

Living it out (Application):

Last week's question: How have you reflected God's compassion to the broken?

This week: Who are the people God would want you to reach? In what ways do you need to adapt your life to get alongside them with the good news?

Coming Up at St Mark's

Andy's ordination...Just to flag up, Andy P will be ordained a priest at 9.15 service on 30th June and celebrate communion at 11.15 that day..

Church hog roast and summer celebration, for all the family...keep lunchtime on Sunday 14th July.

There will be a meeting for all those currently involved in **music groups, and all those who would potentially like to be involved,** on Sunday 23rd June from 3-4pm and Tuesday 25th June from 7.30-8.30pm at Church (you only need to come to one or the other!). This will be a chance to hear plans moving forward and ask questions.

We want to produce a **resource this year for advent** to enable individuals families and small groups to journey towards Christmas with a range of resources, reflections and challenges focusing on pushing back the darkness and looking towards the Kingdom. If you want to be involved speak to one of the clergy.



Please pray for...

Pray for **Barbara Shreeve, Saheli Chaudhury, Margaret Brown, and Eric Waters** as they adjust to new legs!

Pray for **Andy and Claire**, as he gets ready to be ordained priest at the end of June.

Give thanks for our **confirmation candidates** Alison Taylor, Rachel Hayes, Megan Watts, Greg Webber, Gemma Finan, Jack Kennell, Sam Gumbley, Toby Donegan-Cross, Oliver Brook. You can see a video of their testimonies in the website at the videos page.

Pray for the **Widening Our Doors** group, as they listen to God and seek His leading in exploring how we can "go to" our community.

Continue to pray for **Andrea, David, Stephen, Ruth and Paul** – for God's grace and presence in their lives.

Mission Partner Focus:

Pray for the **Kathryn and Heather Rowe**, as Heather visits in Bolivia. Kathryn asks us to pray for staff, finance, and the children at the home in which she is working. You can find a detailed prayer request under the "Latest News" section of the website.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Welcome:

Week beginning: 23rd June 2013

How does this picture speak to you? Watch St Mark's Widening our Doors on Youtube. How do you respond?

Worship:

Read Ephesians 3: 20-21. Rest in the love of your Father in heaven. Hand your anxieties to Him.

Vision without action is a daydream: Widening our Doors

As we continue to look at our plans for the future, this week Neil and Rachel Tunnickliffe offer some thoughts on how God is leading us to widen our doors as a church..

How does the picture above speak to us? For us, the picture illustrates the thinking that we associate with the "attractational model" of church. With this thinking, people tend to see the church as the destination – the place that they're trying to get people into when they go out to do mission in their local community. Their goal in this mission work is to preach the gospel to people so that they can be saved and start coming to church – the implication being that, when they start coming into church on a Sunday, they'll be all right! For us, this thinking is faulty because it places the church building at the heart of the Christian walk – when, really, it's the way that we honour God and love each other that is the real focal point.

What's the difference between coming to church and being church? When you go right back to the first century AD, and the early church in the Book of Acts, you notice straight away that they didn't have a building as the focal point. They met pretty much anywhere they could find – in the temple courts, in the marketplace, in each other's houses, wherever. The important thing to them was that they were part of a community that encouraged each other, taught each other, provided for and looked after each other – all as part of their worship of God. The word they used for themselves was "ecclesia" – which doesn't signify a building or institution of any kind, it means an "assembly of people" – literally, "the people who are called forth". We think that's the difference between coming to church and being church – the realisation that you are called out by God, and that the work of His Kingdom is without walls.

How do Pentecost and the disciples fishing on the other side of the boat speak to us?

When the Holy Spirit first fell on Jesus's disciples as the precursor to the formation of that early church, the effect on them was to make them speak in the languages of the people around them, so that they could be understood. The message of that for us is simple: if we want to preach the gospel effectively, we have to do it in a way that people understand, relate to them in their language. The point about Jesus telling the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat is symbolic in two ways. First, it pointed the way for the disciples to spread the gospel beyond Israel and the Jewish nation, and into the wider world. But it also challenged their thinking as to how they spread the gospel. They weren't to keep doing the same old, same old Rabbi stuff that had been going on for years – after all, one definition of madness is to keep doing the same thing time after time, and to expect different results! Instead, they needed to do something different and counterintuitive to get the best effect. And when they did it, the fish started jumping out of the lake! It also reminds us that our Lord's plan is the best one. We have all the ideas and make all the plans we like, but the best results will be when we follow rather than lead, when we hear and heed God's guiding and prompting and directing. After all, He's the expert, He's the one who knows what it is we're supposed to be doing. We can be very keen to ask God to help us with our splendid plans, but it all works best when we ask God what He's up to, and join in a bit. He's the boss.

What might be challenging about church for those not yet part of it? What are the main things they need to experience? The risk in thinking simply that people need to come to church and that'll sort them out, is that one size doesn't fit all. Not everyone responds to the same stimuli. While the structure and worship patterns of the established church are of great value to an awful lot of people, let's face it, we do some pretty odd things in church that you wouldn't do in most other walks of life. It's not usual to stand up and sing corporately in public. And chanting prayers together can come across as a bit cultish if you're not used to it. It can be a bit like a secret society where all the insiders know the rules and the required behaviours, and the outsiders feel completely alienated by it all. It can appear that the structure and processes are the main thing, rather than the Kingdom itself. We think that what attracts people to Christianity is the love, the relationships, the way we serve each other when we're at our best as a community. The story we always tell is about Jennifer, Neil's Mum, who hadn't been a Christian and who died of cancer two or three years ago. As we ministered to her as a family in her last few months, the church community rallied around us – making us meals, looking after the kids while we were in hospital, lots of practical acts of love as well as prayer. At first Jennifer couldn't understand this: why were all these people going out of their way to do these nice things when there was nothing in it for them? When we explained to her that, as Christians, this is what we do for each other, she finally started to understand what Jesus was all about. It was the most powerful witness that anyone could receive.

What mindset do we need towards our community? Our mindset needs simply to be a loving one. We need to be doing church with them, and not to them. We need to meet them where they are, speak their language, celebrate with them, cry with them, stand alongside them when they suffer, serve them. We need to be in a full and open

relationship with them – as people who love them as we love ourselves. Like Jennifer did, they will want to know why, and what it's all about.

What is the main point of the Mission Shaped Ministry course? What examples of new kinds of church struck you? We went on the MSM course a couple of years ago – it's a year-long course that looks in detail at how to develop, deliver and sustain different forms of church which grow in the heart of the community in the places where people live, work and go for fun. It's the opposite of the attractional model of church: rather than trying to bring the people into church, it's about getting alongside people where they are and seeing them as a potential church – an assembly which God wants to put His mark on! While there was a huge amount of material we covered in the course, some of the most helpful stuff was concerned with what other people are doing to put different models in place. There were churches for surfers and skaters, churches in cafes and nightclubs, a church where people came together to bake bread, all sorts of churches! Not all of them worked brilliantly, but the hallmark of the best ones lay in their relationships – the way they loved, shared and cared for each other.

What's the Widening Our Doors group doing? What kind of process is involved? We know from research both nationally and locally that many people believe in God and have a hankering to know Him better – but that going to church is not for them. The Widening Our Doors group is just starting to think about how we might address this – how we might grow the Kingdom outside of the doors of St Mark's by engaging with a community who have an itch that they currently can't scratch. The process at this stage is all about waiting and listening. If the MSM course taught us one thing, it's that the early stages of development require patience: the examples we looked at which failed were all ones where people rushed in with pre-formed plans and sought to impose them on the people they came into contact with. For us, it's important not to fail God, but to seek and do justice to His purposes.

What's the measure of our "success" in this? Probably easier to define this by what it's not – and it's not more people in St Mark's on a Sunday! Whatever the measure is, we don't think it's quantitative – it's not a numbers game. It's not about filling St Mark's with the people of Harrogate, but more about filling the people of Harrogate with Jesus by showing him to them wherever they hang out. To do that, we almost need to forget everything that we've ever known about church, and reimagine what it could be like if the structures and processes that we currently observe had never existed.

Study

Read 1 Cor 9: 19-27. What is Paul's aim? What will he give up to see it happen? What do verses 24-27 say to you?

John 20: 21; Matthew 9: 36-38. What does this teach us about why and how we are missionaries?

John 1: 1-14. In what ways did Jesus adapt himself to reach us?

What's is your group's mission? Where can you start to "go out"?