

Discipleship Pathways 'Tell'

Call to worship

Here, in this place,
God welcomes all the dreamers, as well as the doubters:
here, the worriers and wanderers can call on God by name.
Here, in this time, we can remember all the ways God has graced us:
here, in these moments, we are reminded that God is with us, always!
Here are gathered those daring enough to step out of comfort into the unknown:
here, in this faith space, we will find the courage to cry out, 'God, save us!'
in every situation. Amen.

Introduction

There are three different approaches to evangelism in a Methodist Way of Life:
'Tell' is about what we say (conversation with others), 'Share' is about what we do (our loving actions with individuals and communities) and 'Live' is about being the image of God (naturally radiating God's love, to draw people to Jesus). Today we are thinking about 'Tell.'

Evangelism can be something that people worry about and find scary, but it is through sharing conversations with others that we find that our faith deepens and grows.

Hymn STF 661 Give me the faith that can remove

Give me the faith which can remove
and sink the mountain to a plain;
give me the childlike praying love,
which longs to build thy house again;
thy love, let it my heart o'er-power,
and all my simple soul devour.

My talents, gifts and graces, Lord,
into thy blessed hands receive,
and let me live to preach thy word,
and let me to thy glory live;
my every sacred moment spend
in publishing the sinner's Friend.

I would the precious time redeem,
and longer live for this alone,
to spend and to be spent for them
who have not yet my Saviour known;
fully on these my mission prove,
and only breathe, to breathe thy love.

Enlarge, inflame and fill my heart
with boundless charity divine,
so shall I all my strength exert,
and love them with a zeal like thine,
and lead them to thy open side,
the sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

Prayers

Eternal God,
by your word you create
and by your breath you give life.
We worship you with joy and thanksgiving,
praising you for the fullness
that your presence brings to our lives,
and our life together.
We praise you that by your word you feed us;
we are satisfied, and there is always more.
Your goodness is displayed in your wonderful works
for all humanity,
and in your perfect love.
In our humanity we are rebellious,

and sometimes follow after foolish ideas;
going ways which lead away from life with you . . .
And yet, when we cry out you are there,
your word healing our inner emptiness and pain,
embracing us, leading us in your life-giving ways.
For your unending faithfulness, revealed to us in Christ Jesus,
and made present to us in your Holy Spirit
we praise you, Lord God. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Bible reading Romans 10:14-15

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Message

Evangelism is something that all Christians are called to do. As it says in Romans, "How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" (Romans 10:14). Each of us has a role in speaking of God's love – the entire congregation. It is not a special job reserved for Ministers or preachers. God calls us all, as a Body of Christ, to speak – and hopefully we want to, in the way that is right for us! As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:15).

I recently read a story about a man who had been sharing his faith with someone and that person died. The deceased was a young man in his 30's and the person who had been sharing their faith began to wonder whether they had done everything that God wanted him to do in that young man's life.

The world is a changing place – in the past 20-30 years and even longer than that, there have been so many transformations that have taken place. At one time people would have been open to conversations about faith, but today our culture has changed so much that even trying to have that conversation can be extremely challenging for both the speaker and listener.

We have gone through a period of transition from modernism to postmodernism. Pre-modernism is that time from when the New Testament was written until the 1500's. This was a time when you didn't question authority. Modernism was the next thing to follow and it believed that reason would be the answer to everything. Post modernism supposedly began in the 1980's although it is harder to date. Post modernism is suspicious that everyone has a higher agenda, there is an emphasis on tolerance and that there is no such thing as an absolute truth.

Whilst I quite admire the outreach team that gathers outside Marks and Spencer in the city centre each week to speak to people about Jesus, I also have severe doubts about the success of such techniques in today's society.

Where people today prefer to be able to make their own choices, not having the grounding in faith that their grandparents may have had (it's doubtful that their parents even went near a church too), they are unlikely to listen to people who give off the impression of having all the answers whilst the listener has none.

Today, if we wish to 'tell' our story we need to do it in a way that establishes a relationship at the heart of it and it should not be a 'hit and run' conversation which leaves people either wanting more or completely turns them off.

In the days of modernism, those taking part in outreach had to prove that the message was true, but today in a post-modern era we have to demonstrate that that message is relevant. People want to know what difference it will make to their lives if they become a Christian. They are asking whether faith works not whether it's true.

Most people don't have a 'road to Damascus' moment. We should not be disheartened if our prayers seem unanswered and our conversations continue for months, years, even decades. God often works in a different time frame to us. We might just be called to prepare the soil/water and then plant/nurture somebody's journey.

Whatever your role is in enabling people to see and experience the love of God, just remember that you can make a difference.

Challenge

Who will you talk to about the love of God this week?

Hymn STF 404 God's Spirit is in my heart

God's Spirit is in my heart,
He has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do.

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see,
And set the downtrodden free
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come,
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
So I'm sending you out to be
My witnesses throughout the world,
The whole of the world.
He sent me ...

Don't carry a load in your pack;
You don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep –
Can earn their own keep:
He sent me ...

Don't worry what you have to say,
Don't worry because on that day
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,
Will speak in your heart.
He sent me ...

Prayers of intercession

**Lord, to whom can we go?
You have the words of eternal life**

Lord, thank you for last night's sleep and thank you for today
Help us to waste none of today's hours and to miss none of today's opportunities
Thank you for the gifts you have given us – individually and collectively – and help us to use them to further your Kingdom here on earth
• Eyes to see and perceive
• Ears to hear and listen

- Hands to work and create
- Minds to think and innovate
- Memories to remember and learn from
- Hearts to love and worship

Lord, to whom can we go?

You have the words of eternal life

Lord, you call us to follow in your footsteps.

Help us to know what this looks like in each situation where we find ourselves.

Help us to know when following you means washing the feet of others,

When it means turning over tables,

When it means going to a party at the house of an outsider,

When it means breaking down the barriers that divide people from each other in the homes where we live, the places we work, the communities where we worship.

We grieve the fact that our world is divided and we ask that you work powerfully in our small lives and our big world to break down the walls that divide.

Break down the walls between Jew and Gentile

Between male and female

Between weak and strong

Between young and old

Between rich and poor

Between board member and worker

Between conservatives and reactionaries

Between creationists and scientists

Between Protestant and Catholic

Between Christian and Muslim

Between Sunnis and Shiites.

Break down the walls within our own lives, which hold us back from reaching out to others,

Which prevent us from seeing the best in other people, in other cultures,

Which stop your love getting in, and your blessing getting out.

Lord, to whom can we go?

You have the words of eternal life

Lord, in gratitude,

In deep gratitude for this moment, this place, this world

We give ourselves to you.

Take us out, to live as changed people,

because we have been touched by the living Lord, and cannot remain the same.

Ask much of us, expect much of us

Enable much by us, encourage many through us

Living Lord, accept our lives and accept our prayers this day and every day

You have the words of eternal life and in you we trust.

Amen

Hymn Hear the call of the kingdom (StF 407)

Hear the call of the kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us

*King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in him
King of Heaven ...

*Keith and Krystin Getty
Stuart Townend*

Closing prayer

Go from here to share that good news with all you meet.
And may the blessing of God,
the love of Jesus Christ,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit
be among you and within you.
Amen.