

# From ancient to modern worlds

**Bars and taverns** were common in Pompeii. The hireable rooms available within such establishments may have been useful meeting places for some early Christian groups. Some sociologists categorise modern environments into 'first-places' (the home), 'second-places' (the work place), and 'third-places'. This last label describes the neutral spaces in which occupants interact on an equal level, such as libraries, cafes, bars and parks. In a 2014 report, it was estimated that 26.3% of Fresh Expressions happen in such public venues.



## Example Fresh Expression



Sanctus 1, based in Manchester's Northern Quarter, is an example of a pioneer emerging church. Formed in 2001, it aimed to be a contextual Christian community that meets the needs of a post-modern city-centre population (Edson 2006). Sanctus 1 has now merged with the arts cafe Nexus, a not-for-profit, alcohol-free project connected to the Methodist Church. They hold exhibitions, gigs and alternative evening events, as well as film and games nights and life drawing sessions. Nexus offers a safe space that aims to 'facilitate grass roots organisations'. Sanctus 1 provides a chaplaincy service and organises spiritual activities, meeting mid-weekly at the cafe and gathering around 12–16 people.<sup>1</sup>

## Questions

- ▶ What similarities and differences are there between this space and the Roman bar?
- ▶ What effects might meeting in a third-space like Nexus have on a group? How might it affect the nature of the group?
- ▶ How might it affect the perception of the group among neighbours and non-Christians?
- ▶ How might these effects compare to the effects of meeting in a bar for first-century Jesus-worshippers?
- ▶ How would members of the modern church group interpret the issues of 1 Cor 14:26–33 if they were using a third-space to host activities they considered communal worship?

<sup>1</sup> Information kindly supplied by Al Lowe, minister of Sanctus 1 (June 22, 2018).

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