

TOGETHER

LOVING GOD...SERVING PEOPLE...MAKING DISCIPLES



Preparing For Mission

The **Methodist** Church 
Northampton District

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ACTS OF RANDOM KINDNESS

In the Metro newspaper there is a regular column called 'good deed feed,' which records people's thanks for a good deed done to them. Such as Abi from London, who wrote, 'A huge thank you to the blond girl on the Victoria Line on Tuesday evening who gave me a hug when I was crying, talked to me and gave me her copy of Heat to cheer me up. I'm so grateful.' Or John from Sussex, who wrote, 'Thank you to the lovely lady who sticky-taped my boot when the sole came off.'

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

A small, kind act can make the world of difference to someone. This may not be traditionally thought of as evangelism, but it certainly sows seeds in people's understanding & appreciation of others.

Try to cultivate a kind attitude. Pray for opportunities to help other people, remembering that **our actions** can bring **comfort** and **joy**. Acts of kindness don't have to be a huge deal either....just simple, random acts, showing a friend or a stranger that someone cares. If appropriate, offer a simple 'God bless' as you leave. However, **always** be prepared to give a reason for the hope you have. Then, as you leave pray for God's blessing on them.

Be a good Samaritan



So what stops us?
Are we worried about getting involved?
Of course we need to be careful, but let's not be the kind of people who cross by on the other side. The story of the Good Samaritan acts as both a reminder & a challenge to get involved.

Some mission teams have put community service in their programmes and are involved in neighbourhood clean ups. Is this kind of action something churches & individuals could be encouraged to continue well after Together has finished? In particular, have a look at Hope 2014.

"Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can." John Wesley

For stories, resources & inspiration go to:
www.hopetogether.org.uk/
www.randomactsofkindness.org/

COMMUNITY CLEAN-UPS

A practical community Project is a great way for getting people together from all walks of life, talking & building relationships & positively impacting on the community at the same time. You may be surprised at the variety of non-church people who want to get involved with something to improve the community. Here's some guidelines to help:

Research - Keen, but not sure what to do? Try casting your vision – talk to others (at church, school, clubs, community centre, or Local Authority Councillors) about wanting to do something in the local community & see what they suggest– they also may want to be involved. Also, walk about the local area & pray for inspiration. Once you have some ideas, narrow them down to one or two that are realistic, achievable & you have permission to do.

Planning – *Good planning* is important, so start by thinking & writing down all aspects of the work & speak to others for advice, to build up a complete picture of the job & elements to make it a success.

Consider:

- *task size* – something that a group of willing volunteers can complete in a specific time-period.
- *variety* – smaller teams doing a variety of tasks will give people choice in what they can do.
- *skill range: experienced vs novices* – consider the tasks & think who is confident & competent to lead on aspects of it. Break down larger tasks into smaller components & ask specific people to undertake these. Think about who will volunteer & make sure the task is appropriate for them, for example children, youth, active adults or elderly?
- *build a basic team* before the event & others can join these 'on-the-day'.
- *delegate* specific work to individuals & ensure they know what they are doing before the day itself.
- *tools & equipment* – what do you need for the job? First Aid?
- *health & safety* – think about who will do what & how & who may be impacted by it so the tasks can be completed safely. Compile a Risk Assessment (not as scary as it sounds).
- *Public Liability Insurance* – double check that what you are doing is covered by your church or Circuit policy.
- *publicity* – do you want others to help, or other people to know what you have done? Can you take photos, use social media, issue a Press Release? What about group caps, T-shirts & banners?
- *back-up*. It is worth ensuring that key people have emergency contacts as appropriate. For example, each other's mobile numbers, other 'permission givers', Community Wardens etc. Is your activity weather dependant?

Delivery – Make sure the key organiser or delegated second-in-charge can be free to 'down-tools' & respond to issues if they arise.

After-the-event – Try to give the event a 'feel-good-factor', where everyone can meet up after the event to talk about what they have been doing, perhaps over food & drink. If the event ends on a good note, then people will be open to doing it again.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The two main activities involved in good & effective community engagement are **Prayer & Listening**. Without these two key things community engagement will be fruitless.

Listening is an active process. **Use local resources** to find out about a local community. Your local government website will have a wide variety of statistics about the local Ward which compares them also to other local areas and can help to identify key needs and issues in an area.

Prayer walk and **observe** the area around the church. See what's happening.

Relationship is also key in community engagement. It will help the church find out what it needs to do/provide, but it is also important to develop trust. In the short time you are on mission, what relationships do the church already have which you could tap into?

STEPHEN CHERRY – 'Community ministry...involves not seeking to meet the needs of the poor on our own terms but envisioning a radically different future...but it only works if it leads us to discover that the other has more to offer us than we them'.

Some **questions** which might be helpful to ask as a mission team but to also help the local church to ask, discern and pray about. (Adapted from "Unreached" by Tim Chester).

Where?

- Where are the missional spaces, places and activities where people meet?
- Where do local people experience community already?
- Are there existing social networks with which you can engage or do you need to find new ways of creating community within your neighbourhood?

When?

- What are the rhythms of your neighbourhood?
- What cultural experiences and celebrations do people value?
- How might these be a trigger for the gospel?

What?

- What are the local people's fears, hopes, hurts and needs?
- Are there local justice issues which the church can get involved in?
- What are the barriers to the gospel/church attendance in your neighbourhood?



Be careful not to fall into the trap of believing one local church needs to be the answer to everything in a community. Seek to talk & co-operate with other local churches & organisations who are already at work.

COMMUNITY MEAL



Simply celebrating the community we are part of is a good enough reason for any church to show love, care & hospitality by inviting the people who live around us to a community meal. This could be a lunch or early evening meal any day of the week. It could be held either in the church or a community building whichever seems more appropriate.

When starting to plan – answering the following questions are helpful. What? Why? When? Where? Who? How? What resources are needed?

WHY? We want to make every opportunity we can to connect with people in our community, and with those who we may know but not know well. We want to bless people, welcome them and share God's love in any way we can.

WHO? We will invite our neighbours who live around the church, include families from e.g. Messy Church, Holiday Clubs, Luncheon Club members, any groups who use the premises or are in any way however loosely connected with our church. Helpers, prayers, givers, movers & shakers & everyone from our church will make it happen.

HOW? By taking a risk, a big step out in faith that we can feed all who will come. By praying hard! (A safer, but less open alternative is to ask potential guests to pre-book a place.)

By sharing a meal together and making it an informal, enjoyable, fun occasion.

By being available and even vulnerable!

By being hospitable open house, prepared to welcome, accepting and valuing each person.

By making it fun, maybe a quiz between courses. Church folks may have hidden talents you could use.

By some of our folk of different ages being hosts whose main contribution is to sit alongside, share food, be interested in, listen to & chat with the guests and in doing so share God's love, with words or without. (It might be good to think about how we would answer the question 'why are you doing this?')

Recruit a team who will prepare & cook good food, and others who will serve the food & wash up.

Give guests a warm welcome, a good joke or two might help people to relax.

By producing good quality publicity to distribute to user groups, in significant community venues e.g. dentists, libraries, toddler groups and invitation drops through letter boxes to homes around the church.

Provide a way for guests who wish to be notified of any future community events you may hold to leave their contact details.

Be pleased with however many guests you have, enjoy the experience, you will be blessed.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST? Your church or Circuit may have a mission fund? Pray through what you want to do, estimate how much it will cost and where you might find the resources. You may need to decide how many guests to cater for and trust that the food provided will feed the people who turn up. We have a generous God and we are generous followers of Jesus. Gifts & donations kindly accepted!

CREATING PRAYER STATIONS

The use of prayer stations has become much more popular in recent years. These creative areas can be extremely helpful – both for those who pray regularly and for those who are new to prayer. Creating a safe space for people to explore prayer at their own pace is to be encouraged in a variety of settings. Whether creating a single prayer station in a corner, or giving a whole room to facilitate several stations, these guidelines should help.

Think about how we can use all our senses in prayer

Make each station comfortable & attractive to look at, using:

- Fabrics (must be flame-proofed if anywhere near candles!)
- Candles – make sure they are set on trays or in candle holders.
- Lights.
- Bibles, prayer books etc.
- Sculptures: praying hands, cross etc.
- Natural material: wood, cloth, water, sand, pebbles, glass beads etc.
- Printed and laminated quotes or prayers.

At a station you might have:

- Something to read (poetry, bible passage, poster, questions to make you think)
- Something to hear (either music in background or use of headphones for a particular song)
- Something to watch (a DVD clip on a laptop, a mirror)
- Something to smell (scented candle, fresh flowers, incense)
- Something to touch (fabric, dried up leaves)
- Something to taste (bread, salt, water)
- Something to say (prayer, Bible reading) and so on

If using more than one station, give each one a different feel. Consider also using different themes, such as;

- Prayers for others (prayer requests, prayer wall, candles to light)
- Prayers for the world (map, globe, prayer requests)
- Prayer for the community (A-Z, local newspapers, photos)
- A place to leave burdens (use small stones dropped into water)
- Stillness (candles, quiet music, water feature)

The key thing is to make the area as **comfortable, attractive & creative** as possible so that people find it easier to pray. The mission shaped intro course (from which some of this material is taken) has a whole session on re-imagining worship.



DIGITAL MISSION...AN OPPORTUNITY?

The church is beginning to grasp the nettle on the issue of the Internet... many churches have websites that promote what they are about & what they do. Some of them talk about who they are & what they believe; it's worth a look to see what's out there.

As well as websites there are other tools that churches are using on the Internet. The rise of social media has opened us up to the world in ways that would have surprised us in years gone by. These provide us with opportunities to communicate Jesus & our faith. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube & the Internet phenomena of blogging have given the masses a voice. See <http://bigbible.org.uk/digilit/> for a good introduction to each.

Many people now engage with social media in some way...It has become an opportunity!

Practical hints

Quality matters! If you are creating your own site or blog it will not attract people unless it is of a high quality.

What's your message? What are the fundamental things you want to say...how do you want to say them?

Who do you want to connect with? Who is your audience? Young people? Those in their twenties and thirties...

What's the best tool? Each tool on the Internet does something different...explore each of them and see what they offer.

Staying safe! When we think about the Internet we probably also think about 'safety'! The church now offers guidance & policies about staying safe on line as do other organisations – go to the Methodist Church website & search for 'internet safety' & it will provide you with a downloadable document. There are also other help places to go if you want to discover more about this.



Always remember to act with integrity. What you write can be read by many people. Consider how your words might impact others & therefore seek only to do good.

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/>

<http://www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/> (For children, young people, parents, carers & teachers)

A couple of helpful places to look regarding mission on the Internet

<http://www.rejesus.co.uk/> <http://d-church.blogspot.co.uk/>

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/deepening-discipleship/evangelism>

GIVING AN EVANGELISTIC TALK

I remember once in the middle of my Local Preacher's training being told by someone that I was a good story-teller. I laughed because I thought, well that can be taken two ways; either I was a liar or I could tell a story. I think they meant it the latter of the two ways. The longer I go on in ministry the more I like telling stories, **stories with a point** to them.

So, if I were looking to do an evangelistic talk, I would start from one of two places; find a bible text or passage that you feel God is wanting you to share from or start with a story. It does not have to be a long one but a spring-board into what you feel directed to say.

The gospel is **GOOD News**, so telling it should be full of life and hope. The bible is full of stories where God meets with human beings; these encounters say something about who God is and the desires and challenges of being human. In an evangelistic talk you need to make people aware of those encounters today & the way God can enter a life and give the resources needed to face life's challenges & fully enjoy its celebration.

At the core of any talk about God is the truth that God is love & all His actions demonstrate that core nature of God. His greatest demonstration of love was to send his Son, Jesus, to be one of us. The concepts of the humanity & divinity of Jesus are not to be argued here because we need to keep it uncomplicated. Look at how Jesus lived ready to respond to any human need that presented itself to him, by way of illness, hunger, infirmity, distraught parents, embarrassment. The same Jesus meets us where we are, and is always ready to respond.

Jesus spoke in stories. Make sure the story makes the point you set out to make. I remember a well-respected Evangelist telling a long story to his peers & at the end he had to admit it hadn't said what he was trying to say. You can make your own stories up, use ones that you found helpful, use a relevant part of your own story.

In the talk keep reminding people that they are important to God, that God wants to speak to them if only they will listen. Remember that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction, but we sow the seeds.

Be intentional in your delivery...keep to the one main point you want to deliver, and be intentional in your ending.

In summary make sure it is good news that you are sharing. Keep to the one major point; the Holy Spirit can then apply it to different lives. Be clear & intentional in concluding.



Use story to tell His Story

DOOR TO DOOR WORK / COMMUNITY AUDIT

We may feel apprehensive or even scared stiff at the thought of doing this, so much so that our initial reaction is to say 'no'! The reality is often the opposite of what we expect. Most people are polite, will give you a hearing and be happy to talk about their community and how they see the role of the church, or not. Some have been waiting for someone to talk to or to ask a question; some will tell you about their experience of church when they were young and how or why they moved away from church or God. Younger people may be harder to engage but a younger person as one of the visiting duo would be helpful. There will be the odd welcoming Christian, and it's good to share time with them, maybe have a cup of tea and encourage one another.

Very few people will be antagonistic or negative or not want to engage at all. But if we are prepared for this we can still smile and be gentle, listen and be interested in what they have to say, or, if not say, 'that's fine' and politely withdraw with no harm done.

Practical Guidelines:

- Plan the questions/survey carefully. Have no more than five or six questions. Know what your aim is.
- Visit in twos; while one talks the other can be praying.
- Pray together before you go and as you go. As you approach the door and wait for it to open, pray for the folks in this house.
- Don't get in people's face as they open the door....stand back (we can learn from JWs and salesmen!).
- Work out how you want to introduce yourself and the reason you are there.
- Clearly identify which church you represent.
- If you don't know the answer to a question it is better to say so.
- Avoid getting into an argument.
- If there is something you really like in the garden tell them (if appropriate).
- Talk to the friendly dogs and watch out for the unfriendly ones!
- Always thank the person who has taken time to talk to you.
- Enjoy it!

Remember to ***smile*** and be ***pleasant***



We can **trust** God to go with us and to help us respond in a good way to whatever comes. The most exciting thing is that we don't know who we will meet or what opportunities we may have to plant a tiny seed and to share something of God's love.

We are intentionally **seeking to listen** to people, and to be interested in them, because God is interested in them too. There is a bonus; God blesses us as we do it.

A GENUINE WELCOME FOR ALL?

It is often commented that the church is willing to welcome anyone as long as it does not upset the *status quo*. Communities are often found willing to accept individuals as long as their normality is not disrupted. Experience suggests that, when any community is added to or depleted in some way, the dynamics can do nothing but change.

1. Think of an occasion when you were made to feel really welcome/unwelcome? How did it feel? What makes the difference between good and bad hospitality? Does it affect a person's behaviour? Why?
2. When, as a local Christian community, did you last properly consider your welcome?
3. How much would your local church be willing to change for the sake of offering a good welcome?
4. What would a genuine welcome look like to people with differing abilities e.g. sight & hearing impairments, learning disabilities & those with mental health ill-health?



What does the Bible teach about the importance of welcome or who should be welcomed? What should our attitude as Christians be to welcoming people?¹

The traditional Irish greeting **Céad Míle Fáilte** literally means 100,000 welcomes. What does the local church always embody such a warm welcome? Do we really welcome people through our words and actions? Is it really that important anyway?

The Revd Simon Sutcliffe, Pioneer Minister in the Methodist Church, notes that a '*guest host relationship depends on invite & acceptance which, in turn leads to an expectation of behaviour.*' The **context** of the invitation often affects the way in which a person responds & subsequently behaves. Imagine attending your local church for the first time.

5. What emotions are evoked as you become a guest in a new context?
6. What would a new guest experience in your local church? What 'rituals' might be perplexing?

The Revd Dr. Jane Leach, Methodist Presbyterian in principle of Wesley House, Cambridge writes, *Perhaps it is the art of being guessed that Christians in the West most need to be captured....If we are to experience holiness in encounter with those who are different from us and participate in the kind of community to which God is calling the whole of humanity.*²

7. If we are to make people feel truly welcomed in our local churches - what should be kept/changed/adapted?
8. Write a ten-point guide on the do's and don'ts of a good and genuine welcome.

Further reading & helpful websites;

Gilchrist, A (2004) *Creating a culture of welcome in the local Church* (Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd.)

www.churchleaders.com www.evangelismcoach.org www.methodist.org.uk

¹ Consider Isaiah 58: 9-12, Genesis 18:1-8, Matthew 5:1-12, John 2:1-12, Matthew 28:16-20, Philippians 2: 1-13

² Walking the story: In the steps of Saints and Pilgrims, (Inspire, 2007) Pg.93

HOME VISITING

There is **no set format** for visiting people in their own homes.
These are simply some guidelines and suggestions for good practice.

- Consider 'how well do you **know** the person you are going to visit?'
- You need to know **why** you are going.
 - o Are you going because there is a problem?
 - o Or are you going to get know the person better?
 - o Or are you going to ask about something else?
- It is usually best to make **contact** before you go to find out if it is convenient.
 - o As a rule people don't want you to call before 10am.
 - o It is best to avoid meal times.
- Have some idea about the amount of **time** you are prepared to give each visit.
 - o Be prepared to adjust this time according to the person's needs.
 - o Even if you have only a short time to visit, relax back into your chair, rather than perching as if you are about to leave.
- Be guided by them as to **how** the conversation develops.
 - o If it is someone who is no longer able to go to worship, they may be interested to know how things are going.
 - o For example, what theme is being followed, what is going on during the week?
 - o **Don't gossip!**
- Be prepared to **pray** or share a passage from the Bible with them.
 - o Always ask if there is something they want to pray for.
 - o **Don't** assume that you know what they want prayer for.
 - o The Methodist prayer manual is a good resource.

Re-acquaint yourself with safeguarding principles as outlined at the back of this training resource.

Happy visiting



HOW TO AVOID JARGON

Ever been in a conversation when people used words & concepts that you just didn't understand? Frustrating, isn't it?

When talking about our faith it is important to not slip into the bad habit of using Christian jargon. That in itself is difficult, as there are so many words that we use in our prayers & hymns that mean a lot to us but would be confusing to someone who had not heard them before.

In his Grove Booklet, Laurence Singlehurst suggests how we might express some Christian terms in a culturally comprehensible way;

Sin	?	Selfishness
Repent	?	Change your values
Love	?	Sacrificial love
Saved	?	Surrender
Conversion	?	New start, seeing the world in a different way
Disciple	?	Follower, apprentice
Lordship	?	Surrender, give up rights
Worship	?	Honour, fan
Born again	?	New start
Baptism in the Holy Spirit	?	Power to love
Hell	?	lost opportunity.
Kingdom	?	God's rule
Evangelism	?	Sharing unconditional love
Give your heart to God	?	Commitment
Give your life to Christ	?	Jesus at the centre.
Crucified with Christ	?	Dead to self, giving up your own agenda
Redemption	?	Rescue
Church	?	God's people
Election	?	Chosen

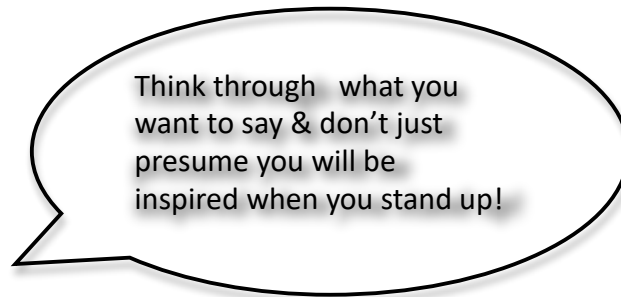
Interestingly, Laurence Singlehurst suggests that the words **Cross & Forgiveness** are still okay to use (although they still need explaining).

Think about what you say from the perspective of the person who is hearing it. Remember that Jesus used everyday language, stories & expressions to share some amazingly deep concepts.



Extra reading - Grove Booklet. *The Gospel Message Today*. Language that connects in communicating the gospel. Evangelism series 100.

HOW TO GIVE AN EPILOGUE OR SHORT TALK



A few pointers for good practice;

Be aware of your **audience** and try to tune the epilogue to what might interest them. So for example, you may want to ask yourself what your audience have been doing through the day? Then consider what you can say to link with that.



Be aware of **time** – if you have been allocated 5 minutes, then keep to time and do not over-run. Make sure you know exactly how you are going to end in order to avoid drifting on after you have really said all you need to say.

If you are going to use any **technology**, particularly media clips or music, make sure everything is set up and working beforehand. Any clips should be of a high quality or they are probably not worth using. Whilst technology can be a great asset to an epilogue or short talk, sometimes a simple story can have more power. If using PowerPoint, don't be 'tied' to your slides as it will ruin your flow.

Consider using some of your own **story** or life experiences. However, avoid trying to give too much information in a short space of time.

Try to find illustrations that will really help to make your point. Avoid using illustrations, jokes & stories that have been used many times before unless you are fairly sure they will be new to your audience.

It might be helpful to use others to help with your presentation. For example, is there someone you can interview? Is there someone who might have a story to illustrate what you are sharing?

It's okay to use notes, but if you can, try not to be tied to them. Make sure you make eye contact and your voice can be heard (louder is better). Remember to plant your feet, don't sway and smile.

Most importantly, remember to **pray** and **prepare** well. Just because it's a short talk does not mean any less preparation should be undertaken.

HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY

Story is a significant element to the Christian life and God's story is told in and through your life by your **words** and **actions**.



*We **ALL** have a story to tell; it's special and it's uniquely yours.
No one has a story like yours.*

Your story is the message that God has planted in you when you began your journey on this earth; it's a message of ups and downs, it's one of discovery and challenge and your story has been meshed together with God's story and what that means for you, right here and now. As followers of Jesus we are now messengers of God's story as it is lived out in our lives, and so that involves words...it's not about knowing the right answers or about being perfect; if we waited for that we would never say or do anything. God uses who we are, it's as mega and simple as that.

So as you prepare your story, consider these things...

- What your life was like before you became a follower of Jesus?
- How did you realise you needed Jesus?
- How did you commit your life to Jesus?
- What difference has being a follower of Jesus made in your life?

It really doesn't matter if you can't name a time & place when you came to faith....most people speak of their story being like a journey of discovery.

Helpful Hints

1. Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.
2. Practise this over and over until it becomes natural.
3. Keep it short - 3 minutes. At that length, it's easily something you can put into a conversation without it becoming a monologue.

An example: Paul's testimony

Before (Acts 22:1-5)

How (Acts 22:6-11)

After (Acts 22:12-21)

Practise writing your story...and then pray for opportunities to share it with others.

For more information, look at this on the Methodist Church website;
<http://tinyurl.com/khz8wv6>



Pass it on

LEADING TEAM DEVOTIONS

As a team you will grow together & work well together if you spend quality time with one another in prayer & fellowship. You may well be asked to lead team devotions one morning. Some of you may have lots of experience in this, whilst for others this will be new. First of all, do not be afraid to ask for help or guidance from other team members.

As a general rule, try to include prayer, a Bible reading & some time to share. You can also include a story, meditation or reflection. There are some excellent devotional books & many helpful websites. If you have musicians in your team you may wish to use their gifts, if not use recorded music.



Some ideas

- The Northumbrian Community have a wonderful liturgy for Morning Prayer which includes Bible readings & a meditation.¹
- Put everyone's name on a piece of paper & each pick one & promise to pray for that person throughout the day.
- Pray for the other Together teams.
- Write down some prayer requests & send them to the other Together teams so that they can remember you in their team devotions.
- Use silence creatively; space to think, reflect & pray can be just what is needed in the midst of a busy week.
- Read a Psalm together & then turn that into prayers of praise.
- Pray for the person sitting beside you (ask for requests) – go around the circle so everyone has been prayed for.
- Consider using the Methodist Prayer For The Day.² This site also has some creative suggestions for praying with one another.

It would be great if someone could collate any '**good news**' stories and testimonies. We will use these after Together to encourage each other.

There is always something to be grateful for so include a time of thanksgiving, either as prayers or as a time of sharing.

Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Rejoice always, pray constantly, **give thanks** in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

¹ <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/morning-prayer/>

² <http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/prayer-of-the-day>

LESSONS FOR SHARING FAITH

So, you finally find yourself in conversation with someone and, after sharing part of your story, they start to ask questions about your faith. Rather than give a set formula for faith sharing, you might find it helpful to consider some basic principles and hold to them in your on-going relationships. These next seven points were taught by Steve Hollinghurst at a recent training day.

1. People increasingly come to faith through experience rather than changing thinking
2. People want to grow spiritually and will take support in this seriously.
3. Sharing faith is welcomed. Telling others that what they share is wrong simply closes the conversation.
4. People aren't interested if Christianity is true but if it is inspiring and life changing.
5. With the Internet everything is public - be consistent.
6. We need to know how we will handle issues of gender, the environment, evil, other faiths.
7. Avoid Christian language like sin, salvation, redemption etc. People don't understand it or misunderstand it. But we still need to talk about them but with different words.

Keeping these principles in mind will not suddenly enable you to answer every question! But they will help you to encourage others in their journey of faith. In themselves they are not enough – remember to pray persistently for those who are spiritually seeking.



Most Important Point

Remember it is God who transforms people, not us!

ARE YOU REALLY LISTENING?

In our noisy, distracting world, many people long to be heard. Really listening to another person's story can be a profound and beautiful gift. The ability to listen without judgment, or even without offering solutions, is something we should all learn to do.

Active listening v passive listening

Open questions are any questions not requiring a yes/no answer. Often starting with the words - How? What? Where? Who? Why?

Some examples of good, open questions;

"Do you mean that...?"; "It sounds like to me as if you are saying..."; "I wonder if..."; "Could it be that..."; "I'm rather confused about..."; "Could you tell me more...":

"What do you think about...?"; "What do you plan to do?"; "Give me an example...";

"What would you like to do...?"; "Have you come to any conclusions?";

"What do you think is standing in your way?"; "What are you thinking now?";

"Tell me more about..."; "How do you feel about...?"; "What does that mean to you?" "How you feel you could deal with that?"



Offering your full attention to another person can create a safe place for them to share at a deeper level.

One great way to show love like **Jesus** is simply to **listen** to people.

It is amazing how a **listening** ear can show people you care.

Who can you **listen** to?

Messy Church

Messy church is a fresh expression of church which was launched in 2004 for those who are on the outside or fringes of the Christian community.

Life for many people is Messy. Messy in terms of busy lifestyles, time is at a premium, messy as many children no longer live with both parents, and therefore travel between different family units at weekends. Sport, leisure, and social opportunities have changed the very nature of what weekends were. Sundays especially have become just another day to many, especially if employment or family commitments determine their day off is at another time, to what we may know as the traditional weekend.

<p>You can read up about some of the principles of messy church here http://www.messychurch.org.uk/</p>
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What is required for a Messy church project?

- A Budget – Messy church runs on donations only.
- A team of volunteers – minimum of 10.
- A Publicity guru.
- Games, art and craft and food.

What does a typical Messy church session look like?

On arrival - - Families arrive and are welcomed

- Registration and name badges given to all.
- Refreshments of drinks hot and cold are available.
- A selection of activities for families to play with.

Introductions - Team leader welcomes all and introduces themselves and the theme for this session.

- Craft tables are introduced and families choose which ones their children would like to engage with.
- There should always be a pre-school table set up with toys/equipment suitable to them.
- Each table has a leader who explains how the activity fits into the bible theme.

Worship - This would be best conducted in a different space to that of craft.

- Make best use of space and don't forget to decorate the room.
- Invites children to show what they have made, and say what the best bit has been etc.
- Worship should last no longer than 10 minutes ending with the Messy church grace with actions.

Meal - this can be a formal two courses, or a snack.

Points to reflect upon:

- Will the church provide funding should donations not meet expenditure?
- Could this lead to a regular event?

<p>Messy church is not there as a stepping-stone into Sunday services. It can be church in its own right.</p>

PRAYER-WALKING



Prayer walking isn't hard to do...at its simplest it's praying as you walk around an area. Some people feel that being close to a location helps them to be much more focused on the needs of the locality and then to pray with more insight.

Praying On-Site with Insight

Of course you can pray as you walk on your own around any area. But there is an effectiveness in working in teams – perhaps groups of two or three. Each group could go to a different area or prayer walk a different few streets. Think strategically about where it might be good to pray, so, as well as praying in residential areas, consider praying outside the schools, businesses and shops. Think about where people congregate, where young people hang out etc.

- Pray for the people who might be occupying or passing through these particular places.
- Think about the various activities that occur in and around these places and offer these in prayer to God too.
- Consider – 'how do you see the heart of God for this place?'

Prayer walking is usually a low-profile affair. **Be on the scene without making a scene!**

Prayers can be both in silence and audible (but remember to keep your eyes open if you are walking!). When praying aloud, use a quiet, conversational voice. If you are praying in silence it may be helpful to let your prayer partners know what you are praying about, so they can join with you. Be attentive to the Holy Spirit and ask to be led in your prayers to pray about specific needs. Prayer is about listening as well as making our requests.

If anyone does ask what you are doing be ready to give an answer, **'we are praying for God's blessing on this neighbourhood'**. Be prepared to ask local people what the community needs.

Pray for God's blessing to be upon everyone you see and the people who live and work in the areas you are walking. Pray for God's will to be done in the community "as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Afterwards, gather to share your prayers, observations and experiences. What did you learn about the neighbourhood? How was God present in this experience? If you are leading a group, gently encourage those in your group to pray – again either out loud or in silence.

As a mission team this is something you could **encourage** the rest of the church community to help with & perhaps even to continue with well after the mission week.

PRAYING FOR THE SICK

We may not all have the gift of healing, but we are all called to have a care and concern for the sick. Offering prayer to those who are sick or in ill-health can be a wonderful gift.



These guidelines are suggestions and not a formula to be followed;

- Be brave. **Very few people will refuse the offer of prayer!** Often it's more about our reluctance to offer prayer than an individual's desire not to be prayed for.
- Always ask permission to pray and always make sure they can easily refuse.
- Have a genuine concern for the individual person and their needs. They are not guinea pigs for us to practise with.
- It's good to pray in twos or threes. If possible avoid situations on your own.
- Please be sensitive to the needs of each individual. Their greatest need may be to be reassured that God is with them and will comfort them as they go through difficult situations in life.
- You may like to offer the opportunity to be anointed with oil. Make a simple cross with a small amount of oil on the forehead. Normal olive oil or unfragranced oil is fine...it's not special or magic in any way.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit to lead you as you pray, both when you pray with an individual in person and later when you continue to pray on your own.
- Always keep confidences. If someone shares with you a need for prayer then that remains between you and them and God.

*Regardless of what is being prayed for, and whether anything seems to have happened or not, **ALWAYS** assure people that they are **loved** by God.*

With regards to the laying on of hands, always ask permission and explain what you are doing. So for example, you might like to say, "while I pray for you is it okay if I just rest my hand on your shoulder?". Hands should only be laid on a shoulder, back, hand or in some circumstance on the head. NEVER lay hands on other parts of the body!

It is a good principle always to pray for **wholeness**. Whilst some people are not physically healed, we can be assured that God wants us all to be whole. Admit that we do not know why some people are healed and others are not. Do not give platitudes, false hope or condemnation.

NEVER 'cast out' demons. We have guidelines that must be followed in this area and an experienced, ordained minister should always be present. If you are in any doubt talk to your team leader. NEVER embark on 'deep' late night prayer sessions for someone as they can lead to tired, over-emotional responses.

For a short but helpful exploration of prayer, look on the Methodist Church website, <http://tinyurl.com/k7mj9f8>

READING THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand. But as for me, I always notice that the passages of Scripture which trouble me most are those that I do understand. Mark Twain

One of the strongest means of grace that God uses to communicate our special message is through the gift of Scripture. It is a joy to learn to hear God speak to us as we learn different ways of freshly engaging with Scripture and develop disciplined ways of using it to give us the fullness of life promised for us, our communities and our world.

Here are two reflective methods, which creates a safe, non-judgmental space for sharing & deeply listening to God & one another. As we listen to one another so we learn to hear more clearly the ways God speaks to us.

The African Bible Study

1. Start with a prayer. Then one person reads the passage slowly.
2. Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention. (1 minute).
3. Each person repeats aloud the word or phrase around the group (3 – 5 minutes – no discussion). Notice how the passage speaks differently to different people.
4. Another person reads the passage again, preferably someone of different gender, or using a different translation, to change the way the passage is heard.
5. Each person identifies how the passage is touching their life at the moment. (1 minute).
6. Each shares briefly & everyone listens carefully. (5 – 20 minutes).
7. The passage is read a third time (another reader & translation if possible).
8. Each person thinks of an image, word, reflection & names or writes this down for themselves. "From what I've heard & shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?" (5 minutes).
9. Each person shares their answer. (5-10 minutes, NO DISCUSSION).
10. Everyone prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in the other steps (5 minutes). Close with the Lord's Prayer.¹



Head, Heart, Hand Bible Study

1. Read a short bible passage through once, thinking about the facts of the passage.
2. Read the passage again, thinking about how the characters feel.
3. Read the passage again, thinking about what God is asking you to do in response.

¹This & other methods for reading scripture can be found on the Methodist Church website at; <http://tinyurl.com/kwo4dep>

RESPONDING TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

*Who made God? Why is there suffering?
Isn't it enough just to live a good life? Is there really a hell?
Do all religions lead to God? What about science? Is the Bible
accurate? What about reincarnation? Why does the Church still not
have equality...for women? For homosexuals?
Why are there so many starving people in the world?*



These & many other questions are incredibly difficult to answer. It's important to consider our responses & to think about how we respond. There are books & websites that give their answers & some of them can be helpful. However, rather than giving a list of answers here, I encourage you to read the bible, talk to friends & consider for yourself how you would respond if someone asked you one of the above questions.

But in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15

In the original language of the New Testament (Greek), the word translated here as “defence” is *apologia* from which we get the term “apologetics,” which means providing a reasoned defence for what we believe. Try to discern when people genuinely want to know the answer to a difficult question and when they are using that as a smokescreen because they don't want to talk about faith or God.

Regardless of the questions, here are some **principles** to help you respond.

LOVE – always respond in love. Simply trying to win an argument is never a good idea. Consider what you can do to present yourselves in a way that is as Christ-like as possible.

PATIENCE – take time to listen to people. Consider what the question behind the question might be. For example, the question ‘Is there really a hell?’ might be asked, but what the person really wants to know is ‘What happened to my granddad when he died?’ So please try to be sensitive to the deeper needs of others.

HUMILITY – admit if you do not know the answer. Admit it if your answer seems inadequate. At times, admit it if there is a chance you may be wrong. If you feel the conversation is worth pursuing, admit you don't know the answer but offer to find out or introduce someone who knows.

DON'T...judge, offer pat solutions, or hijack the conversation with your own agenda.
DO...show respect, listen well, pray & keep confidences.

People don't come to faith in God because a believer can answer all their questions! More often it is a believer's lifestyle & attitudes that demonstrate God's love.

SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES

Guidelines for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults and those who work with them.

These guidelines aim to:

- Safeguard the welfare and care of children, young people and vulnerable adults when they are the responsibility of **TOGETHER** events.
- Protect leaders and those who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Provide guidance to ensure safe, good practice in work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Principles of good practice:

- Wherever possible work in twos: you should never be more than a few seconds from another authorised worker.
- Plan activities that are appropriate and inclusive.
- Before you criticise behaviour, consider what might be happening in other parts of the person's life which may be causing it.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour e.g. racism, sexism, bullying, ridiculing, rejection and mockery. Never use abusive language or behaviour yourself.
- Respect personal privacy.
- Be aware and alert. Take seriously what you see, hear or feel. If you are concerned, talk to your team leader.
- Remember that you are responsible for your actions, and that the child's, young person's and vulnerable adult's welfare is paramount.
- Remember your role as children, young people and vulnerable adults' Advocate and be ready to listen to a person sensitively.
- Ensure you have read and understood the 'quick reference guide' and that you carry it with you at all times.

WHAT YOU MUST DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE IS OCCURRING OR IF A DISCLOSURE IS MADE TO YOU:

Follow the guidelines on the 'quick reference guide'. Tell your group leader as soon as possible after the incident/conversation.

WHAT YOU MUST NOT DO:

- Do not ignore your suspicions.
- Do not do nothing.
- Do not investigate matters yourself; you may clarify what has happened but do not ask other questions.

For more information, go to <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-officeholders/safeguarding>

STREET PRAYER INITIATIVE

'PRAYER DOWN OUR STREET' 'PRAYERWORKS'

WHAT?

We offer to pray for those people in our community who would like us to do this. It is good if possible to do this in partnership with other churches in the area.

WHY?

So that people in our community know that the church is interested in them, cares about them, believes in prayer and is there to offer their support when times are tough.

HOW?

Recruit a small group or one person to coordinate the initiative.

Make the offer by letter delivered by hand to each home, street by street. Participating churches ask their members to deliver letters to specific streets. Rather than a blank envelope or a letter addressed 'to the occupier' addressing the envelope 'To our neighbours, from the churches in?' may be more positive.

Offer a variety of ways for people to respond e.g.

- Via card provided with letter to be returned by hand delivery or post to a specified church.
- Via email to a specified church or email address.
- Via phone, by text or voice message to a specified telephone number.

Requests received by each church may be passed to the other churches involved. Work out the best way for your church to respond to prayer requests, e.g. in regular prayer meetings. Be aware of confidentiality issues.

Costs for stationery/printing may be shared between churches.

Cell/Small groups may be willing to fill envelopes and deliver to a number of streets. Follow Up (if requested):

- Reply card may include preference for follow up (Name of church) if required.
- Initial visit may be done by a Minister possibly with another person and assessed regarding future needs.

Praying for specific needs in your community

For ideas and resource go to:

<http://www.neighbourhoodprayer.net/>

UNDERSTANDING FAITH JOURNEYS

We are all different and the way we discover who Jesus is and what that means for our lives can begin in a variety of uniquely diverse ways. That said, there are four helpful dimensions by which people connect with the Gospel. These do not necessarily come in this order... in fact they can come in any order! But they are all 'ways in' to a life of faith

Blessing - Many people unconnected with the church are spiritually seeking and have all kinds of experiences in which God meets them, whether in their physical or emotional needs, naturally or supernaturally. Through these experiences of the Holy Spirit (ordinary and extraordinary encounters with Jesus), people can respond to God's love with no real beliefs in place and without belonging to a group of believers. However, through this experience something of the reality of God meets their life in a tangible way and enriches or blesses them. From these moments, as the reality of God breaks into their lives, the opportunity to respond is made, and people can start to seek a relationship with Jesus.

Belief - Some people through the centuries have come to believe in the truth about Jesus Christ before they actually know it through a relationship with Him. Whether reading the Bible or hearing a message (testimony, sermon or article) they have engaged with who Jesus is as God's Son and started to believe in Him.

Behaviour - Some connect not through words but through observing, of joining in with, the actions of Christians. Their service in the world draws a curiosity that leads to inquiry. Love of God found in outward action often draws more attention to the Gospel than words. Whether acts of kindness, justice, service or stewardship of the earth, doing things that are often counter cultural (i.e. not being selfish but caring for others) creates the opportunity to see Christ at work in the world today.

Belonging - Many people find Jesus through a friend or a circle of friends to which they belong first and as relationships strengthen, so the individual is drawn closer to Jesus and begins to seek Him for themselves. Though this might sound very similar to the above observation of behaviour, it is much more relationally based and one might say it is through the faith of the group or individual, that acts as a sort of surrogate to give new life in Christ to them. For many folk who come to faith in Jesus this way it is important to recognise that their belief, behaviour and/or experience of Christian faith may often not form part of their value system initially but they do like belonging to a group of people or church who care about them.

Entering the Kingdom, therefore, has no defined territory or route. We all start from different places. Everyone's journey is different.

Once we appreciate that others can have very different faith journeys to our own, it helps us to be less judgemental about them. We all face fresh daily challenges of choice to either journey toward Jesus or not. It is good to gently encourage each other towards Jesus and the perfection of behaviour, belonging, belief and blessing. As we journey towards Jesus we are transformed into His likeness (Romans 12:2 & Ephesians 4:24).

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

Here are some people's definitions of evangelism:

- Sharing a treasure of ultimate value, and a need to share it authentically, whilst listening to the one in charge.
- Evangelism is being who you are wherever you are.
- Telling the story of Jesus? Maybe good news should feature in there in some way.
- Evangelism is being good news as well as telling good news, both in Jesus' name and the power of the Holy Spirit.

What would be your definition of evangelism?

There are many models and theological understandings of evangelism. Evangelism happens in all sorts of ways and in a wide variety of places inside and outside the church. And by framing evangelism in a broad framework, no single perspective will be prioritised over any other.

Evangelism is...

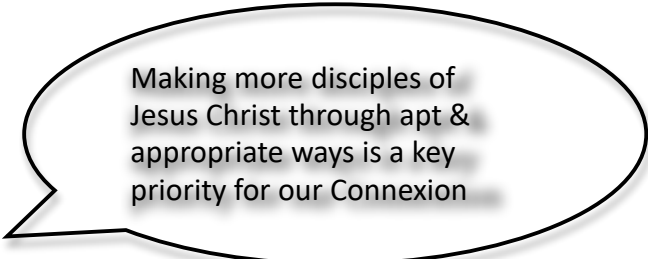
Evangelism is about Jesus.

Evangelism is about the people whose lives have been transformed because of Jesus. These people are called 'disciples' and can be found in the Bible, as well as in almost every street in the UK.

Evangelism is about people who have not heard about the life and continuing work of Jesus.

Evangelism is about the coming kingdom of 'shalom' – peace, compassion and justice.

Martyn Atkins, the General Secretary for the Methodist Church, in his report to Conference 2011, said...



Making more disciples of Jesus Christ through apt & appropriate ways is a key priority for our Connexion

Playing our part

Each of us has a part to play in evangelism; be that our own continuing development and discovery of Jesus in our midst, as well as the spiritual journey of other people.

How might we be equipped and resourced to move beyond a caricature and become people who know and love Jesus, and demonstrate this to a world in desperate need of hope, compassion and transformation?¹

TELL somebody, **SHOW** somebody, **BE** somebody

¹ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/deepening-discipleship/evangelism>

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Some principles and tips for working with young people;

- Be real - be yourself and offer what you have, your story and your gifts. Young people will appreciate and respond to authenticity.
- Be fun - creating a safe, welcoming, accepting environment where young people can open up, be themselves and thrive in a fun environment.
- Build genuine positive relationships with young people. Get to know them, their interests and their context.
- Be honest - we don't have all the answers, young people may have difficult questions or issues, it's perfectly acceptable to say - 'I'm not sure but I'll find out for you', or 'let me look into it so I can help you more'.
- Be truthful - explain and share who you are and why you do what you do.
- Share your stories. Show examples, share mistakes and how you learnt from them.
- Model Christ in your team, serving, encouraging and blessing each other - young people will notice conflict and tension.
- Be open, show grace and be welcoming.
- Have rules, discipline procedures and boundaries and stick to them.
- Safeguard the young people and yourselves, have personal boundaries and create a safe environment for all.
- Respect young people, they should feel valued and listened to.
- Create an environment where ALL are welcome and given a chance to be themselves.
- Be encouraging - lift up and celebrate achievements, humour, good attitudes and offer opportunities for young people to be creative, use their gifts and develop the things they love doing.

For more resources, visit <http://www.methodist.org.uk/mission/children-and-youth>



Many thanks to those in the Newcastle and Northampton districts who have contributed to this training manual.

We hope and pray you find it a useful resource. More than that, we hope it will encourage you to demonstrate and talk about the Good News – particularly with those who have not as yet had the opportunity to respond to God's love.

Everlasting God, through Jesus you have given us life in all fullness. You have called us to share the Good News in our homes, communities and neighbourhoods. Awaken in us such a love for you and for your world that we may boldly proclaim Jesus Christ by word and deed, so that all we do may be
loving you, serving others and making disciples. Amen

If you would like further copies, or any of the individual sheets, then contact:
'Together Mission' northampton.together@gmail.com

