



Engaging the Community:

Crossing the River



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Crossing the river

Part 1

Crossing the river mime and discussion

Ask three participants to read through the activity and practise the mime. Then they can show it to the rest of the group and use the questions at the end for discussion.

1. Two lines fairly wide apart are drawn on the floor in chalk or masking tape, to represent the banks of the river. String can also be used if you do not want to draw on the floor. Pieces of paper are used to represent stepping stones and another large piece of paper is put in the middle of the river, representing an island.
2. Two people come to the river and look for a place to cross. The current is very strong and they are both afraid to cross.
3. A third person comes along and sees their difficulty. He leads them up the river and shows them some stepping stones. He encourages them to use the stones but they are both afraid, so he agrees to carry one on his back.
4. By the time he gets to the middle of the river, the weight on his back seems very heavy, and he has become tired, so he puts the person down on the island.
5. The man goes back to get the other person on the bank who also wants to climb on his back. But the man refuses. Instead he takes her by the hand and encourages her to step on the stones herself.
6. Halfway across the river, she starts to manage alone. They both cross the river.
7. When they get to the other side, they are very happy. The person who has learned how to cross the river returns to the island to help her friend.
8. An alternative ending is that the person who has learned how to cross the river walks off leaving her friend stranded in the middle of the river.



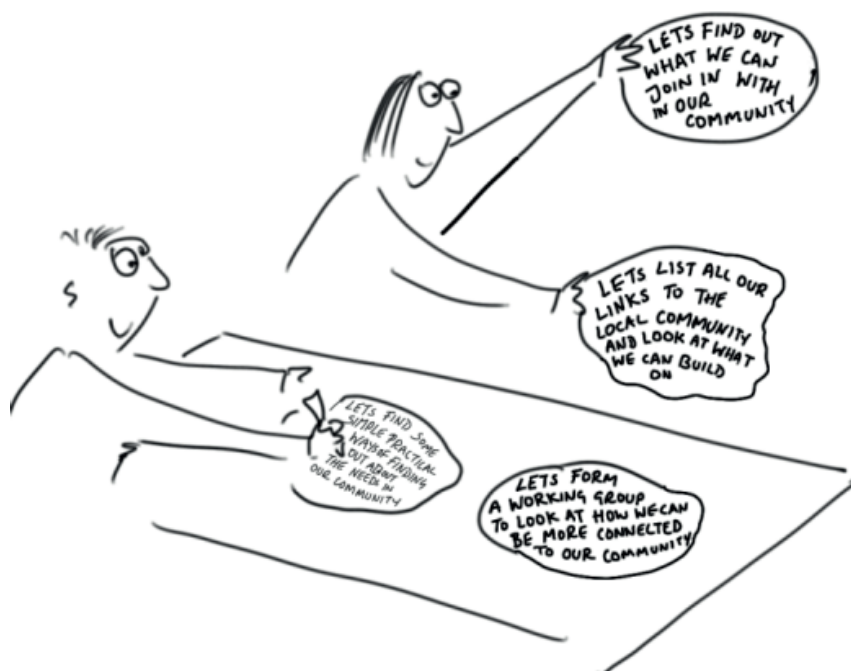
Discussion questions

1. What did you see happening in the mime?
2. What different approaches were used to help the two people across?
3. Who could each person represent in real life?
4. What does each side of the river represent?
5. In what ways do church and/or community projects build a sense of dependence?
6. What must we do to ensure that those we work with develop a sense of independence?
7. With the alternative ending – what might the man left stranded in the middle of the river represent?

Part 2

Using stepping stones to plan how we will connect with our community

1. If you have a large group, divide it into smaller groups of four or five people and give each group four A4 stepping stones (print off stepping stone)
2. Each group fill out the four stones according to the question that is asked. The question needs to be relevant to your particular context and the capacity of the church. You could ask the groups to focus on one question or a number of questions. Some examples are:
 - How can our church improve the way it engages with the local community?
 - How can our church respond to the needs of the isolated elderly?
 - How can our church relate better to young people in our community?
 - How can our church influence planning policy around the need for more social housing in our area?



3. Once each group has filled out the 4 stepping stones they then present them to the whole group, placing them across the river used for the mime.
4. Once all the stepping stones have been placed, invite the group to discuss the following questions:
 - What are the common themes?
 - What can be achieved in the short term?
(one to three months)
 - What can be achieved in the long term
(four to twelve months)
 - What aspects excite you and give you energy?
5. Give everybody three sticky labels and invite them to vote on the top three priorities they could do in the short term. We would suggest that you could then use the Hot Air Balloon exercise in Module 6 of 'Stories on the Street' to plan your project/initiative.

