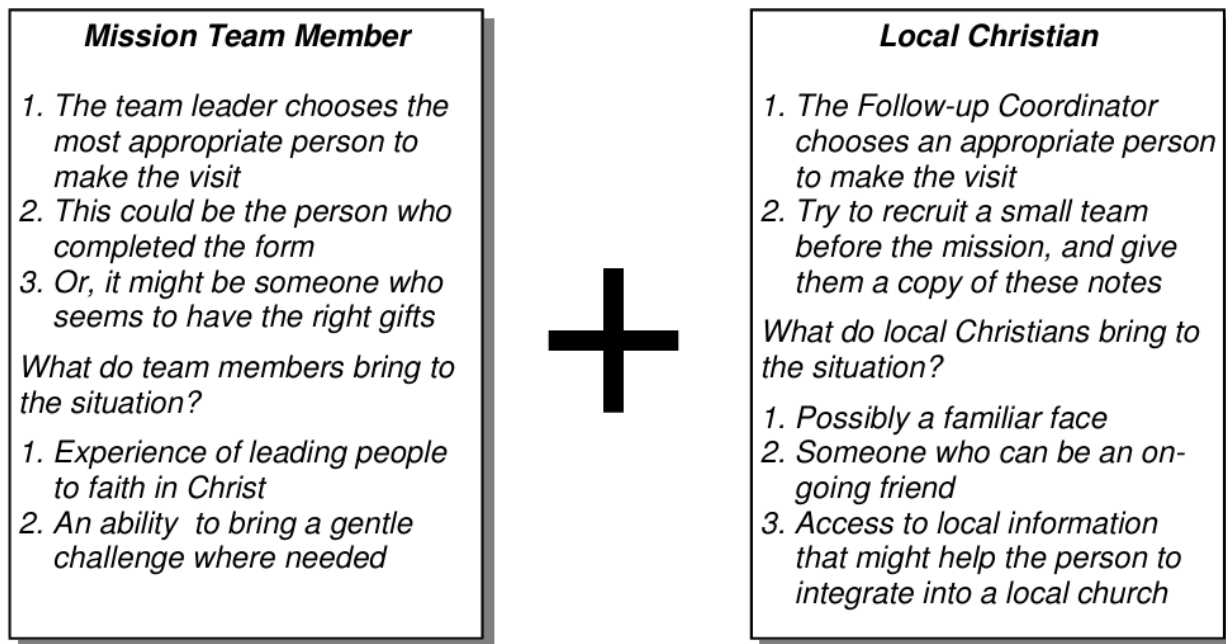
- Think of them as a “newborn”
- Those who have taken a step of faith often struggle to make sense of what they have done and need some help to do so
- They may face opposition or ridicule from family or friends, and spiritual attack too
- So, the best time to meet with them is soon — and then they should be able to recall more clearly what they felt and thought at the time that they made a response.

### Partnership

Looking through the Book of Acts, we see that Paul and others appointed local Christians to care for those who had come to faith. This is a task of the local church, and particularly those called and gifted in pastoral ministry.

On missions, therefore, we have always taken it to be the case the local church holds the primary responsibility for caring for those who have made a response to the gospel. Having said this, we have also seen that local churches often struggle with this, particularly now that people are coming with so little understanding of the Christian faith and often not clear in the response

that they have made. Therefore we propose a partnership for the initial follow-up visit, as follows:



## Setting up the Initial Visit

### Mission Team Members

There are some simple guidelines for follow-up that need to be observed:

- **Gender.** If an individual is to make a follow-up visit, then that person should be the same gender as the person being followed up. Where two people are going, at least one of them should be the same gender as the person being followed up.
- **Gifting.** On any mission team, there will be individuals whose gifts are more pastoral than evangelistic. This is an opportunity to let those gifts shine. Team leaders need to identify these people early in the week and make use of them when appropriate.
- **Personality.** Sometimes, you will know that the person to be visited is timid or has some other particular personality type. Team leaders should bear this in mind and not just send the first person to volunteer!

Mission team members leave at the end of the mission week, so they can only help with visits during their stay. This is another reason to act promptly. We hope that partnering local Christians during the mission week will give them confidence to carry on with further visits after the team has gone.

## Local Christians in Follow-up

The same comments on Gender Gifting and Personality as noted above apply.

In addition:

- **Training.** Local churches should try to recruit a small follow-up team (where there are several churches, this should be interdenominational) so that they are ready in advance of the mission. Give them a copy of these resources and chat through any questions.
- **Obvious links.** When it comes to choosing an individual to make a particular follow-up visit, you should consider any obvious ways in which the two people might relate well. For example, you might have a young mum on your team who could easily follow up a lady who has responded and who has children at the same school. Or, you might have a retired person who lives in the same street as another elderly person who has made a step of faith.

## The Initial Visit

*Remember: the first thing you do NOT do is assume that you know exactly what kind of response they have made*

### How to make a first visit

#### Make contact

- You should be given a follow up card with all the details
- Pray for the person before getting in touch
- Either 'phone to arrange a time to visit or (if the home is near) call round and arrange to visit at a convenient time (they might simply invite you in there and then)
- If they ask, "How long?" any time 30-60 minutes is enough.

#### Build rapport

- As with "helping an enquirer" it's worth taking time to put people at ease and make some personal introductions.
- Don't plunge straight in to the issue of their response

#### Helping them to take the next step

- At some point (5-10 mins) broach the subject of the event at which they made some kind of response.
- The notes on "helping an enquirer" will be helpful to you in this situation<sup>1</sup>. You want them to tell you in their own words what they have done.
- By the end of the meeting, you would hope – if they haven't done so already – to lead them to a clear commitment to Jesus Christ. You cannot, however, force this; if they are

not ready, then see if they are willing to explore Christian faith further (e.g. through Alpha or something similar).

#### Establish assurance of salvation

- Those who have come to faith need to know that God has accepted them; that this is all done by grace. We emphasise this because so many people get hung up on this point.
- You can use “the gospel train” (see below<sup>2</sup>) or the sure promises of a verse such as Revelation 3.20 or 1 John 5.13

#### Make the link to the local church and to discipleship

- This is essential. You will be leaving the area and so will be of limited help in the future (though you could still write)
- Ideally you will be to take a local Christian with you on the visit (better really than two visiting team members going)
- One of you could take them to church next Sunday
- Help them to get started with the basics of Christian life (prayer, the Bible, fellowship and sharing their faith). Don’t give too much content at this stage; keep it simple.

#### Helping an enquirer

As you listen to a person describe what happened and why they made a response, you need to make an assessment: into which of the following categories does their response fall?

Under each one, you will find some simple guidelines to help them to make the next step.

**Enquiry** = want to know more

- Respond to their questions
- Lead them through the gospel, if appropriate
- Arrange to meet them to discuss further if there remains a stumbling block
- If they accept Christ, then arrange follow up

**Acceptance** = want to become a Christian

- Go over the message again with a gospel tract and commitment prayer
- Arrange follow up

**Rededication** = want to renew their Christian commitment

- Chat through why they are at this stage, encouraging repentance if appropriate
- Speak God’s forgiveness if there is confession of sin
- Arrange follow up

**Assurance** = want to be sure that they are Christian

- Why are they unsure?
- Use “the gospel train” to bring them assurance
- Arrange follow up

**Problem** = want specific help

- Moral, psychological, occult involvement or addiction problem ... don’t get out of your depth!
- You may need help from another team member or someone with specific skills

## The aim of the first visit

You will be meeting people at varying stages of their journey of faith. Whatever stage they are at, you will hope to have:

- Taken them one step further. For some, this may mean helping them to properly make the step of becoming a Christian, for others it might be establishing assurance of salvation, etc.
- Started a friendship through which you can help them to grow in faith
- Helped them to make a link towards full membership of a local church

Obviously, it doesn't always work out as easily as this! Nevertheless, establishing a personal link gives a real opportunity to reach out to someone who is still an enquirer or to help a new Christian to grow in faith.

## Potential difficulties

What if they don't want a visit?

- Sometimes this does happen. You can't force it.
- Still pray for the person and see if natural opportunities arise to see them again.

What if I come up against a problem such as drugs, occult, etc?

- The simple guideline is: don't get out of your depth!
- The resources at the end of the manual gives some guidance on this sort of issue. In reality, this doesn't come up very often. When it does, then you need to talk with the person and ask their permission to try to get someone more appropriate to help them.
- There are confidentiality issues here in particular, so you must be very careful about such information.
- Fortunately there are many excellent specialist agencies that can help people with drug, alcohol, or other problems—your minister may well have information

What if there are problems with meeting with them at their home?

- Sometimes this does happen — for example, a child might fear ridicule from their parents, or a wife or husband might know that their partner would be very aggressive.
- You can arrange to meet in a neutral venue — a café, a church, etc. Obviously, you should make sure that the venue is appropriate.

## Nurture Courses

### Timing and which course

We recommend that you start a nurture course for new Christians within 7-10 days of the mission. Strike while the iron is hot! Not only does this help the person to begin growing in faith immediately, it also provides him / her with a peer group. It doesn't matter if it's only 2-3

people; there is still a strength in meeting together (fellowship) and learning together (discipleship). For those who are not used to “going to church”, this can be a really helpful bridge into church life.

Generally speaking we have found it best to advise churches to use the material with which they are familiar. This is just commonsense! Having said that, it may be that you want to try something different. Here are some suggestions and a list of resources.

The timing of the mission can raise a question about the selection of material. Some Walk missions do not allow sufficient time to run Alpha, Christianity Explored or similar course before we hit a major holiday — e.g. the summer or Christmas. We suggest that you choose an initial nurture course that can be run in this time frame even if that means you run a full course later.

This could rule out running a full Alpha course even though many churches may already be geared up to use that resource. We believe that Alpha official policy is to run the course only in the way that they stipulate. This is a bit of a shame for this mission, in that the first 6 sessions would work quite well as an initial follow-up!

[What shorter courses are available?](#) There loads of different courses! Ask around. Ask TFM. See what works for you.

Note you may need to consider running different courses for adults and teenagers.

## Following up children and young people

We believe that children and young people need to hear the gospel. Furthermore, we have many team members who speak of their own very real response as teenagers and some who even speak of becoming Christians at primary school.

Naturally the response of children raises a number of issues, and we will seek to explain how we try to handle these:

### Wanting to please

If there is an invitation to become a Christian given to children of, say, under 10 years old, it is quite possible that most or all would respond. This is even more likely if there is the offer of a Christian booklet or 'gift'. Therefore, those presenting the gospel in children's groups need to find ways to make sure that any personal response goes deeper than just following what others are doing. Three very simple ways to ensure this are as follows:

1. **A choice.** At the end of your talk, you can emphasise to the children that they have a choice. They can choose to stay with you and pray a prayer to "ask Jesus to be their special friend" (or whatever phrase you have used). Be sure to provide some other activity for those who don't want to do this or who are not ready.
2. **Booklets for all.** Give out booklets to everyone, whether or not they want to become a Christian. This ensures that no child "misses out".

Sadly, there isn't a great supply of up-to-date literature specifically designed for children and young people (there is however a lot of old-fashioned stuff available!). We suggest you do your own searching for what works in your particular setting, remembering that older children may prefer to be pointed to an online resource rather than any handout! Age appropriate of course.

3. **Small groups.** It's good to make the gospel presentation to all children present. However, it can be helpful to combine this with small group activities through the event. You can then direct any children who want to become Christians to talk to their group leader in a final group session after the presentation. This defuses the situation in terms of a "mass response" and means that they can talk to the person with whom they have been working. If you have a holiday club over several days, you can even give the child a booklet to take home and think about and then follow this up the next day - again, this helps to make sure that there is no pressure on them.

### Peer pressure

With teenagers, group dynamics is more likely to work in the opposite direction. So, again, response in a smaller group might be easier - or some other way to respond that can be



discreet (filling in a card, sending a text, etc). You can also find that follow up is tricky if the person's friends are beginning to give him or her a hard time. Churches who have a youth worker will find him or her invaluable in follow-up, to get alongside young people in a non-threatening way over the following weeks. Sometimes the response is real but takes time to be articulated.

## Involve the parents

Imagine that a religious group say that your child has expressed a desire to join them. Would you be suspicious? If so, then maybe you can understand the need to involve the parents, particularly with pre-teens. They may not want to get involved with church, but that's not what I mean. Here are some issues to consider that might help to allay their fears and enable you to handle this well.

### Check first with the young person.

There could be instances where the child or young person knows that their parents are very anti-Church. If this is the case and they request you not to involve them, you need to go along with that. So, let the child know if you are going to send anything to their parent(s) to see if any objection arises.

### Response letter

If you do send a letter, what might it include?

1. It would be helpful to describe the event (the parent should probably know that their child attended anyway, so they should have some idea about this)
2. Briefly introduce the church(es) involved, so that they can see you are a "normal" group of people!
3. Explain that the child expressed a desire to become a Christian, or to learn more about the Christian faith, or whatever phrase seems most appropriate. Avoid jargon or anything that would sound odd to those outside of Church life — even "made a commitment" can sound a bit alarming (a commitment to what!)
4. You could include a copy of the literature used to show that it was appropriate to the age of the person responding
5. Include contact details, to show that you are open to questions, etc

### The visit

When someone makes the visit, don't ignore the adults! The child may want or need to speak with you privately; if so, make sure that this is not in a shut room or away from others. However, if the child is happy for the parent(s) to be involved for some or all of the time, then that too could be helpful. Remember: follow-up is about building good healthy relationships as well as about discipleship. If the child begins to attend a group at church, then that may be the best place for discipleship. The home visits might be more to do with reassuring the parents and perhaps also reaching out to them with the gospel as friendship and trust grow.

### Suitable visitors

It would make sense for Sunday School teachers or those involved in other children's work in the churches to be among the visiting team. This will help the children to feel comfortable if they are new to your church groups.

### Children's nurture course

You could set aside, say, 10 minutes of each of your children's group meetings specifically to build up in the faith those who have responded (whether new to the group or not). This need not be complicated — simple teaching on prayer, the Bible and so on.

Remember: children also have a spiritual life that can be nurtured.

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### Through Faith Missions

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