

CHURCH

COFFEE

#101

Your guide to
creating a good church
coffee experience

Why Coffee?

All of us desire for our churches to be a place of incredible welcome, a place to learn and grow deeper with Jesus, and for relationships to strengthen.

Good coffee is such an important tool for the church in all of the above. It creates a familiar introduction to new people, it creates space for God to turn sermons into conversations, it enables a moment of pastoring & friendships.

Creating a good café space in your church, serving a quality product with integrity, and training team members doesn't need to be difficult. Yes, it needs resource and effort. But boy is it worth it.

Nick & Linda Castle co-founded CLO coffee in 2008 with the aims of bringing church to the streets through quality cafes. They have run 6 high street cafes, all in partnerships with local church. They source and roast ethical direct-trade coffee and now support with churches all over the UK with their coffee stations and cafes however small or large.

This guide pulls together the essential things to consider in creating a good coffee experience in your church.

Themes we cover include:

The Setting

Practical Details

Make it Missional & Intentional

What the Bible says about Hospitality

Quick Wins

THE SETTING

- **Looking good.** You don't need to invest in a full-blown café but you can make your space feel like a café area. Create a desirable coffee space so people stick around. Make it aspirational and a place you want to go to.
- **Music Playing.** Band warming up etc – Never silence unless intentional – set a scene with music. Set an expectation. Silence can make new people feel they shouldn't be there.
- **Furniture.**
 - o Soft seating? Cosy corners for more intimate chat/ministry
 - o High tables for standing and mingling?
 - o You don't need seats for everyone – but get a couple of feature sofas or quality seats that make it look a special area.
- **Coffee Counter/servery.** Make an attractive looking Servery bar. Big enough for the number of people you are serving. Do you need 2 serveries?
- **Customer Flow.**
 - o Think like a café business – and ensure a good 'customer flow' from entry to receiving drinks – is it easy to follow and understand.
 - o Do I need to pay? Make this obvious
 - o Plenty of space so no one feels 'in the way'
 - o Encourage people to keep moving with your team members
- **Awkwardness.**
 - o Ensure your cultural processes do not make anyone feel awkward.
 - o It may make sense to request people bring their own travel mugs, but if you're new and you don't do this, you need to be able to have a cup, and not feel like the newbie.
 - o Put people at ease with familiarity – keep it like the high street cafes

THE SETTING (CONT.)

- **Speed of Service.** Ensure there are no bottle necks and keep people moving. If you have to wait long, you may not bother again.
- **Lighting. Make it feel cosy if possible** – use lighting to aid this. Can you add any lamps or better still hanging pendants in the café space?
- **Signage.**
 - o Help everyone know what to do, and where everything is with good, simple signage. No big lists. Simple and short.
 - o COFFEE should be written large somewhere – everyone will know where to come.
- **Think high street café feel.** Familiarity is helpful and relatable. Get ideas and inspiration from your favourite cafes.
- **Youth Café.** Do you have a children's and youth work? Maybe they could have their own 'café space'. Youth worker meets and greets? Sweet bags or doughnuts for kids? Make it a dream welcome for kids.
- **People!** Smiley welcoming faces near the door, helping people navigate and feel like you are just waiting for them to arrive. More of this later.
- **Comfort is key.** Have the coffee area a lovely temperature, right for the season. No drafts by the door.

THE PRACTICAL DETAIL

- **Cups** – We all have a favourite mug right? So its worth using great cups at church. Show value by making it a high end experience
- **Sweet treats.** Think about what snacks you'd like to offer. Maybe fresh fruit, cake slices, quality biscuits, donuts?! How would you treat a guest to your house?
- **Do café style seating rather than a big circle.** Way less intimidating.
- **Use talking point cards** or small games to help put people at ease.
- How about **Question of the Week** to tie in with the sermon?
- **Drink – what coffee & tea are you serving?**
 - o Would you buy this drink in a cafe? If not then don't serve it. Cheap, poor quality, unethical coffee gives the wrong message.
 - o Do you know where the coffee & tea comes from? Farm to cup? Put up a poster of the coffee farmers.
- **Ethically Supply Chain.** Never, never, never source cheap coffee or tea from nameless origins. There is only one reason its cheap and its not a loss making uk company. Its our duty as consumers to ensure farmers are paid well and the sourcing is done well. It may be cheaper to you, but it's a bigger cost to farming communities.
- **Be ready ahead of time.** Any early comers and the band/speakers/team can be all sorted before the congregation arrive.

THE PRACTICAL DETAIL (CONT.)

- **Keep coffee flowing.**

- o Leave the coffee station open all the time. Parents with small kids will love you for it.

- o Or sometimes people need a bit of space for whatever reason, and instead of leaving they could sit and have a drink.

- o Don't tell people off for coming too late, lets not have people missing out or not feeling part of it.

- **Condiments.** Keep the condiments separate from the serving flasks to keep the customer flow

- **Café team should be pastoral first.** Make sure your team are pastoral people! Detail people are fabulous for planning, but once people arrive, you need 'people people'. The gift of hospitality is so valuable!

- **Be 'easy come-easy go'.** Someone may be struggling but not ready to chat and socialise. They may want to bypass this social scene and head straight for a seat. That's okay. Keep it relaxed and none-compulsory. For some people in a difficult place, this can be the hardest environment to deal with!

MAKE IT MISSIONAL AND INTENTIONAL

- **Café team roles.** Think about the roles you want the team to play. It is FAR more important to have team members chatting, guiding & putting people at ease than pouring every drink.
- **God lands messages into real life, through chat. – create room!**
- **Let the welcome time become a platform for the service ahead.** Maybe just in the sense that people can engage and lay down the week, find some peace. Or maybe intentionally tie a theme together, get people thinking about the day's theme/sermon. Raise an excitement and expectation for gathering together.
- **Coffee time can be as important as the service.** (controversial I know!) Invest time into the coffee welcome. Give it thought, it's a huge outreach and pastoral potential.
- **Grow Family.** The difference between being part of church family and 'attending' church is massively helped by the hospitality. Come home!
- **Call out people's gifting!** In this space, let people go for it! Those who pray, pray, those who evangelise share Jesus, pastoral arms to care, servant hearts to problem solve, apostles to encourage and spot what the Holy Spirit is doing and more. Think of all that Jesus can do in 20 mins of welcome time, before we even get to the service starting!

MAKE IT MISSIONAL AND INTENTIONAL (CONT.)

- **Be creative.** This creative welcome space could be useful for prayer breakouts, or time at the end for people to chat. Having a homely space encourages people to open up, to process the sermon, to think about the impact on them, to get right with God.
- **Create a full on café.** If you have a substantial café type area, could this be an event in itself? How about if people brought friends for coffee at say 9.30am before church? Or meet at the end of the service in the church cafe? Maybe the friend doesn't want to stay (yet), but this could be a fantastic first experience inside a church for someone! They could meet people and feel at ease. If they leave before the church service starts, that's okay!
- **I can't emphasise enough how important your team are.** Train them in what you want from them. They create the success in this area. Equip them with conversational starters. The coffee is just a tool for the God-experience it creates. Good people are essential.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ON DOING GOOD HOSPITALITY

- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4: 9-11

- The Islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

Acts 28:2

- Serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:13

- Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:10

QUICK WINS

- Keep milk cold by using an Airpot Server. It can stay out all morning and they are nice and large so no re-filling needed.
- Do you want teaspoons or just wooden stirrers?
- Would it be worth having a take away option?
- Do you want a donation pot or to charge? Or fundraise for different causes. Ensure it is clear for all to see.
- Packet sugars can be easier than shared pots of sugar.
- Do you need wrapped cakes or biscuits to limit waste?
- Have a dairy free option like oat milk
- Keep an eye on stock levels
- Offer gluten free/vegan snack options
- Avoid snacks with nuts in, keep it simple and safe.
- Think about storage, have the kit accessible and easy to put away.
- Have a bin out for people to use – even better, install it into your serving area.
- Paper plates? Napkin? Ceramic plates?
- Make sure there is access to water close by the serving area.
- If you're using flasks, keep the brewer out of the reach of children
- If you are using the grinder and brewer setup – why not use it on show in front of people. There is nothing like the smell of freshly ground coffee.
- Have a spray bottle and paper towels or cloth for quick clearing up
- Use tongs or plastic gloves if you're serving cakes to people.
- Keep gluten free items completely separate

IN SUMMARY

Don't let your church coffee be an after-thought.

Be intentional.

High Quality
+
People-focused team
=
good church coffee experience

Nick & Linda Castle started CLO Coffee in 2008 with one café on a high street and a desire to bring church to the high street. For over 10 years, they have operated a coffee roastery, 6 cafes, and a bookshop. Their cafes have run in different locations; city centre, shopping centre, out-of-town high street, offices district & they have run cafes in partnership with YMCA and Leeds City Council. They have partnered with churches and festivals in Pioneer Network, HTB network, Vineyard, Elim, Youthscape, CCX & many others in creating a good coffee experience.

Discover more at CLOcoffee.com/church



Listen to Nick & Linda's podcast
Experience Good Coffee for more tips
and inspiration.

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CLOcoffee.com/podcast