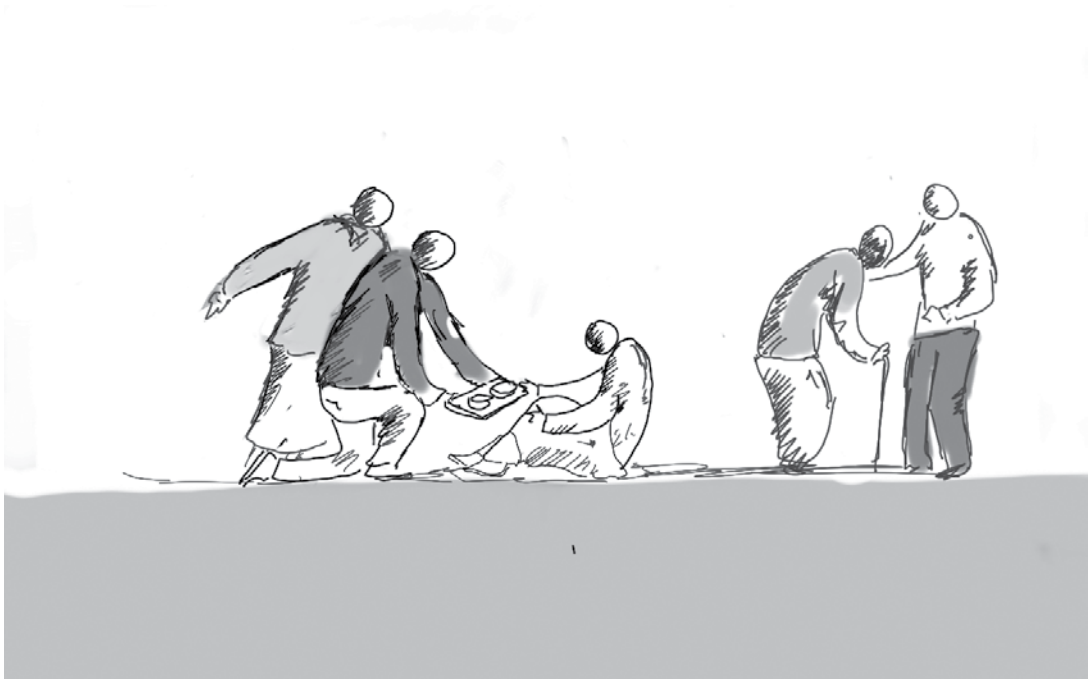


# PART THREE: A HEART OF COMPASSION



## PURPOSE OF PART THREE

- To reflect on Jesus' heart of compassion.
- To look at the stories of the woman who touched the cloak, and Bartimaeus, and learn lessons for how we as a church can place the poor at the heart of our ministry.
- To understand the importance of good listening as a way of valuing others and learning about our communities.
- Through the Bible passages, to experience individual transformation which can be demonstrated practically in the community through individual acts of kindness and by supporting small projects.



# INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

## Back-to-back drawing game

### Purpose

Both of the Bible passages in this section show clearly how Jesus had a listening ear to the needs of the poor. The following exercise shows the importance of good listening and putting ourselves in others' shoes.

### Materials

Pen, paper, something to lean on, two rows of seats (back-to-back), two pictures made up of drawings of irregular shapes

### Method

The participants sit down in two rows, back-to-back.

1. The facilitator shows one row one of the pictures and tells them to describe the picture to the person behind them who must then draw it.
2. They have two minutes to complete the drawing.
3. No one must turn round to either see the drawing or check what the other has drawn.
4. Stop after two minutes and ask for some reflections (see questions below).
5. Repeat the exercise, with the other row describing the other picture to the person behind them.

### Questions

- How did the people drawing feel?
- How did the people describing feel?
- What helped?
- What hindered?
- Did you find the noise challenging?
- What would you do differently?



### Application

When we listen to those in our community who are different from us or vulnerable, we need to focus all our attention on what they are saying, so that we get a good picture of the situation. Just as we find in this exercise, asking lots of questions and clarifying the information can help us build a complete picture of what they are trying to communicate. The noise in the room represents all the other things going on in people's lives that could prevent them communicating and hearing effectively. This, once again, emphasises the need for clear communication and good listening.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

### The woman who touched the cloak of Jesus

Luke 8: 40-56

Read the passage and then play the film of the woman who touched the cloak of Jesus. Use the following link:

<https://youtu.be/5RceqLgVNRs>

Alternatively, ask someone to read or perform the monologue on the following pages.



After the film or drama, ask your group:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings and then ask for feedback.

## The woman who touched the cloak of Jesus

Martha, my neighbour, has just been in to see me. She was so excited.

"Have you heard about Jairus?" she said. "Have you heard? His daughter – she died, she actually died, and Jesus raised her from the dead! Can you believe that? He raised her from the dead!"

Then she was gone, dear Martha, off to tell someone else the good news.

Can I believe it? Yes, I can believe it. He's done it before. You see I know a lot about Jesus. Stuck inside my house, shunned by everyone, this is what has kept me going - listening to the people standing outside the window in the street. And often they talk of Jesus. He's done such amazing things. He healed a leper, a demon-possessed man, a centurion's servant who was close to death, and yes, in Nain, he brought back to life the only son of a poor widow. Jesus seems to care about everyone: lepers, mad men, widows, even centurions. So when I saw him from my window, coming through our village, I just thought he might care about me.

It's been so lonely having this illness. Twelve years I've been suffering, twelve years I've been bleeding. No-one has been able to heal me. I've spent all my money on doctors, and instead of getting better I've just been getting worse. But the worst thing is there has been no-one to share this suffering with. No-one has come near me. I was unclean; not acceptable. Who in their right mind would come near me? Martha would come by occasionally and leave me food, but she didn't stay. Why should she? So I was left on my own - just waiting to die.

And then, there he was, Jesus, walking through the village. I heard the crowds at first, and then I heard his name. So I went to the window and looked out. A huge crowd of people was there. I recognised a few. Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, was there. He looked desperate, and as they came closer I could hear what he was saying:

"My daughter, my daughter, please heal my daughter!" over and over again.

He was out of his mind with worry. Ah, so that's where Jesus was going. This was important and I didn't want to stop him, but I was desperate too, and I thought that if I could just touch him as he walked by, that would be enough. He could heal me. But how? Such a big crowd.

But somehow I had to do it. So I stepped out of my house. Some people shouted at me to stay away, to get back indoors, away from

decent people. For once I didn't listen; I kept going into the crowd, closer and closer to Jesus. But I couldn't get close enough – there were just too many people, and I wasn't strong enough to push my way through them. I could feel my excitement turning into despair, but then I looked down, and there it was – the edge of his cloak right in front of me, trailing along the ground. I leant forward and reached out my arm as far as I could, and then I felt it. I felt the material brush past my fingers. And then the most amazing feeling. I can't describe it, but it swept through the whole of my body and I knew, I just knew I was healed.

I tried to make my way out of the crowd, but then Jesus stopped.

"Who touched me?" he said.

One of his friends said, "There's a crowd of people all round you, what do you mean?" I breathed a sigh and looked for a way out of the crowd. But Jesus didn't move; he spoke again.

"Someone touched me. Power has gone from me."

Well, I knew I had to own up. So I fell at his feet and told him it was me, and I told him why I had been so desperate to touch his clothes: those twelve years; the shame. Everyone was listening to me now, including people who had ignored and avoided me for years. Now they knew what that had been like for me. And then I looked up at Jesus. He was smiling. Such warmth in his eyes. Then he said to me the words that will stay with me forever.

"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

"Daughter, go in peace."

Later on that day he gave a little girl her life back. I think he knew he'd done the same for me.



# Questions

Below are several questions to deepen the learning. Choose the ones you feel are most appropriate and divide your group into smaller groups if appropriate.

## Questions on the passage

- How did the woman's illness affect her physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually?
- What did it cost the woman to push through the crowds towards Jesus?
- Compare the way Jairus approached Jesus with the way the woman approached Jesus?
- What did it mean to the woman to have the time and space to tell her story?
- What do you think was the effect of this time and space on Jairus, on Jesus, and on the crowd?



## Questions for us as individuals

- Can you think of a time when you experienced loneliness or isolation from friends, family or God?
- What did it feel like? What was most painful?
- What does belonging mean to you?
- What does it cost you to get closer to Jesus? How can you overcome any barriers getting in your way?
- What situations have required you to reach out in faith when the odds have been against you?

## Questions for us as a church and community

- Who do you think may be feeling isolated or rejected in your church and community?
- What are the obvious needs in the community, and what may be some of the more hidden ones?
- What can we learn from this story about giving people time and space to tell their story?
- How can we, as individuals or as a church, help to give vulnerable and marginalised people a sense of belonging and value?



## Application activity

On a piece of flipchart, as a group, brainstorm who are the vulnerable and marginalised in your community.

When you have generated a list, ask people to mark with a tick which groups of people the church is involved with on a regular basis.

When this is done, see where the gaps are. Discuss with the group why the church is not involved with certain groups of vulnerable people. What can be done to address this?



## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

### Bartimaeus

Mark 10: 46-52

Read the passage and then ask someone to read or perform the monologue on the following pages.



After the reading or drama, ask your group:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings and then ask for feedback.

# The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

I can't remember when I last felt that excited. Jesus was in Jericho and on his way to Jerusalem. I was determined that I would go with him all the way. The significance of this journey was all I could think about. At last, the end of Roman domination. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to save his people, I was sure of it. This was no ordinary man. He was special. The miracles have proved that. I couldn't wait to get to Jerusalem!

And I wasn't the only one. There were so many in this crowd, wanting to make this journey with him. I was determined to stay as close to him as possible. I wanted to hear what he was saying; I wanted to hang on every word.

Soon we reached the outskirts of the city. This was the worst place. 'Won't be sorry to get through this,' I thought, 'it stinks!' Rubbish, rotting food, beggars – what a combination. We crowded round Jesus to protect him from the polluted atmosphere, and hurried the pace on a little bit.

But then there was this huge cry coming from the side of the road, from the middle of a pile of rubble.

"Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" and then again, "Have mercy on me, Son of David!"

Oh, it was a pitiful wail. 'Even more reason to push on,' I thought.

I hoped Jesus hadn't heard, but then the beggar wailed again, "Jesus son of David, have mercy on me!"

I looked round at him. What a sight this man was! He was obviously blind – his arms were flailing in the air – desperately reaching out towards someone he couldn't see. I was irritated now. This was a distraction we could do without. Did this man not know how important Jesus was, and what he was about to do? Some of us shouted at him to be quiet, but he took no notice – he just kept crying out. I was furious now!

"Leave Jesus alone!" I screamed.

But inevitably the noise got through to Jesus and he stopped.

"Call him," he said.

This is what I'd feared. Jesus was such a good man. He had healed so many poor, wretched people, just like this blind man. Looks like he was going to do it again – but on such a day as this? Why can't he get his priorities right?

Resentfully, we called to the man, "Come on then, cheer up – you've got what you wanted. He's calling you. Quickly come!"

Oh, he was quick alright. He jumped up, threw off his cloak and ran over. The crowd made way for him. Some, I noticed, were encouraging him. Some were holding their noses.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus said.

'Strange question' I thought, but to be honest, I couldn't help being moved by what happened next.

"I want to see," the blind man said.

'What now?' I thought. 'Are you going to rub dirt in his eyes? Pray over him? What?'

Just six words in the end: "Go. Your faith has healed you."

I could see the blind man's face very clearly from where I was, and watching the transformation in his eyes was incredible. Suddenly the rest of the crowd evaporated. It was just Jesus and the blind man, face to face; eyes once sightless meeting those eyes of compassion. And joy, yes real joy in both. In that moment Jerusalem seemed to be forgotten. I suddenly got it. Jerusalem was forgotten for now. Right now, Jerusalem wasn't important.

But this man – this poor, smelly, now jumping-for-joy man – this man was.



## Questions

To deepen the learning, ask all or some of the questions below.  
Divide your group into smaller groups if appropriate.

- What was the attitude of the crowd at the beginning of the story? And when they heard Bartimaeus? And at the end of the story?
- What accounts for the change in this attitude?
- What are the similarities between this story and the story of the woman who touched the cloak of Jesus?
- What do we learn about Jesus?
- What attitudes exist in our church towards those who are marginalised in our community, and do they help or hinder what the church does?
- What could be a first step that our church could take towards those who are vulnerable or marginalised?



### Application activity

If you have not done the study of the woman who touched the cloak of Jesus, you could do the same application activity which follows that study.

## NEXT STEPS

### Creating a sense of belonging

Here are some simple activities you could do to promote a sense of belonging as individuals, as groups and as a church.

#### Individual response

Think about who in your street might be lonely and vulnerable, for whom you could do a small act of kindness. Find out what sort of help they might need in the future (e.g. young mums, single parents, isolated elderly, asylum seekers).

Think about your own gifts and resources which could be used for the benefit of the marginalised in your community, and pray for wisdom on how best they can be used.

#### Group response

As a home group, look at the material at the end of this reflection on the power of listening to others and to our community. Plan days or evenings to go out into the community to listen and gather information from people, with a view to prioritising a need that the group could try to address.

What is already going on in your community that your group could join in with (e.g. befriending at a homeless hostel, helping at a foodbank, visiting the elderly)?

#### Church response

Consider, as a church, the different ways it can make people feel welcome, especially those who have little or no experience of church culture.

With the church leadership, identify needs in the community that the church as a body could address and support with its human and financial resources (e.g. setting up a community cafe, lobbying on behalf of the homeless, setting up debt counselling, providing a drop-in for single parents).

As the church engages with its local community, encourage church members to pray for the worldwide church, especially those working with the marginalised (e.g. people living with HIV / AIDS who are stigmatised).



## The Power of Listening

Having read and discussed the passages, it might be useful for your group to think practically about the power of listening and how to improve listening skills. If the church is going to be involved collectively, or as individuals, in the community, developing good listening skills is vital for hearing and understanding local people's needs. Below are some questions and reflections, and a practical exercise, for your group to consider.

Why is listening so important?

- It is how we learn.
- It helps to clarify a problem or an issue.
- It stops us making assumptions.
- It builds confidence and trust.
- Perhaps most importantly, it affirms people as being valuable and significant, and worth listening to, and therefore it is a spiritual act.

"When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing, and face with us the reality of our powerlessness: that is a friend who cares."

Henri Nouwen,  
The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey



'Therefore, healing means, first of all, the creation of an empty space where those who suffer can tell their story to someone who can listen with real attention'

Henri Nouwen,  
Reaching out

# Listening to the whole person

## The three levels of listening

To be effective listeners, we must learn to listen to the whole person – not just to the words he/she is saying, but also to what the person is trying to say, and what lies between or behind the actual words.

We need to listen to thoughts, to feelings and to intentions. One way of describing this is by saying we need to listen to the head, the heart and the feet.



"Listening to the head" – the thinking level – to thoughts, facts, concepts, arguments, ideas and the principles behind these.

This is the most obvious way to listen, and requires attentiveness to hear all the words, so that you are familiar with all the facts of the situation or story of the speaker.



"Listening to the heart" – the feeling level – to feelings, emotions, mood, experience and the values behind these.

Listening on this level can give us important clues about what really matters to the speaker. Strongly expressed or strongly denied feelings can provide fruitful entry points to key issues that lie behind experiences. To listen on this level involves not only hearing the words that are spoken. It will be necessary to observe the speaker's body language and facial expression, and listen to the tone of voice.

Silences are also important to "listen" to. They are very powerful in expressing the feelings of the speaker – sometimes silence expresses feelings of disagreement or inadequacy, boredom or anger.



"Listening to the feet" – the will level – to intentions, energy, direction, motivation, the will.

To sense the real intentions of another person – what they want, why they are telling you this or that – can be one of the hardest aspects of the art of listening. Often, speakers are themselves only dimly aware of what they actually want in a situation. Skilful listening can help to discover what is "behind" the thoughts and "below" the feelings involved.

Careful listening on these three levels will enable you to ask the right questions, to learn from your community and to build stronger relationships.

It is also true that the more we get used to listening to people on these three levels, the more likely we are to express ourselves more clearly on these three levels, and in so doing, make it easier for others to understand us.





## Why do we sometimes find it hard to listen?

What can we do about it?

We have so many other things on our minds.

When you are listening to someone, try to put everything else out of your mind and focus on that person. Pay special attention to non-verbal signs, like gestures and hesitations, to pick up on the feeling level.



We have biases and prejudices that prevent us from listening. Through conversations with people, you will become aware of the biases and prejudices you may have. Try to be especially attentive to people who obviously have a different viewpoint, and respond constructively. Being honest about your own feelings in a spirit of humility, can lead to really worthwhile discussions and greater understanding of both sides.



We are too interested in what we are going to say.

Sometimes in the course of a conversation, someone will say something that sparks off a memory or story that we want to tell. We may then stop listening to what is being said, or even be tempted to interrupt, in our impatience to say what we want to say. Always stay focused on the person you are listening to, and wait for them to finish before speaking.



**“Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you would have preferred to talk”**

Doug Larson

We see our role as giving advice or wisdom, rather than listening to the problem or issue.

It is easy to be opinionated and to think we have the answer to a problem, but it is important to have the attitude that we are the pupils, and that the person we are listening to is the teacher. In this way we gain far more insights and we are able to respond more constructively.



**"Every person in this life has something to teach me - as soon as I accept that, I open myself to true listening"**

Catherine Doucette

Sometimes there may be a language or an accent that makes it hard to understand someone, so we switch off. In this situation it is important to ask for clarification if something is said that you don't understand. This will show the speaker that you are really interested in what they have to say. You can then always summarise back to the speaker what you understand them to have said.



**"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and to be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them."**

Ralph Nichol

## Practical listening exercise

The following activity is designed to practise listening skills and to encourage better listening.

Ask the group to get into pairs. One of the pair should spend two minutes talking about an issue or an experience they have had. The listener can ask questions or ask for clarification if necessary. After two minutes, the listener should then summarise back to the speaker what they have just said. If possible, try to summarise according to the three levels of listening, and summarise in terms of facts, feelings and intentions.

Then swap over, so that the speaker becomes the listener.



Afterwards, have a group discussion about the exercise.

You could ask the following questions:

- What did it feel like to be listened to?
- What did it feel like listening to someone?
- Did the listener summarise correctly?
- Was it difficult to stay focused on the speaker? If so, why?
- What could you do to improve your listening?

## Listening to your community

Having done the Bible studies, you might feel that your church or members of your church would like to work together as a small group to find out what the needs are in their local community and explore ways in which the church might respond to some of them.



### Where to gather information

When thinking about gathering information, consider the following places and people:

- Individuals shopping in the high street
- Young people
- The elderly
- Young mothers
- Any form of club such as bowling, scouts, etc.
- Doctor's surgery
- Head teacher of local school
- Police
- Social workers



## Questions you might use when listening to your community

Before you go to the community, it is worth thinking about a range of questions to ask.

The following questions are a useful guide:

- What do people most value about this community? Why?
- What have been the significant changes in this community in the last five years?
- What are the things that people are most worried about in this community?
- How do you think those concerns might be addressed?
- If you could change one thing about this community what would it be?
- What do you think about the local church, and how would you like to see it benefitting the community?



## Pulling all the information together

Once the group has gathered enough information, set a time to sit together and create two lists: one list for obvious needs and one list for hidden needs. Once they have all been written up, discuss which ones are currently being addressed and which ones are not.

This is a great opportunity for the church to gain an insight into needs they had not realised existed, and challenge assumptions they might have had about their community. It is also an opportunity for the church to get excited about using its talents to make a difference in its local community.

## Prioritising

Once you've seen all the needs on the lists, discuss as a group which ones to prioritise, thinking about the capacity of the church to address them.



## Working with others

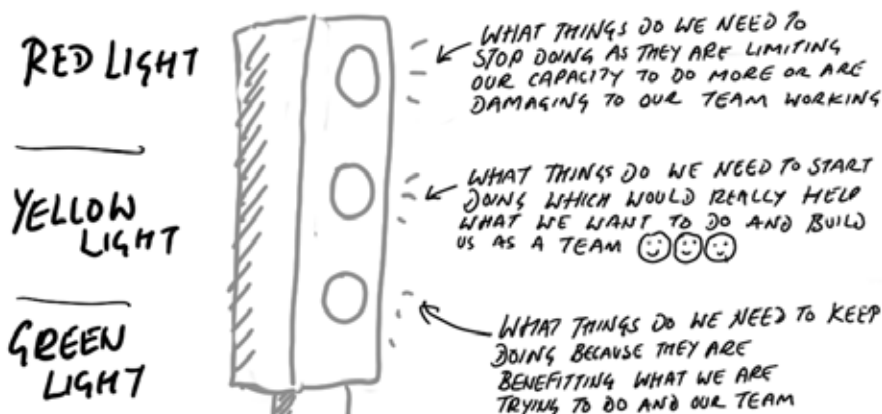
It may be that some of the priorities are a bit overwhelming and beyond the capacity of the church. In this case, it is worth thinking about how members of the congregation can support and join in with the work of other agencies.



# QUICK GUIDE TO HOW WELL WE ARE WORKING AS A GROUP



## THE TRAFFIC LIGHT REVIEW METHOD



**TIP**

DRAW THE TRAFFIC LIGHT ONTO FLIP CHART AND INVITE THE GROUP TO BRAINSTORM ONTO POST-ITS THEIR SUGGESTIONS FOR EACH LIGHT. THEN DISCUSS AND PRIORITISE THEIR SUGGESTIONS AND PLAN HOW THESE WILL BE PUT INTO ACTION



## Worship response

Having heard and reflected on the stories of the woman who touched the cloak, and Bartimaeus, and the power of listening, there is now an opportunity to pray and reflect together on what this passage means for us and for our church.

### Worship activity

Find or make a cloak and lay it on the floor or over a chair. Give your group members some post-it notes or small pieces of paper.

Play some reflective music.

As the music plays, invite your group to write down on the paper the names of people they know, or of people in their community, who are lonely or marginalised in some way. Then ask them to place these people on the hem of the cloak and offer a silent prayer for these people.

Then invite your group to think about people who may be marginalised or isolated in our country: maybe people of a different culture; people with learning difficulties; the elderly; people who have come out of prison and who are finding it hard to fit back into society.

Write these people down and, again, place them on the hem of the cloak and offer a prayer.

Finally, ask your group to think of people who may be isolated or marginalised in our world: maybe people living with HIV; people who are persecuted for their faith; women who are suffering with the same condition as the woman who touched the cloak.

Write these people down and place them on the hem of the cloak with a prayer.



Lord,

We give to you all the people represented on your cloak. We pray for your healing touch and your love to surround these people and all those on the fringes of society.

Lord, help us as a church to have a listening ear, to be aware of the needs of the most vulnerable in our community, and to offer them a place of belonging and hope.

In your name,

Amen

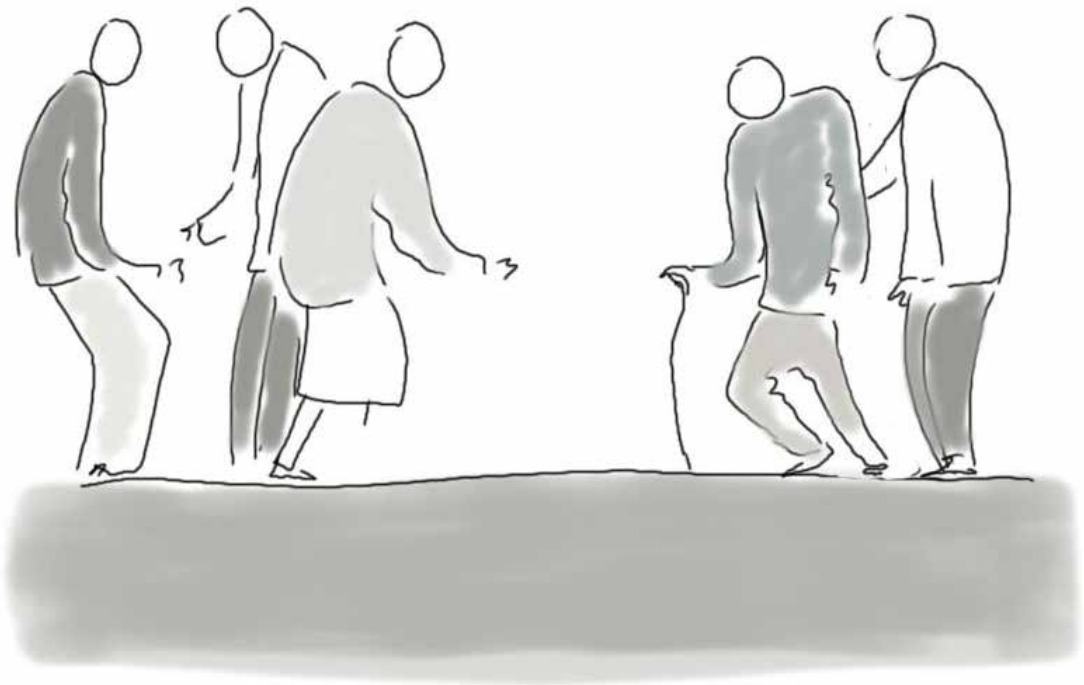


“Daughter,  
your faith has  
healed you.  
Go in peace.”

Luke 8:48



# PART FOUR: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



## PURPOSE OF PART FOUR

- To explore the barriers that stop us engaging with our communities, which may come in the form of our own insecurities and prejudices.
- To gain insights, from Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, on how to build relationships with people who are different from us.
- To gain insights, from the story of the Good Samaritan, on how to be a good neighbour.
- To explore ways of building relationships and networks within the community.



# INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

## Bingo

This is a fun opening activity which gets people talking to each other and finding out about each other.

Has a birthday this month	Likes spinach	Can ride a horse	Supports Manchester United	Can play the piano
Can do a magic trick	Has three or more siblings	Is wearing something yellow	Loves pizza	Speaks more than two languages
Has a family member living abroad	Likes watching soaps	Has lived in the same house all their life	Doesn't like coffee	Can touch their nose with their tongue
Can't swim	Is the youngest child	Has a university degree	Has an allergy of some kind	Can recite all the books of the Bible
Has been a teacher	Has been on television	Snores in bed	Became a Christian in their thirties	Has a 5-letter Christian name

### How to play

You can use the example Bingo card above or make up your own card. Print off enough copies for everyone.

Ask each group member to go round the room and find someone who can say 'Yes' to one of the descriptions on the Bingo sheet. Write their name in the appropriate box. Then find someone else who can say 'Yes' to another description, and so on. The first person to complete a line (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) can shout, 'Bingo!' If this happens very quickly, ask them to complete another line.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

### The woman at the well

#### John 4: 1-42

Read the passage and then play the film of the woman at the well.

Use the following link:

<https://youtu.be/09j-iteqHMI>

Alternatively, ask someone to read or perform the monologue on the following pages.



After the film or drama, ask your group the questions:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings and then ask for feedback.

## The woman at the well

He was in a bad mood as usual when I left the house. He'll be off soon I thought. He won't stick around. They never stick around. They make you feel special for a while but it doesn't last. No – it's not all their fault. It's mine as well. I find myself winding men up deliberately, daring them to go, and in the end they do. So what's that about – boredom? Fear of getting too close? I don't know. But I do know the special feeling never lasts.

So I made my way towards the well with my water jug. It was so hot; always is at midday, but I can't go any other time – too many people about, making judgements. Do I need to feel any worse than I do already?

But today as I approached the well I could see that I was not going to be alone. There was a man there. Shame. Mentally I braced myself for some kind of verbal attack, but as I got closer, I realised he wasn't from our town. In fact, he was a Jew! What on earth was he doing here? Well, at least he knew nothing about me. And at least there would be no conversation. Jews do not speak to Samaritans.

But I was wrong. He did speak to me. He asked me for a drink. That knocked me back a bit. I wasn't sure how to respond. But there was nothing accusing about him, and it felt good to be asked for help. I wanted to know more; why was he talking to me, a Samaritan woman? So I asked him, and then he said that if I knew who he was, I would be asking him for living water.

Well, I was really curious now. Who was he? I wanted him to say more and we were sitting at Jacob's well, so I said; "Are you greater than our father Jacob?"

He didn't say yes or no but went back to the water theme, which was clearly important to him. He said that he had water that would mean never being thirsty again. Oh, that sounded good; that sounded so good; the thought of not dragging myself to the well every day in the heat. And then there was something in his voice, something that sounded like concern and compassion. I hadn't heard that tone of voice for a long time. So I asked him for this water, whatever it was. And then those words.

"Go and get your husband," he said.

Here we go, here comes the condemnation! I could have lied, but somehow I didn't want to. He was sincere so I wanted to be too.

"I have no husband," I said.

"You are right," he said, "for although you have had five husbands, the man you are with now is not your husband."

There it was, out of the blue! A complete stranger, laying my life before me! He knew me! How did he know? Who was he? But again there was no condemnation. There was warmth in those eyes. There was love in those eyes. And then for some reason I was on the defensive again, doing what I always do with men, pushing them away, pointing out our differences.

"We worship on the mountain," I said, "you worship in the temple."

"A time is coming," he said, "when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

'A time is coming.' So this man was a prophet then.

"I know the Messiah is coming," I said. "He will answer all our questions. He can save someone like me."

"That is who I am," he said, "I who speak to you."

And suddenly, after years of rejection, I felt special again. I felt like he had been waiting for me. He had put himself in a place where he could have been rejected, right in the middle of Samaria, so he could speak to me. I could not keep that to myself, so I gave him one last look and ran back to the town. Now I want to be seen. I want everyone to come and see this man who knows me, everything about me, and loves, yes, loves me anyway - and offers me living water.

So come, come to him! Come as you are, come.





## Questions

There are several questions below. Choose the questions that you feel are the most appropriate.

### Questions on the passage

- What were the differences between Jesus and the Samaritan woman that could have made it difficult for Jesus to listen to, and speak with her?
- How does Jesus treat this woman in conversation with her?
- What was the woman's response to the conversation? What was her impact on her community? What can we learn from her?
- Why does the woman leave her jar at the well? Compare this with Jesus' comment to the disciples when they return with food.



## Individual response

- Do you find certain people difficult to talk to? Why?
- In what ways have you experienced living water in your life? What is your responsibility in drinking, sharing and making known this living water?
- Do you find it easy to talk about Jesus to non-believers? If so, where does the difficulty lie?
- What or who has been the most powerful witness to you in your spiritual life, and why?
- The woman brought her empty jar to the well to be filled. She also brought her empty self, little suspecting that it too would be filled that day. What brings you to the well?



## Church and community response

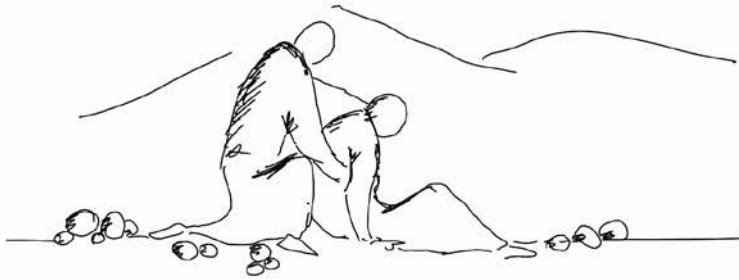
- What is true worship about? Is it a place, an attitude, words or deeds?
- What are the prejudices that exist in our churches and communities?
- What is already being done to address these prejudices? Can we join in this work?
- What other steps can we take to break down barriers resulting from prejudice?
- What are the qualities of water? List as many as you can. In what specific ways can the church be living water in our communities?

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

### The Good Samaritan

Luke 10: 30-37

Read the passage and then ask four people to read or perform the monologues on the following pages.



After the reading(s) or drama, ask your group:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings, and then ask for feedback.

# The Good Samaritan

Priest

This is one journey I didn't want to have to make. I really hate travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. It's 17 miles and yesterday it was incredibly hot. I was grateful for the donkey. About half way, I saw in the distance there was something blocking my path. As I got closer, I could see it was a man lying in the road. Closer still, I was horrified to see that he had no clothes and looked to have been beaten up. In fact he could have been dead! 'Thieves and robbers' I thought. This is not a place to hang around. I shifted the mule to the other side of the road and kept going. This was no place for me. I'm a priest and there was no way of knowing whether this man was a Jew, as he had no clothes. If he wasn't, I could defile myself if I was to get involved. And think of the shame and embarrassment that would cause to me and my family. No, it's best to keep well away. Besides which, those robbers could still be in the area, so I need to keep moving.

Levite

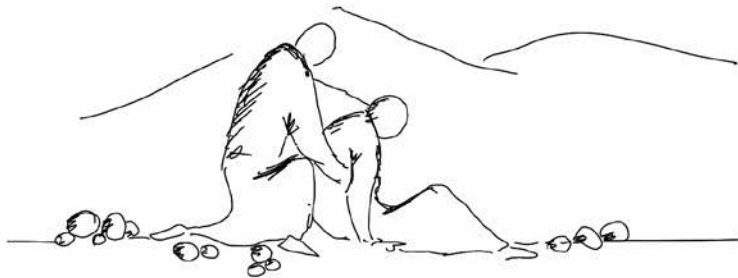
I've travelled this road before, but this time seemed especially long. Such a hot day, and I had to do this journey on foot. Ahead of me I could see a man on a donkey. How I envied him and his ride. I think it was a priest, from what I could see of his clothing. I noticed that at one point he moved to the other side of the road and seemed to increase his speed. As I got closer to that point I could see why he had moved: there was a man in the road, very bloody and completely naked. He wasn't dead, but close to it. Yes, I can understand a priest getting out of there. It would be the right thing to help of course, but I wasn't sure if he was Jewish, and if a priest can pass by, then I think it's ok for me to as well. Besides, if I was to stop and help, someone might see me and report me to the officials, and say I had committed a crime against the injured man. No, it's too risky. Besides which, I'm really tired; I just need to find a place to stay.

### Samaritan

The poor man. It was clear as soon as I got to him that if he had to spend much longer in this heat with no water he would be dead. There was blood all over him – and flies. He didn't have the strength to get rid of them. As I bent over, his eyes begged me to do something for him. He was clearly in a lot of pain. I had some oil and wine, and a cloth in my bag, so I bathed his wounds with oil and wine, and bandaged them. I could see he was definitely a Jew. As I bathed his wounds, I thought of the hostility between our nations, and the events of the past that had caused them. They seemed unimportant, faced with such suffering. I looked around me for evidence of the men who had done this to him, but no-one appeared. So I put the poor wretch on my donkey and led them towards Jericho. Luckily, on the outskirts of the city there was an inn that would take him, so I paid the inn keeper some money to look after the man. He seemed nice enough – the inn keeper – but I know that if people don't pay their debts they can be arrested, so I assured him I would look in on my way back and pay more if necessary. He seemed to trust me. It felt good to be trusted, so I left the man in his care.

### Inn keeper

What a state this guy was in! The man who left him here – the Samaritan – he'd done as good a job as possible in patching him up, but he had been beaten up good and proper. It would take a bit of work to nurse him back to health. But, the Samaritan, he gave me some money – and promised to pay any more if necessary. Amazingly, I trust him. Well, if he can stop to care for a Jew, on that road of all places, he must be good man. He'll be back, I'm sure. Besides which, I've got nothing against the Samaritans. I'm not a political animal. Let bygones be bygones, I say. So we've taken the poor invalid to the one spare room. There's been a bit of a rush on rooms today, probably due to the heat. People can't make that extra mile to get into the heart of the city. So he's safely tucked away now – in the room between the Priest and the Levite.



## Questions

To deepen the learning, ask your group some or all of the following questions. Divide your group into smaller groups if appropriate.

- Compare the attitudes of the robbers, the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan?
- Why do we sometimes walk by on the other side?
- How might this incident have changed the traveller's life?
- What might a similar scenario be in our community? Try a role play.
- How, as a church community, do we harbour prejudice? Are there subtle ways in which we exclude people?
- What principles can we draw from this story that will help us as we build relationships with our community?

"To be a neighbour signifies the outpouring of compassion. And compassion always proceeds from that part of us that has been wounded, feels alienated, even despised, just like the Samaritan was. It is this wounded part of us that is able to reach out to another's hurt and pain without being superior or judgmental. That is to say, we are all Samaritans; we are all potentially wounded healers.

And so this parable says to each of us: Do not despise the wounds you have suffered, or even the ones you yourself have inflicted. It is there where your real humanity lies. Do not despise what you consider to be weak and unworthy of yourself. For as Jesus reminded us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Henri Nouwen



## From 'Who is my neighbour?' to 'How is my neighbour?'

There is much to learn from these two Bible studies. We see in both stories how love and acceptance is the key to unlocking potential and bringing positive change. As we think about our own churches in community, we need to consider the following principles as these are foundational for building strong relationships.

Principles of building community:

- Everyone is made in the image of God and we all have something to bring and we all need each other's help.
- We should relate to each other as people who possess and demonstrate the attributes of God.
- Rather than trying to fix people, seek to understand them and help them to find their own solutions to their challenges.
- Focus on activities that build community relationships at the same time as meeting a need.



Doing things for people as opposed to with people can have the following consequences:

- It can create a passive identity for receivers of assistance, who are defined by needs and problems.
- It can create a dependency.
- It can dehumanise people as it assumes people can't do things for themselves.
- It can create an unhealthy power dynamic – providers are in a position of power which can be disempowering to others.
- It doesn't bring long term change and it doesn't build mutual relationships.



“Nothing about us,  
without us, is for us”

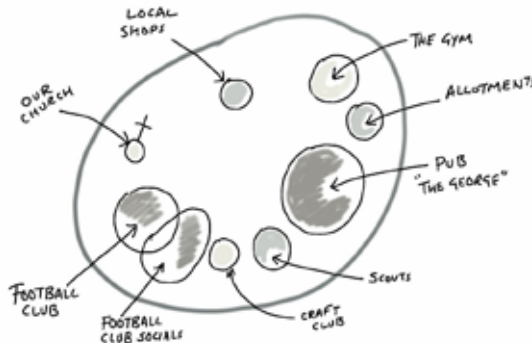
## NEXT STEPS

### The Chapati Diagram

One useful way of trying to understand the relationships within the community, and also between the church and community, is to use a method called chapati diagrams. This method explores the degree of influence different groups and institutions have, and the degree of connectedness the church has to its community. This exercise is done in two parts, and each part has a set of questions to facilitate some discussion.

To do this exercise you need the following materials:

- coloured card
- flipchart paper
- scissors and glue
- marker pens



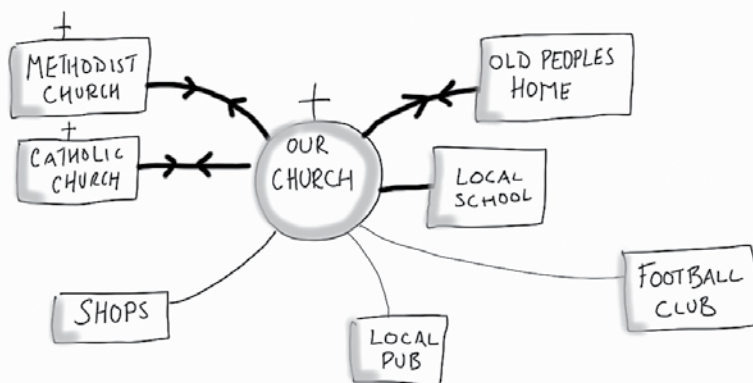
#### PART 1

1. Take a large piece of paper or flipchart and draw a large circle on it. Then, in discussion in the group, write a list of groups, institutions and businesses which have influence in the community.
2. Decide which groups, institutions or businesses have the most influence and which have the least. Cut out circles of coloured paper, or draw circles according to the degree of influence: the bigger the influence, the bigger the circle. For example, a local pub may host a range of community activities and is seen as a natural meeting point for anything to do with the local community. In contrast, a local Methodist Church may have very little influence, as its congregation is declining and has few links into the community.
3. Once all the circles have been placed on the bigger circle, discuss the following questions.
  - a) What does this tell us about our community, and how cohesive it is?
  - b) Which parts of the community are not represented, and why might this be?
  - c) Does this teach the church anything about its relationship to its community?



## PART 2

1. Take a large piece of paper or flipchart and draw a symbol that represents the church in the middle of it, leaving plenty of space around it.
2. Make a list of the relationships the church has with different groups and institutions within the community. Identify which relationships are strongest and which are weakest.
3. Cut out symbols or circles to represent the relationships the church has, and place the groups that the church has strong relationships with closest to the symbol of the church, and the groups that the church has weak relationships with further away.
4. Connect the different relationships with lines, using marker pens to show the frequency of contact. For example, if the church has a strong relationship with an old people's home, then you would draw a short thick line connecting the church to the old people's home. If the church has a weak relationship with the football club, then the line would be long and thin.
5. Use the following questions to discuss the chapati diagram you have developed.
  - a) Why does the church have strong relationships with some groups and not others?
  - b) Are there any groups the church should be connecting with, and why is this not happening?
  - c) What would be the ideal combination of relationships the church should have in its community?



## Building relationships in the community

The thought of building relationships in our community can be daunting, but we can take small steps. Never under-estimate the power of building one significant relationship. The story of the woman at the well shows that community transformation can be the result of showing love to one person. This can be true of our communities too. The following model shows us how.

### The ripple effect of relationship building

The diagram below shows three levels of response in building relationships with the local community. It starts at the individual level and then expands to a community response.



This is where an individual makes a connection with another individual in the community who may be vulnerable or marginalised in a particular way, for example, an isolated elderly person or a refugee. The individual response may take the form of befriending in order to build a good relationship of trust and support. In all these situations it is important that child protection and safeguarding issues are considered when preparing to work alongside vulnerable and marginalised individuals.

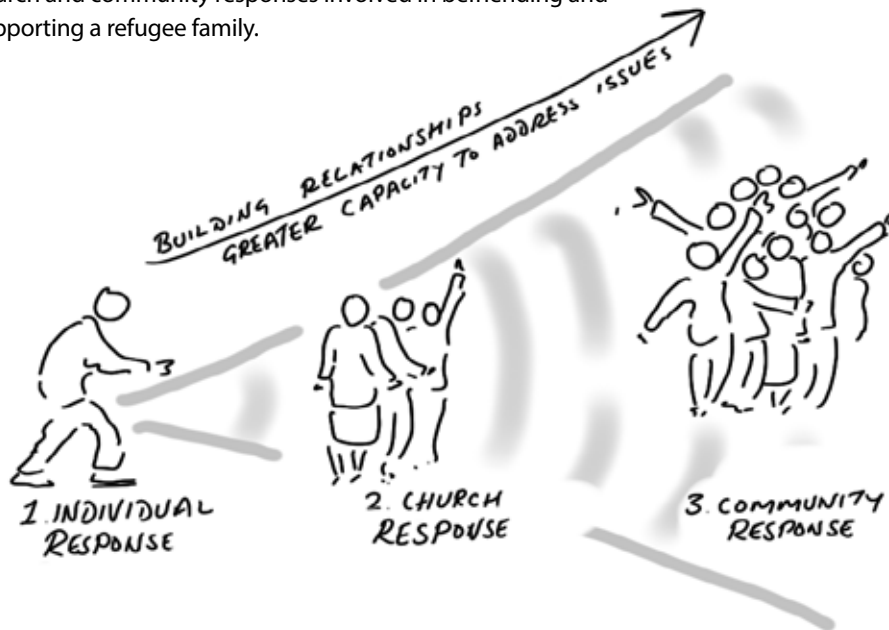
From the individual response it may be appropriate for other members of the church to be involved and this may involve providing additional support, such as sharing transport, providing meals, accompanying people to claim benefits or get advice from statutory authorities. As the church gains confidence in its response, look for opportunities to involve more vulnerable and marginalised individuals.

The church can play a key role as a catalyst in raising awareness in the wider community of a particular issue, such as isolation and loneliness, refugees, homelessness etc. This can lead to more volunteers being involved in supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups as well as be an opportunity to put pressure on local authorities to improve services or provide particular support to vulnerable and marginalised people.

## CASE STUDY

### Welcoming and integrating a refugee family

Below is a case study, based on a true story, showing the individual, church and community responses involved in befriending and supporting a refugee family.



A refugee arrives in a town, having received political asylum. A church member befriends him as he waits for approval for his family to join him. This involves meeting up for coffee, having meals at the church member's house and exploring common interests resulting in them working together on art projects.

Once the family is reunited, the church family offers support in working with the local authorities and providing furniture, hospitality and friendship. They also offer help and advice settling the children into local schools.

As the family tries to get more involved in the community, the community responds by giving the family a warm welcome in sports clubs, at youth events, community events and in giving employment opportunities. The refugee family are also given opportunities to share their experience and offer support to other refugees.

## Small group exercise

Look at the following four scenarios and using the ripple effect method, discuss how you could make an individual response, a church response and a community response to these situations. Once you have done this in small groups, share your ideas in a plenary discussion. Finally, find some key principles for building relationships with vulnerable people in different situations.

### Scenario 1

In this household, lives a lady in her early 70s. You have just heard from another neighbour that her husband died last week. On the very rare occasions in the past when you have both been in the street at the same time, you have stopped to have a brief chat. How could you get to know her better?



### Scenario 2

In this household, a family have recently arrived from Syria. You have noticed the husband shopping at the local supermarket but you have not spoken to him and you're not even sure if they speak English. They appear not to know anyone in the immediate community and look isolated. How could you get to know them better?



### Scenario 3

In this household, there is a single mum with three children aged 3, 5 and 8. You see her walking to and from the primary school most days. The children like to stroke your cat, and you talk to them quite often. They tell you about what they have been doing at school. Mum is quite shy but does say hello. How could you get to know them better?



### Scenario 4

You become aware of a family in the road that is under stress as one of the parents, a woman in her forties is terminally ill with cancer. They have two young children. How can you respond sensitively and appropriately to this situation?



# QUICK GUIDE TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- 1 THINK ABOUT WHO IN THE COMMUNITY YOU WOULD MOST LIKE TO GET TO KNOW? THINK ABOUT THE KEY PASSAGES IN SCRIPTURE THAT STIR YOU TO CONNECT WITH SOMEONE.



- 2 SMILING HAS AN AMAZING EFFECT ON PEOPLE. IT IS EQUAL TO EATING LOTS OF CHOCOLATE OR WINNING THE LOTTERY (RON GUTMAN: TED TALK) SO KEEP ON SMILING!



- 3 WHO IS MY LOCAL COMMUNITY NETWORK (FAMILY, FRIENDS, INTEREST GROUPS?)



- 4 EXPLORE OPTIONS AND TAKE ACTION!

ONE TO ONE CONTACT - WITH NEIGHBOURS

VOLUNTEER WITH EXISTING INITIATIVES

AS A CHURCH IDENTIFY GAPS IN SUPPORT & SET UP A TEAM TO WORK ON THIS

- 5 CREATE A NETWORK OF SUPPORT TO INDIVIDUALS AND TO GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY (PRAYER, ADVICE, PRACTICAL HELP, AND OF COURSE ☺)



Bill Gunkelers

## CASE STUDY

### Befriending homeless young people

Seaford Court is a hostel for homeless young people in Wokingham, Berkshire. Many of these young people have been kicked out of home for various reasons and several have some kind of addiction.

Every Tuesday evening, a team of volunteers from the local Baptist church visit the young people there. Together they create a home environment by playing games together, cooking and eating together or watching TV or films. During the course of these activities, the young people share their lives and their challenges with the volunteers, who listen and empathise as well as share their own stories. Volunteers also offer advice and any help they can in order for these young people to make healthy life choices.

Sometimes, they will all go out of the hostel to take part in outdoor activities such as canoeing or rock climbing, or a visit to the local bowling alley. Over the eight years that the volunteers have been visiting, residents have come and gone, but the the presence of the church has been a constant fixture.

Interviews with the young people have revealed that perceptions of church and Christians have completely changed through this building of mutual relationships. Some have even ventured into church, secure in the knowledge they are loved and accepted for who they are. They have found that church is less about religion and more about family and community. As one interviewee said,

“It’s like Christmas when you’ve got all your cousins round.”

The love the volunteers have for each other is as powerful a witness as the love they have for the young people. After a weekend of canoeing and camping, one interviewee remarked on the “humble happiness” she saw in the volunteers.

“They weren’t happy about mobile phones and stuff like that - they were happy ‘cos they had a marshmallow on a stick - I’d like to be happy like that”

This shows that love and acceptance along with demonstrating a different way of being can lead to a desire for change and a more positive way of life.

**Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.**

1 Thessalonians 2:8

## Worship response

Build a wall of rocks or large stones. This wall represents our prejudices that create a barrier between us and our community, and also between us and God.

Invite your group, one by one, to take a rock or stone and go and sit down. Time should be given to think about any prejudices or fears your group may have, and the effect these have on them and their community. Some may want to share with the group, but no pressure should be put on anyone to do this.

Write OUR CHURCH on a piece of paper and OUR COMMUNITY on another piece of paper and place them on the floor, several feet apart. One by one, invite your group to lay their rock on the ground to make stepping stones between the two pieces of paper, symbolising that when we give our prejudices to God in prayer we can connect with our community.

Have a time of prayer. Pray for God to remove these prejudices and to replace them with grace and love for God and for our neighbour. You can conclude with the prayer below.



Prayer

Lord, Jesus Christ,

who reached across the ethnic boundaries  
between Samaritan, Roman and Jew,  
who offered fresh sight to the blind and freedom  
to captives,  
help us to break down the barriers in our  
community,  
enable us to see the reality of racism and bigotry,  
and free us to challenge and uproot it  
from ourselves, our society and our world.

Amen.

“Whoever drinks the  
water I give him will  
never thirst.

Indeed the water I give  
him will become in him  
a spring of water welling  
up to eternal life.”

John 4:14





