

Section D - Praxis

This section looks at what doing evangelism from a Kingdoms paradigm looks like on the ground, drawing on the experiences of the Writing Group in local ministry: rural and urban.

D1. Some Kingdom -based Thoughts of How we Speak to People from a Kingdom-based Paradigm when we First and Last Meet Them

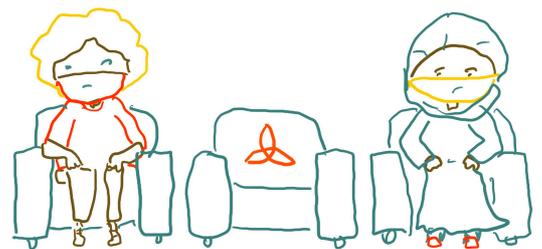
The Writing Group

These are notes taken from a Zoom conversation between the Group members part way through the process, and give a flavour of our responses in certain pastoral situations.

1. WHAT IS THE INVITATION THAT IS MADE?

If we and congregations are out and about in amongst people, there may be a point at which an invitation to further engagement/involvement is appropriate - so what is the invitation?

- invite people to a group that is exploring what it means to believe in and follow Jesus, and is a learning community (i.e not one that has all the answers) – ‘Come and hang out with us’.
- draw people into relationship – (how to develop relationship with new people coming to a Covid-distanced church with no ‘mingling’ may be difficult) – through relationship with other people, people can discern what a relationship with God might be about.
- groups should be both about sharing faith and helping people feel comfortable.
- non-threatening questions that allow space for negative views – ‘Where are you with God?’ ‘I’m a follower of Jesus, would you like to find out what that might mean for you?’
- we have to have greater intentionality to make the invitation.
- finding common cause and working together with those who have similar concerns, and through them connections, can be made with people who are seeking to know God (cf the writings of Ann Morisy). Causes might include food poverty, climate change, improving a local open space, where practical issues and the causes of problems are addressed alongside others; where we work with others, as Elaine Graham understands it, to create a greater horizon of hope.



What scriptural passages are we drawing upon?

- The call of Jesus to “Come and see” (John 1:39). Note this is in response to a person’s question to Jesus.
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- Parables of invitation to feasts – we are asking people to join in with something that is about joy and peace and transformation.

WHAT ARE THE FINAL WORDS OF COMFORT?

What do we, as ministers, say to people who are dying with no acknowledgement of, or resistance to, God? What do we say to Christians who are scared that their unbelieving relatives will be suffering after death?

To the dying person who doesn't believe

- when you ask people what kind of God it is they don't believe in, you often find you don't believe in that kind of God either – they are frightened by a vengeful God rather than attracted by a merciful one.
- demonstrate the love of God through the way that you behave towards them.
- remember that unbelief can come about because of hurt, harm or lack of care done to people by the church or those identifying as Christians: do we have to make reparation and apology for that?

To the believing relative of the unbeliever

- Tom Wright talks about God's kingdom being the hope of Easter coming forward into the present, so God can act in ways that are unfathomable to us.
- Consider Matthew 25:31-46, the parable of the sheep and the goats. Many have lived as Jesus bid us live even though they have not consciously believed.
- emphasise the love of God from which nothing can separate us - Romans 8:38-38.
- John 14:1-3 - the generous provision of God in providing many rooms in his house.
- the Kingdom is something that expands, God is generous and eternally reaching out to people, it is not something that is bounded, because it is not a place but a way of living.
- Colossians 1:15-20, especially verse 20; Jesus' mission is effective in reconciling all to God.
- there can be no forcible inclusion. Pressure on the person, even if well intentioned, is not part of the Kingdom paradigm.

We want to see this grow.
Contact office@utusheffield.org.uk to contribute or to take part in the supportive quarterly seminar series.

D2. Parish Evangelisation: An Approach by St Patrick's and St Thomas More's

Facilitated by Deacon Andrew Crowley with four parish members

“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their Journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”
Evangelii Gaudium. 2

PRAYER FOR EVANGELISATION

Loving Father,
You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son,
that we might believe in him and have eternal life.
May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day
and live the Good News with joy.
Through the power of your Holy Spirit,
help us to “go out to the whole world and proclaim”
our faith with confidence.
Give us the courage to witness to the Joy of the Gospel
by our words and actions.
Help our parish to become more welcoming and missionary,
so that you may be known and loved by all people.
We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever,
Amen.

Our Lady, Star of the New Evangelisation, **Pray for us.**

Blessed John Henry Newman, **Pray for us.**

St Thérèse of Lisieux, **Pray for us**



INTRODUCTION TO PARISH EVANGELISATION

In July 2015, the Bishops conference of England and Wales held a conference on evangelisation. It was called “Proclaim 15”. Some people from our parish joined others to go to Birmingham, to meet others and to learn what evangelisation might look like in 21st century Britain. Proclaim 15 was a response to Pope Francis' call for a new evangelisation within our parishes, for us to become missionary people, outward facing, and confident in spreading the joy of the Gospels.

“Christians have a duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the church grows, but ‘attraction.’”
Evangelii Gaudium 15.

A small group in the parish of St Thomas More's and St Patrick's met weekly from July 2016 to March 2017 to consider what evangelisation is for us and how our parish could become missionary, evangelising and outward facing. We have prayed together, shared our faith stories, and looked at simple ideas as to how we can create an evangelising parish community.

As part of our discussions we have looked at a document produced by the Diocese of Southwark, which challenged us to consider how our parish life could be developed and how we could serve the needs of those who live in our area. It was clear, during our discussions, that in order for the Holy Spirit to be allowed to work in our parish, we must take some action to facilitate this. We are called to put in some effort, some labouring in the vineyard, but at the same time trusting that the owner of the vineyard will look after us and provide us with what we need. We realised that our efforts are not dependent upon our own energy or enthusiasm, but instead are dependent upon the grace of God. We have to make a deliberate and intentional step forward in faith, always trusting that it is the Holy Spirit who calls people to faith.

There is already a lot of activity within our church which does strengthen our faith and is a witness to others. Our deliberations have shown us the significance of what we're doing at the moment, and emphasises its importance. What we have discovered is a more holistic approach to our parish life, with all the different elements feeding in to creating a fully alive and loving experience for ourselves, and for those amongst whom we live and serve.

We have broken down our plan for the parish into the following headings:

1. Making our church more welcoming
2. Deepening our faith
3. Making our liturgy live
4. Caring for our neighbours
5. Caring for ourselves
6. Building our life together
7. Deepening the relationship between the school and the parish
8. Spreading the message
9. Administrative and IT tasks to support our work

MAKING OUR CHURCH A WELCOMING CHURCH

Because we are so familiar with coming to church and knowing what happens, it is difficult for us to see how our communal parish life looks through the eyes of someone new. To show that we care about welcoming people, about making them feel at ease and giving them all the support and information they need, what changes do we need to make? Is it clear where the disabled access is, the toilets are, what we are doing in our services and who to contact?

DEEPENING OUR FAITH

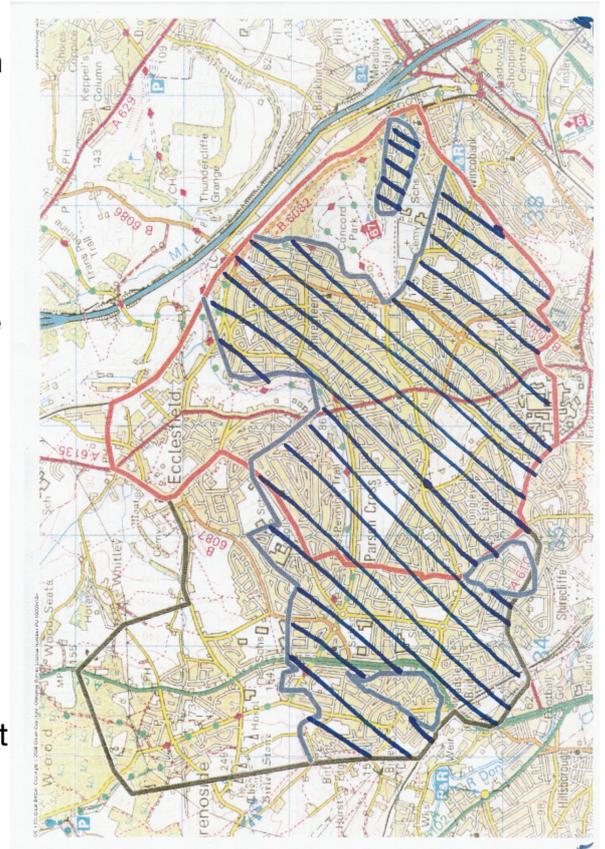
Part of becoming an evangelising community is for ourselves to be evangelised. There is no point in welcoming people into a church in which people, as Pope Francis has said, look as if they're attending a funeral. Evangelisation of ourselves demands that all parts of our lives are touched by the gospel values. How can we deepen our faith and how does it affect the way we live?

MAKING OUR LITURGY LIVE

Our liturgy is a lived experience. When we come to church we not only worship God with our mind and soul, but also with our senses. The way that we conduct our services should point towards the mystery of God, and be characterised by reverence, simplicity, care, humility, and love. How are needs of our world and of ourselves addressed in the way that we worship together? What does our liturgy convey?

CARING FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS

It is also easy to overlook the area in which our parish is, and the needs of the people amongst whom we live. In our group we looked at the needs of the area, and noted with concern that most of the area is part of the 20% most deprived areas in Britain. (See the map). Deprivation is not just lack of money, but also poor health, education, housing, and high crime levels. As a servant church we must consider how we can meet some of the needs of our neighbours. How can we reach out to those who live in our parish but do not attend a church? How can we demonstrate our love for others?



CARING FOR OURSELVES

As we consider caring for our neighbours, we should also consider how we care for ourselves. What is it that we can do that increases our sense of well-being? How can we help each other to live a fulfilling life? How can we make real and practical the way that we care for each other?

BUILDING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

We are called to be the body of Christ, not just as a worshipping community but as a community of people who worship together. How can we deepen our relationships with each other during the week? What opportunities can we create to build community with each other?

DEEPENING OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

We have been blessed with two junior and infant schools in our parish. Part of their work is to deepen the spirituality of their pupils. How can we as a parish support them in this work, and work with the schools to deepen the spirituality of each one of us and of our families?

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

Within our parish area there are many organisations such as care homes, colleges, schools and doctors surgeries. How can we best communicate with them about what we do in our parish, and how we can support them in their work?

ADMINISTRATIVE AND IT TASKS TO SUPPORT THE PARISH COMMUNITY

To help our parish function effectively we do need some good administrative systems. IT can be used to develop a parish database and improve the way in which we communicate the message of Christ to others. How can we develop our resources to promote the Gospel?

OUR LEGACY

What kind of parish are we passing on to the next generation?

THE EVANGELISATION PLAN

Making our church a welcoming church

1. Have open days and make use of Heritage Open Days (usually in September).
2. Look at times when the church can be open for part of the day, which is welcoming and accessible and not a service. Possibility of a quiet time/time for peace, forgiveness, etc. We need to ensure that there is someone in the church to welcome and supervise. Visitors would be encouraged to experience the stillness. light a candle, etc.
3. Develop leaflets for visitors explaining what happens in church, who to contact, etc.
4. Develop a guide and formation for welcomers to ensure that visitors are welcomed and provided with suitable information.
5. Consider developing welcomers who have had some formation, who are clearly identifiable by name badges and a welcome desk.
6. Review the welcome experience.
7. Have a sign outside the church indicating when the church is open.
8. Look at improving visibility and access to the church, with a specific focus on the appearance of the church's entrance lobby.
9. Improve notices about facilities in the church such as toilets, hearing loop, room for noisy children, disabled access, etc.
10. Consider ways of making the liturgy more accessible to the hard of hearing and the visually impaired/blind.
11. Consider how the liturgy is welcoming to all, especially newcomers. Ensure that at each Eucharist there is a welcome for those who cannot receive to come forward for a blessing.
12. Consider printing leaflets explaining how the parish works, our purpose and vision. Include information about administration, weekly meetings, brief history, who to help with transport, etc.
13. Consider occasional events to invite people, such as 'coffee and cake', 'meet the priest', and how there can be some fun and relevant activity for children.
14. Review the signage outside church to ensure that is inviting, informative, providing contact details and witnessing.
15. Leaflet to guide newcomers through the mass, with all the relevant responses, and some basic guidance.
16. Ensure that newcomers are advised to make contact with a welcomer.
17. Provide booklets for children to use during the service.
18. Improve the signage at St Patrick's as to where the entrances are, including the disabled entrance and parking. Also improve signage for access to the presbytery.

Deepening our faith

19. Look at using more IT resources for catechesis.

20. Develop a programme of ongoing faith and spiritual formation for adults.
21. Review how we do Catechetics and look at opportunities for evangelisation. e.g. use of prayer and witness to run alongside instruction
22. Develop programs for parishioners to deepen their faith so that they can explain it cogently and sensitively to others
23. Look at sharing our faith stories, and setting up a system for people to accompany each other on their faith journey
24. Consider opportunities to have tea after mass to discuss the readings and homily
25. Consider ways in which we can help parents teach their children
26. Prepare short biographies for the saints' statues in the church
27. Prepare a simple explanation of the stations of the cross
28. Consider how we can make the Word more prominent in what we do
29. Draw attention to opportunities for house blessings
30. Consider a programme to explore the relationship between family life and spirituality
31. Consider the use of Godly Play within the parish
32. Consider a Parish retreat
33. Develop a Film night/Book club to ask, where was God in the story or the film?
34. Establish small groups for ongoing faith development, for sharing spiritual journeys and for learning how to share our beliefs
35. Consider having an outside speaker coming to give a talk/series of talks to the parish



Making our liturgy live

36. Constantly look at ways of how we can improve the celebration of the Sunday Mass to make sure it is the best we can do
37. Involve more people in the singing, preparing the bidding prayers (see below)
38. Be more open in church about real life issues.
39. Utilise the outside of church as a bit of a 'shop front', e.g. start the Palm Sunday procession outside
40. Review the Children's Liturgy to see what improvements can be made
41. Have an occasional healing mass/International mass with a shared meal afterwards – Pentecost?

Caring for our neighbours

42. Set up a Justice and Peace group
43. Ensure that there is a clear focus on our relationship with those in our parish who live in the 20% of the most deprived areas in Britain. Consider what little steps we can take to help people out of deprivation
44. Consider how we create a place of belonging and hope for people, particularly those isolated, bereaved, and those on the edges
45. Get someone to talk about homelessness and the refugee situation in Sheffield
46. Work with other churches to meet the needs of the area
47. Consider the viability of a food bank in the parish
48. Make sure the church is represented at local festivals and meetings
49. Ensure church is represented in local forums and consider how we can develop links with the local councillors

50. Deepen links with people of other faiths
51. Have a drop in at the St Patrick's presbytery.
52. Recruit more members for the St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to ensure that there are enough people to visit those on the margins

Caring for ourselves

53. Look at occasional workshops to improve our sense of well-being, e.g. stress management, anger management, healthy eating, walking group
54. Develop life skills to help people to move on from any of the 5 indices of poverty
55. Consider the 8 week Family Care Parenting course
56. Consider the needs of the bereaved in our parish
57. Arrange an annual party for all those baptised during the previous year
58. Look at ways of celebrating marriage, e.g. the renewal of vows, etc
59. Consider how we can develop the SVP to encompass visiting those on the margins in our community
60. Celebrate and deepen the existing links with Saint Wilfred's, Mount Tabor Food Bank and Northern General Hospital chaplaincy. Arrange for speakers to come and address the parish community
61. Look at ways to engender a spirit of pastoral care for all those in need in the parish
62. Display safeguarding information in suitable places in the church
63. Consider an audit of the skills that parishioners would be willing to share with others.
64. Assess ways of involving young people in Church life
65. Consider developing an Open House for parents after dropping children off at school or before they collect them
66. Purchase a drinks dispenser to provide tea and coffee for meetings in the presbytery

Building our life together

67. Arrange for drinks and refreshments after Sunday Mass to welcome visitors and newcomers
68. Consider developing small house groups/cell groups
69. Arrange occasional meals together/day trips/socials
70. Create an environment which develops confidence and empowerment

Deepening our relationships with our parish schools

71. Deepen the relationship and level of cooperation between the school and the parish community.
72. Consider how we can support the teachers and catechetics in the school
73. Encourage families to use the prayer bags sent home with the children

Spreading the message

74. Have a clear witnessing focus on the website and in the newsletter
75. Consider using local newspapers as a means of communication
76. Consider leafleting the area and how this could be done ecumenically.
77. Develop links with Longley Sixth Form College
78. Develop links with all the local schools advising them that the parish is open to visit
79. Make the parish better known to all the residential homes in the area
80. Consider having a sign outside the church with a simple proclamation message on it, which would be changed at regular intervals, e.g. at Easter, "Jesus is Risen"
81. Consider using local cafes for meetings

Administrative and IT tasks to support the parish community

82. Set up a parish database to ensure that we know the parish community. The database would be confidential for use by the parish clergy.
83. Look at how we can use the parish rooms and hire out to others on a reasonable basis. Note: we would need clear policies and procedures
84. Consider how the website can be developed so that it provides a witness of faith
85. Consider using IT to ensure that the newsletter and other material is distributed more widely. Investigate use of email addresses and MailChimp
86. Investigate streaming the Mass and/or uploading the homily to the website. Stream the Mass via the website (Shalom to advise)

Our legacy

87. Consider what kind of parish we are passing on to the next generation

PARISH BOUNDARY OF ST PATRICK'S AND ST THOMAS MORE**Key**

Red line = St Patrick's Parish

Black line = St Thomas More's Parish

Blue shaded area = parts of our parish which are part the 20% most deprived areas in the UK.

We want to see this grow.
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D3. The Relationship Between Incarnational and Proclamational Mission

Glen Marshall

Incarnational church planting begins when a small group of Christians lives and grows church in a particular place, taking shape as it attends to the gospel, engages with the wider community and actively seeks the Kingdom. The old approach to planting was for one church to send twenty or more people to start a service in an under-churched area and then arrange evangelistic events and activities.

The incarnational approach is a definite improvement. However, incarnational planters run the risk of repeating a mistake made so often by the church throughout history and especially in recent years. We see weaknesses in an established way of doing church, initiate change, and in the process utterly overreact and neglect real strengths in the old approach. So, for instance, the charismatic movement's stress on experience led to a regrettable disdain for learning and serious theology; the early/mid 20C reaction against the Social Gospel led to an unbiblical exclusion of social and political action from its understanding and practice of mission. The examples are many.

There is no reason on God's earth why an incarnational approach to mission and church planting should neglect a deliberate, intentional and strategic approach to proclamation. Evangelism is at heart about communicating good news, expounding the gospel, making it public, rendering it manifest, causing it to become apparent and present by doing, saying and being. Not all of these dimensions have the communication of good news as a deliberate intent at the forefront of our attention. Evangelism suffers when we turn it into nothing more than a thing that we do and distinguish it from the doing, saying and being of following Christ.

We evangelise when the stuff we do in pursuit of peace and justice, such as providing shelter for the homeless or campaigning against poverty, gives expression to the way of Christ, but our attention is not directed to getting across a message but to the needs of the people who are homeless and/or poor. We evangelise when the way we are bespeaks Christ, when our churches are hospitable - honouring the least and including the other. Our primary intent here is not an act of communication but the living of a Christ-faithful life. We evangelise, too, when we speak of our faith and the one in whom that faith is placed, when we explain to friends why we pray, when we offer a Christ-informed perspective to colleagues conversing about an event in the news. Even here it is not that we think, "OK, now I am going to evangelise." Rather, because we live as Christians, we also speak as Christians. All good incarnational stuff.



However, none of this is to say that this richer, more integrated, more natural understanding of evangelism has to exclude deliberate, intentional, planned goodnewsing when our primary purpose is indeed to get a message across. As long as such activities

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are appropriate to their setting and faithful to the gospel, refusing imposition and resisting distortion for the sake of 'success' then they absolutely have a place. Why not?

Of course the most important thing about evangelism is that, whether it be our primary concern or a gracious byproduct given as we pursue other priorities; whether it is doing, being or saying. it has to arise from lives given over to knowing and following Christ. Otherwise our doing is so much busyness, our saying mere words and our being an empty shell.

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D4. Kin'dom Prayer Walk ideas

Erica Dunmow

Prayer walking (generally in twos or threes) is on the increase, as a very good way of 'listening' to and observing your locality and tuning in to what God might be asking of you. Casual conversations along the way help to give a benign and friendly presence on the streets. They are especially helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, as reaching out and contacting people through building-based activities is so much more limited.

You may ask what is kin'dom about the following examples. They are all based on the idea that God and the Holy Spirit can break into situations and hearts where there is no prior commitment of faith, and that God wants us to bless irrespective of belief.



This does not mean imposing a belief on anyone, but a simple offering of good wishes.

If you do encounter other people on your walk, a simple 'Hi, how you doing?' or 'You'll'ri?' or 'Good morning, nice/chilly/blowy weather' depending on your style and the locality, can be enough to show a friendly connection. And if they show an indication of wanting to answer the question or chat, do stay and listen, and maybe if it feels right, offer them a simple word of prayer, or to put them on the church prayer list. But keep it very relaxed and trust that the Holy Spirit will be at work in the conversation.

Some people will pray in advance for God to show them and bring them into contact with the people God wants them to engage with, which is a way of ensuring that we do not place too much of our preconceptions and agenda onto the process.

Giving thanks

Whenever you see something of beauty or justice or kindness or flourishing, give thanks for it as a sign of the kin'dom already present.

Listening

If you are in the listening phase, simply stop every now and then and talk to God about what and who you have seen, asking God to let you know what might be there for you and the congregation to support, provide or lobby and pray for.

Blessing

You might also pray a very simple blessing such as 'Peace/Shalom/Well-being be upon this house/shop/business/office/factory/garage etc.' as you walk past.

If walking around institutions like schools, solicitor's offices, police stations, courts, DHSS Offices etc, 'May this place be one of justice and joy'.

You may even want to 'anoint' a building or place where there has been dissent or difficulty, with a simple prayer and some oil. (See the writing of Ann Morisy about apt liturgy, and her example of simple service on the street to acknowledge a place of pain and ask for God's renewal and cleansing).

D5. Growing Good

Richard Atkinson

The launch on 10th November of ‘Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England’¹, a report by Theos and the Church Urban Fund, is timely. Originally commissioned to reflect, at least in part, on the current priorities for ministry thirty-five years on from Faith in the City, it is all the more relevant at this time of pandemic.

Exploring the relationship between social action, church growth and discipleship it is a helpful stimulus to reflection for all Christians, not just Anglicans. It is clear that “social action can be a route to church growth in both numerical and spiritual terms”². It provides content to the reality that evangelism and discipleship are intrinsically related to the presence of the Kingdom of God.

A contributor to the launch was Revd Graham Hunter, the Vicar of St John’s, Hoxton, where there has been significant growth and the church mission statement includes: “Transform Hoxton – We hope to contribute to the renewal of our neighbourhood and the flourishing of every person who lives or works here”.³ Among those drawn in has been David, who is now free from his background of drug addiction and currently is employed as an outreach worker for the church.

At the heart of the report is the importance of relationship, and the opportunity for people to connect through involvement in social action. It highlights six characteristics that are shared among the churches that are growing numerically and flourishing through their engagement in social action. These are:

Presence The importance of being there connected to the local area

Perseverance The opportunities that come from staying there

Hospitality & Generosity A culture of openness and willingness to engage with and invest in the local community as it is. The importance of sharing food.

Adaptability The ability of the local church to adapt and embrace complexity

Participation The importance of invitation and opportunities to participate in church community.

Whilst not new to those involved in mission and ministry, particularly in areas of deprivation, they remind us that faith and discipleship usually only emerge when people come into relationship, not least by joining others in social action.

It is Kingdom-based growth, where engagement with righteousness and justice reflects the priorities of Jesus, as in the Nazareth Manifesto of Luke 4, opening the



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door to Christ. As the report acknowledges it is not social action purely for the sake of growth. The report refers to Luke 14:12bf and Jesus’ words on not expecting a return on your invitations to dinner. Rather it is love in action because we can do no other. However,

“in a secularising society where people no longer feel an inherent sense of warmth towards the church, it helps people cross barriers of religious identity and non-identity”.⁴

It is this Kingdom-based growth that is reflected in transformed lives. The report quotes Archbishop Stephen Cottrell: “Instead of talking about bums on seats, let’s instead talk about disciples being made and hearts changed; or best of all, let’s talk about lives transformed. It seems to me that the best way of answering the question, what sort of growth do we need, is not to say shall it be numbers or shall it be impact, or even to say shall it be both, as if these things were different from each other, but to say let it be growth in transformation.”⁵

Does this report answer all our questions about Kingdom Evangelism and the relationship of social action to growth? That’s an unreasonable expectation. However, it is a shame that the pandemic curtailed the quantitative data and there is an absence of enquiry as to how involvement with the work of the Kingdom flows through to discipleship. Having said that, as already stated, the relationships and participation in church community that are enabled are key in providing the launching pad for faith. The report’s recommendations, including the establishment of a Church of England volunteering service, the re-definition and contextuality of the metric of church size, a more prominent place for social action in church funding schemes, and a greater emphasis in teaching and resourcing on the relationship of discipleship and social action, seem to me to only go so far.

The report opens with what I think is a contentious paradox, namely that the Church of England is, on the one hand, declining in terms of attendance (that is not disputed) and also that “the contribution the Church of England makes to society through its social action has increased.”⁶ Whilst the commitment of many is impressive – the Church Urban Fund identified in 2017 that 93% of church congregations were involved in some way with food banks or food bank collections – the sheer capacity of churches to respond, especially because of numerical decline and an ageing demographic, has diminished. In some areas, such as work with the young, the impact is very significant.

At its heart, however, this report is very helpful in reminding us that church growth, discipleship and evangelism are not distinct from social action and the work of the Kingdom, but rather are right at the centre. People come to faith and churches grow for many different reasons, but so often it is about the right relationships and the purpose they inspire. This report confirms that and explores it.

Some years ago now I was a Vicar on a tough housing estate in Sheffield. We knew then that we had to be involved in the community and to put social justice at the heart of our work. This was not a separate action, but essential to our mission, outreach and evangelism. All too often, larger evangelical churches from across the city would dismiss what we were doing as ‘merely social action’. It was never that and always had the teaching and example of Jesus at its heart. It is encouraging that most traditions are now on the same page and recognise that preaching good news to the poor and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favour ⁷ are a priority for all.

1. <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>. 2. Ibid, p12, 3. <http://www.stjohnshoxton.org.uk/transformhoxton> 4. Ibid, p144, 5. Ibid, p28, 6. Ibid, p12. 7. Luke 4:19.

D6. Using the Space Inside and Outside the Building

Rachma Abbott and Erica Dunmow

All these ideas are about creating things that will attract people into a building, give the congregation interesting conversation openers with strangers or neighbours, all of which can lead naturally to God-related, gossipy conversations or maybe sympathetic listening and a gentle offer of prayer if they trigger difficult memories. If your congregation is big enough to have volunteers to be quietly in the background just to smile and raise an eyebrow to show they are open to talk, that is great. Even better, in a mixed use building, keep the sanctuary door open, or at least unlocked, whenever the building is open for bookings, and ideally have clear glass windows so people can see in. Article E2 shows that this last was part of one journey to faith.

1. INSIDE

Static displays

Churches often underestimate how visitors look at their displays inside the church, especially those older buildings open to visitors. The sort of charities supported, the photos of church leaders, etc, will all help say to people; you too can belong here and be welcome. Please do update them fairly regularly though, or at least put newer versions up. Photographs of children and adults will need to comply with safeguarding policies and other permission issues. Seeing images of your church community can help you notice your diversity (or the lack of it) in generational, ethnic, ability, and gender terms. If the congregation is a diverse community, this may gently speak to people who often excluded, showing that this is a place for them. Displays can relate to more recent 'history' as well – photos of the most recent harvest supper, or displays of Christening gowns through the ages, or the connection of your church with particular employment or industry.

Interactive displays

Flower Festivals and Harvest Festival displays can bring people in. Making sure there are always people around to smile and give a welcome, and with a little imagination, some interactive displays to be looked at are good. A large tray filled with earth and a range of different flowers and twigs can very easily become a miniature allotment, with people invited to 'plant' something and perhaps have a chat about growing and new life.

Displays that evolve or change and that visitors or participants can contribute to also show that the building houses a living community. This can connect with history. During commemorations of the 2018 centenary of WW1 a rural church worked on a village exhibition: "100 days, 100 years", in which knitted and crocheted poppies were added over time, flooded down from the altar as the death toll increased, with white poppies and forget-me-nots made in a local care home. This could also be linked to an online set of photographs – in this case there were black and white pen and ink drawings produced by Kate Slater <https://www.kateslaterillustration.com/100-years-100-days-1>

A Flower Festival about aspects of belief, maybe the sacraments, can have explanations as well as flower arrangements, and an area where people can, for example, make extra buns/bread cakes (for the display of the bread and wine) out of flour, salt and water

dough, and have conversations about what they are thankful for as they make them. One with a festival theme, e.g. a Christmas Tree Festival inviting people to present a tree that represents a Christmas Carol and inviting lots of community groups and local schools to take part, also brings people in so that they are comfortable in the building and see it as a fun place to be. (The winner at one such (votes cast by all visitors) was a vast pyramid of individually decorated six-holed food containers called, inevitably. ‘Gloria in Eggshellsis’)

Prayer stations

These can always be there. Examples include: the traditional votive candle holder stands; pebbles to place in a water fountain (washing away of regrets, bad things); heart post-it notes for people we love; a tree of remembrance in a side chapel where people fix a leaf onto the tree in memory of someone (can be done in the context of a memorial or funeral service). If you have a wildlife-friendly space outside this is a good place to both explain and invite people to give thanks for natural beauty or commit to climate justice.

2. OUTSIDE

A large decorated cross



As well as the dolorous Cross of Good Friday (you may want to drape it with a purple cloth, etc) how about a celebratory Resurrection one covered with yellow daffodils, forsythia and whatever else you have to hand, in a joyous celebration? During lockdown 2020 one inner city church had a sequence of different arrangements on the outside cross from Maundy Thursday through Easter to Pentecost and Trinity. Part of the point was having the flower-arranging happening at a time on a Sunday when there could be engagement with curious or appreciative passers-by ...

A Palm Sunday procession

Processing around the Church can get a bit ragged if the congregation isn’t used to singing and walking and if the organ can’t be heard from all round the building, or there isn’t an instrument with a strong beat in the procession. How about kazoos and a drummer rather than singing, especially if you are a small group? The spectacle of joyous palm-waving helps to counter the fact that church worship is staid and dour.

If you are walking through your community with palm crosses to give away, or packs of paper kits for making one at home, this enables engagement. It can also help to have explanations to offer. St Matthew’s, Bethnal Green, used to give with the palm crosses a bookmark shaped short explanation headed: “What on earth are we doing?”

Good Friday

Think about the message that you are conveying in a Good Friday procession with the cross (see Article B7 for more on this). However, this form of witness has a long connection with ecumenical working together, so it may be that there will be a diversity of theologies within those walking together.

Easter Eve

The Fire in a churchyard on Easter Eve, or as a Dawn Fire service, is not only a mysterious and moving service of the lighting of the new light that can become the Church candle for

the rest of the year, but if done near enough a footpath, is another way of taking worship out at least a little nearer to where people might be able to see and hear something of the message of hope, joy and new life in the risen Jesus.

Easter Day

This is THE day of joyous celebration and yet we often keep ourselves to ourselves. How about coming out of the building at the end of the service, yelling the Easter Alleluias* several times together can be effective if the church is on a street, or perhaps at the top of a valley where the sound will carry. Stand with your backs to the church, maybe by a buttress or alcove, so the sound really projects away from the building. You probably need to warm up to this by inviting people to do the Alleluias more times than the initial one at the beginning. Six to eight times thrown in unexpectedly e.g. before and after the Bible readings, after a hymn, before the address, etc will probably do it. Warn people you'll be doing this, the young and young at heart will enjoy it! How about everyone having a bottle of bubble liquid and blowing bubbles of blessing around after the church service, too? You might want to check the wind direction!

One small chapel, St Peter's-on-the-wall, Othona, Essex, surrounded by countryside, regularly lets off a volley of sky-rockets at its Easter dawn service, and another inner city group of churches persuaded the local pigeon fanciers to give them a basket of homing pigeons to release.

*Easter Alleluias

Call: Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Response: He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All Souls and Remembrance Sunday

Not only do some churches have a War Memorial nearby or maybe in their grounds, but some are using really imaginative ways for people to interact with memorial prayers for those who have died. The use of knitted objects, such as red poppies that people can place intentionally around a cross, or in one case cascading down the side of the church tied to a fishing net, can bring a visual prompt that again, if people are willing to take up talking to neighbours and friends, is a gentle starter into a God-talk conversation.

3. BEYOND THE CHURCH GROUNDS

House blessings

These can take place as a response to a haunting or some sense of a malevolent presence, or offered to people moving into a new place and, perhaps, feeling daunted by what their life there will bring; or simply a liturgy of commitment by Christians to being a household of hospitality and a light to the neighbourhood. It is usually a simple, informal service of blessing – generally with prayers said in all the rooms, (don't forget the bathroom and kitchen) and can be a powerful way of integrating a sense of God into the home. Invite the children of the house to help saying some of the prayers (maybe writing the one for their room). If cleansing is pastorally needed, then a bunch of sweet herbs and twigs dipped occasionally into a bowl of water (that has maybe been blessed in advance) and the water gently flicked hither and yon (check with the household first that they are OK with this – water splashes aren't always appreciated by those with delicate furnishings!), and over the people as well, can be fun for children (and adults) present,

and help the occasion to be serious without being solemn. Carrying a Christ-light candle can be an alternative winter symbol, or the lighting of little indoor sparklers at some point.

Apt Liturgy

This is a term coined by community theologian Ann Morisy (see Section H. Resources), to refer to a special short service with prayer at a specific site, to which the general community, or just those affected, are invited. It can be a joyful thing – perhaps thanks for someone as a new memorial or statue or road name is instituted. It can also be very helpful at a place where there has been a fatal car accident, a murder or a suicide. Police or local councillors will sometimes help with this, especially if laid flowers need to be cleared and the neighbourhood, as well as relatives who may live nearby, need to be enabled to feel that they can move on.

Worship Outside in your church grounds or local amenity spaces

During the constraints of Covid-19 restrictions, worship outside the building brought freedoms such as being able to sing carols that could not happen inside. It also brought an awareness that for many people the freedom to socially distance comfortably was not only about mitigating viral risk but meant families could participate or not as they chose, and feel free to walk away or move around in ways that church buildings often do not enable. Make sure your event stewards and congregation are relaxed and ready for this sort of coming and going, giving a simple smile of goodbye as people leave.

At Lyneham, Wiltshire, the usual Good Friday Walk of Witness did not look possible with the regulations so Methodists and Anglicans together used the larger churchyard for a service with stations. This worked well for some of the ministers with mobility issues and we noticed that people felt more relaxed about arrival and departure times that suited them – easy to arrive part way through or leave early without being noticed. ‘Dipping into’ worship is not easy in some of our more traditional buildings, and denominations vary in how this practice is perceived. There was also greater relaxation for people about how their children chose to respond (people can be concerned if they think that the usual behaviour of children is not acceptable within a sacred space). It also enabled people to move away if they wanted greater privacy for their emotional response (also helpful at services involving veterans and military personnel at occasions marking loss or Remembrance in some way) or simply for movement and conversation. The weather also meant that these services were almost always shorter than the normal local church offering. Services that focus on the creation season might seem natural for outside activity.

However, if people’s expectation or experience is the more overtly evangelistic or parade services, it may be important to be clear at the outset about the freedoms to participate or not. It is also important to think about accessibility issues including outdoor amplification and so on, which can have resource implications. If the outdoor space does not belong to your church there will be additional arrangements that may take time in terms of risk assessments and local permissions.

Rogation Sunday

Rogation is connected with ‘asking’ and so with prayer, but also with very old ceremonies of ‘beating the bounds’ in the Church of England to enable people to know the boundaries of their parish identity. This has the potential to be excluding or imperialist/

colonialist in feel - “we are claiming our territory”. However, in some rural churches it has been used as an opportunity to walk between churches gathered into a group as a reminder of the sharing and connection. Stops for a picnic lunch and ending with tea can be punctuated with very short services of the word, with prayers marking each church or other local landmarks as stops and prayer stations. This can include focusing prayer on, e.g. farmers at a local farm, or education outside a school. Often people have walked or joined the picnic group who might not usually attend church. However, if you are walking as a community it is worth thinking about the balance of fast and experienced walkers and those for whom the joy of pilgrimage needs to be measured and slow as well as those whose focus is arriving at the destination and refreshments. Many small rural churches do not have toilets so it is good to plan for those stops.

Christ Church and St Luke’s in the East End of London have a boundary on the river Thames and have had a church and community boat trip with lunch as they travelled for Rogation. This was accessible for a wider range of people. In other urban settings the local park or canal might be a place to enjoy a local walk with a faith focus - a different intention such as a sponsored walk could be included or adapted for a local or national charity. Section E - People and Personal Viewpoints

This section presents testimonies and stories of how individuals have come to faith through Kingdom-based evangelism and more polemical pieces with which the whole Writing Group doesn’t all necessarily agree or have experience.