

A MANIFESTO for the missional people of our missional God

WE appear to have come to the end of the course, but we've only just begun! We have gained a newfound confidence in the power of the Gospel to change us. Our increasing reliance on Jesus is transforming us into more holy, kind, merciful, loving, giving people. We are encouraged. If simple Gospel faith can change big messes like us, it can change the world!

We sense that God wants to use us, to send us on a grand adventure to share the Good News with others. This link between faith and action is not surprising, for, at its very heart, the Gospel is *missional*. God sought us (his avowed enemies), found us, saved us and then did the unthinkable, adopted us into his family. And now, having made us his own, he calls us into partnership with him as "Kingdom builders" to win and disciple all those Jesus has purchased with his blood from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Rev.5:9) This Gospel has so possessed us we cannot remain mute and immobile. We are compelled by love to enlist!

Our increased motivation should not come as a surprise. Indeed, one of the surest signs of genuine spiritual renewal is that the Spirit propels us into ever more self-forgetful, others-centred living. And, we are compelled to speak out even though our culture tells us to hush-up—that faith in Jesus is a personal matter one must keep to oneself. We are possessed with a holy restlessness at the sight of the millions of people all around us—lost, enslaved by their own appetites and bent on destroying themselves and others. As God's loved ones, we know we must share the Good News with them, and that if we keep silent, the renewing work he has begun in us will wither and die. The time has come to *risk or rust!*

But how does our faith translate into shoe leather? That is the subject of this final lesson. Our focus has been missional from the beginning (Ezek.36:22ff), but now it's time to *launch the ship of your life, the "HMS ME"* into the high seas of ministry to others. Scary? Of course, but remember, you are not alone. You are just one of a grand armada of "Gospel ships", all captained by King Jesus and indwelt by his Spirit. He will lead you; he will supply the gifts and strength you need to do all He asks you do. Your job is to listen to him, keep your eyes fixed on him, depend on him, and in that posture, *follow*.

Are you ready then?

"RISK OR RUST!"

Visioning our mission:
Because our God is a missional God, we are a missional people!

I. OUR GOD IS A MISSIONAL GOD

A. Let's look at the 'FOREST' of history so we don't get lost in the trees. Context!

God's heartbeat is to win the rebels of this world back to himself, and when he calls us into his family, we are swept up into God's great plan for the ages, a plan devised "before the foundation of the world" (Eph.1:4; 1Pet.1:20). The Cross of Jesus Christ was not God's "Plan B." There never was another plan. The Old Covenant of the Law was like those dodgy light bulbs on sale at Tesco—engineered to burn out in two weeks (planned obsolescence).

The Gospel, on the other hand, is a plan so brilliant, Peter says the angels are stunned as they watch it unfold (1Pet.1:12). Think of it. The angels were among God's first created beings. They saw one of their own rebel against God,



Launch of the Gospel ship - HMS ME!

and then looked on helplessly as he lured our first parents to disobey him and bring down on all creation. They saw Paradise created, then lost. They formed a choir to herald the incarnation of God's Son, ministered to him when he was tempted in the wilderness, witnessed his death on the cross, announced his resurrection at the empty tomb, explained his

ascension to the bewildered disciples, and welcomed him back to heaven as he victor over sin and death and hell. And, they are watching now—in holy awe—as in this generation, we are locked in battle with our triple enemy, the world, the flesh and the devil.

And now God has called us to enter this Great Story, HIStory, to join him on a mission to see *his Kingdom come and his will be done on this earth as it is in heaven*. He will make us one family, his family, and, when he deems the time is right, judge all mankind by the Man he has appointed as the heir of all things. The paradise lost will be regained when he refashions this cursed creation into a new heaven and a new

earth where nothing but righteousness dwells. He will be our God, and we will be his people! (2Pet.3:13; Rev.21:1; Heb.8:10)

This is our grand context. This is our purpose, our story, our *raison d'être*, our hope, our future, and we simply cannot live self-serving lives in the light of it. God calls us to *partner* with him in the great enterprise of building the Kingdom of His dear Son. Let your heart be captivated by God's vision for the nations. Let your heart be stirred by the glorious strains of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*:

"The kingdom of this world, is become, the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" (Cf. Rev.11:15)

B. God's heart has always been a missionary heart. He declared his redemptive purpose immediately after the fall (the *protoevangelion*, or first Gospel) in Genesis 3:15, and in scores of Old Testament passages thereafter. This is just a sampling:

- **Genesis 12:3** God promised Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Israel was a covenant people called for a purpose—to evangelise the world, to call the nations away from their idols! Tragically, lacking a new heart and the Holy Spirit, they embraced every idol and rejected God. (Ps.106:34-39)

- **Deuteronomy 10:17-19** "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords... He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien [non-Jew], giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt."

- **1 Chronicles 16:24** "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all the peoples."

2 Chronicles 6:32-33 At the dedication of the temple, King Solomon prayed this amazing prayer: "Lord, do whatever the foreigner asks of you so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel..."

- **Isaiah 56:7** "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

- **Jeremiah 16:19-21** "O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, 'Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good. Do men make their own gods? Yes, but they are not gods!' Therefore I will teach them—this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD."

- **Daniel 7:13,14** "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

- **Zephaniah 2:11; 3:9** "Nations on every shore will worship him"; "Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord."

- **Zechariah 2:10** "Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the LORD. "Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you."

- **Malachai 1:11** "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty."

Has your heart been captivated by God's love for the nations?

BUT, how would God accomplish this? Judah and Israel, appointed as God's missionaries, were busy burning their sons in the fire to *Molech*, so were hardly in a position to be his global change-agents. (2K.17:17,31;22:6; Ezek.16:20)

Answer: GOD'S MESSIAH-SON, "the desire of all nations," would come!

- **PSALM 22:1,16,18,27-31 - A Messianic Psalm** David writes autobiographically, but by the Holy Spirit, he speaks prophetically of Jesus the Son of David as well: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?... They pierced my hands and my feet"... They cast lots for my clothing.... All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him.... Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done it."

- **Isaiah 9:6;11:10 - Messiah** "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious."

THE MESSIAH arrives!

• **Luke 2:8-11;13,14 (ESV)** *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

• **Luke 2:29-32** The prayer of Simeon when he saw the child Jesus in the temple: *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel."*

THIS is God's vision for the nations! This is the historical and spiritual context in which we are living today. God has called us, both Jew and Gentile, to inherit the promise made to Abraham so that all the nations of the earth will be blessed as we put our faith in Jesus the Messiah.

How exciting to be caught up in a story that is so much greater than just *"Jesus for me."*

BUT, what are we to do and be in the light of all this? Hopefully, in the discussion that follows, we will have cause to *rejoice* in the things we see we're doing well, feel a *holy discontent* over what we realise we're doing wrong, and, be filled with a *Holy Spirit-led passion to repent and change!*

God is a missional God, therefore...

II. WE ARE HIS MISSIONAL PEOPLE - God's Family, his Kingdom Builders

Good news: We are not called to be "Lone Rangers" in mission. This is comforting since most of us lack the intestinal fortitude to go it alone in the face of an increasingly hostile world. Ours is a *corporate* task. We are the body of Christ, brilliantly designed so that the weakness of one of us will be augmented by the strength of another (Rom.12:5-7).

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and Ephesians 4:1-16, Paul explains that each congregation is a *body* in which God has placed hands and feet and eyes. There is unity in diversity, and as each one of us does his/her part, we all grow up into

the head which is Christ who supplies each of us with the energy we need.

And, as we grow in love for God and our neighbour, we will be *propelled* by grace to live a vibrant, balanced life that has a threefold focus: **UP - UPREACH** (worship, both private and public), **IN - INREACH** (building up God's family the church), and **OUT - OUTREACH** (joining with his people in the exciting enterprise of extending the reign of King Jesus throughout the earth). Let's have a look at each of these.

A. UP! UPREACH We are a WORSHIPPING community.

Every child of God is called to be an active, faithful member of a Christian congregation. The Bible

knows nothing of solo Christians. On the contrary, we are admonished: *"Do not give up meeting together as some are doing, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching"* (Heb.10:25).

It's true. We are greatly **encouraged** when we see the faces of our Christian family, and are **discouraged** when some are missing. Not only is faithfulness at worship a very tangible way to love God and one another, it is the fountainhead of mission! (Ps. 105:1-4)

What a joy to come together every Lord's Day for a "family reunion". Led by the Spirit, once commoners, now God's sons and daughters, have an audience with The King! Dust communes with Deity as together we *"slip the surly bonds of earth and touch the face of God."*¹ Brothers and sisters, **this is the stuff of glory!**

Psalm 100 (NKJV)

*Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!
Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before His presence with singing.
Know that the LORD, He is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.
For the LORD is good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to all generations.*

UPREACH! On the Lord's Day, with one heart and voice we praise him, thank him and give gifts to him. And, as we study the Scriptures, he speaks to us. He teaches us sound doctrine and

¹ after John G. McGee, RAF 1941, "High Flight"

**Our threefold vision:
UPreach,
INreach,
OUTreach.**



shows us how to live holy lives. We celebrate the sacrament of baptism, applying the covenant sign to his called-out people. We feed on Christ's body and blood as we take the Lord's Supper together. Our worship stirs up our love for God and one another, invigorating the life of the body.

Our worship leaders labour to keep the Gospel central so that our visitors will hear it and we will keep re-hearing it. As pastor Rick Downs

Doing is motivated by looking. We do right things as we fix our eyes on the right person—Jesus!

says, "I preach the Gospel to my people every week because they forget it every week!" (viz. Peter in Gal.3:11-21) Indeed, it is the Gospel that motivates us to love and good works, so the teaching and preaching must ground our obedience in Gospel faith

(4-3). As that happens, we will obey God out of grateful joy, not out of duty, guilt or fear.

- **We** ensure that the worship music and singing are lively and of a high standard so that we and our visitors are neither embarrassed nor bored by a funeral parlour atmosphere.

- **We** involve the congregation in worship (participatory vs. spectator). We use Gospel-rich liturgy and antiphonal (responsive) readings to keep the people alert and involved. (12-10)

- **We** call the congregation to *consciously commune* with Christ in the Lord's Supper, to "look" at him, talk to him, and confess their sins to him (12-11). Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," but we can forget to remember. So, we structure communion to maximise remembering. We expect to see tears of repentance and tears of joy each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

- **We** are fueled by *Kingdom-centred prayer!* (Not by praying for our aunt's cousin's hangnail.)

EVALUATE your church's UPreach

- 1) What are our strong points?
- 2) What are our weak points.
- 3) What steps do we need to take to enhance our Sunday morning worship experience?
- 4) If we could put question 3) to Jesus, what do you think he would suggest?

But UPREACH is not the end. It leads us somewhere. True worship doesn't put us to sleep. It *motivates us* to love and good works—into mission! Being in God's presence God *energises us* for ministry to the body of Christ (**INREACH**) and, propels us out of our local congregation to take the Gospel to a lost world (**OUTREACH**).

B. IN! INREACH We are a NURTURING community. We build one another up.



A football match has been described as 30,000 fans desperately in need of exercise cheering on 22 men desperately in need of rest—hardly Paul's vision for the church: ⁷"**But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it....**

¹¹ *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [And why do we have leaders?] - to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. [The result?] Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." - Eph.4:7,11-16*

- **So, church is not a spectator sport**, a "sit and listen" social club. We don't pay the pastor to do the work of ministry, we do it! We are a training and equipping body, and our motto is "Every Member a Minister!"

- **We** take discipleship seriously, and are actively discipling the congregation in how to live and minister to others on a grace foundation. (A course like *Grace4Life* can be useful here.)

- **We** are busy identifying, developing, encouraging and utilising everyone's natural talents and spiritual gifts. (But the **weak** and infirm are honoured and given special care. Rom.15:1; 1Th.5:14)

- **We** love and build one another up. ("*Observable love is the final apologetic.*" - Francis Schaeffer on Jn.13:34,35; 17:21)

- **We** bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. ("*Love one another as...*")

- **We** are careful not to pander to the wealthy and powerful. Classism, sexism and racism have no place among us. (Jas.2:1-5)

- **We** are becoming "self-feeding" Christians. We provide materials to encourage every able person to pray and read the Word daily. (*One Year Bible*, etc. See: Lesson 6.)

- **We** encourage Scripture memory. (Try having "verse of the month" that all learn and recite together. It's fun, not work!)

- **We** have midweek "home groups" where we study the word, share our needs and pray for one another. These informal times promote spirited interaction, loving body life, and provide a seed bed for profound spiritual transformation.

• **We** train ourselves in *apologetics* so we can answer everyone concerning the hope that is in us (1Pet.3:15). We study books like Keller's *Reason for God* and Robertson's *The Dawkins Letters* so are not intimidated by the atheistic propaganda the world is constantly hurling against us and our faith.

EVALUATE your church's INreach

- 1) What are our strong points?
- 2) What are our weak points.
- 3) What steps do we need to take to enhance the way we love, care for and develop the spiritual gifts of one another?
- 4) If we put question 3) to Jesus, what do you think he would suggest?

C. OUT! OUTREACH! We take the Gospel to the world.

Jesus came to earth to build a temple—not a brick and mortar building, but a "spiritual temple" of "living stones" (1Pet.2:5). We are His temple, the building in which he delights to dwell by his Holy Spirit.

We are a huge temple—tens of millions strong with thousands being added every hour! And, we are *on the move* with a mandate from our King to cover the globe, telling every person of his saving grace, calling them to repent their sins, turn to him in faith, and surrender to his loving Lordship!

Matthew 28:16,18-20 (NLT); 24:14

"Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go...

We preach the Gospel of the Kingdom through WORD and DEED ministry.

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son

and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

In fact, we have a twofold mandate from Jesus—to minister to the world through *word* and *deed*. Historically, the **liberal** church has neglected the former and we **Evangelicals** the latter. But the Gospel of the Kingdom embraces both in a holy balance. Without the message of the Cross, bellies are filled but souls are lost. And without compassionate deed ministry, our lack of love invalidates our attempts at witness.

1. WORD MINISTRY

We preach and teach the Gospel of *repentance* toward God and *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ.

• **We teach what JESUS taught:**

John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

• **We preach what PETER preached:**

Acts 2:38; 4:10,12 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.... Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

• **We preach what PAUL preached:**

Romans 1:16,17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

More on word ministry shortly.

2. DEED MINISTRY

Jesus did not mention deed ministry in what we call "The Great Commission," but there can be no mistaking the importance he attaches to it.

• **Matthew 25:34-40** "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Then Jesus indicted the goats!)

• **James 3:16-19** says that failing to care for the poor of our community is the epitome of dead faith.

• **1 John 3:16-19** "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue

but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence."

• **Galatians 2:9,10** - The Apostles in Jerusalem were tasked with evangelising the Jews, and Paul and Barnabas with reaching the Gentiles. Paul says, "They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was *eager* to do." **Indeed**, Paul (*the evangelist*) organised a collection in Asia Minor for people in famine-stricken Palestine.

The Scriptures are clear: A "faith" that does not propel us into involvement in the lives of the poor is not proper Gospel faith.

DEED ministry in church history

• **1st Century** documents describe an amazing Christian "outreach"—collecting the abandoned dead bodies of societal outcasts to give them a proper burial.

• **2nd Century** documents tell us that Christians made "baby runs" to collect unwanted infants left on doorsteps to die. And the hostile watching world took notice. The **Roman Emperor Julian** (AD 355-363) was one of the chief persecutors of Christians. He admitted in disgust, "The godless Galileans feed our poor in addition to their own!" (He deemed us "godless" because we refused to bow down to Roman deities).

Historian Eberhard Arnold notes, "Most astounding to the outside observer was the extent to which poverty was overcome in the vicinity of the communities, through voluntary works of love, Christians spent more money in the streets than the followers of other religions spent in their temples."

• **This spirit continued** in the pre- and post-Reformation Church. In the 18th Century, **German Moravian** missionaries entered a "Lazarhouse" (leper colony) in South Africa to take the Gospel and care for the sick, and died there. In the 19th Century, it was an English Evangelical, **William Wilberforce** and his "Clapham Sect" who led the movement to end the slave trade. Charles Spurgeon was one of England's greatest preachers, and his close friend, **Lord Shaftesbury** brought cemetery reform, clean water, sewer systems, and mental hospitals to London. He also sponsored child labor legislation, reducing the work day from 12 to 10 hours. It was said Lord Shaftesbury taught much of Spurgeon's congregation to read and kept them alive so Spurgeon could preach the Gospel to them. D. L. Moody (the Billy Graham of the 19th century) won thousands of students to Christ. His compatriot **John R. Mott** worked with Moody to build little community centers to get young men off the street. They were called YMCA's—*exemplary word and deed teamwork!*

• **Live Green.** Let's not mimic our forbears whose "dark satanic mills" fouled the spring from which they drank. Our planet is a global village, and we show love for God and our neighbour (and thus fulfill the whole law) when we act as its responsible stewards and caretakers. We Evangelicals should be *eco-pacesetters*. How? See: <http://arochalivinglightly.org.uk/>

III. DEVELOP A STRATEGY FOR YOUR CHURCH'S WORD AND DEED OUTREACH

The aim is not just numerical growth, but the expansion of the Kingdom of Jesus in this world beginning in the area where he planted you.

As congregations, we need to ask ourselves some fundamental questions:

- **Is our purpose** mere survival, or spreading the Kingly reign of Jesus by word and deed?
 - **What is our plan** for doing *our* part to reach *our* local area and *our* lost world for Jesus?
 - **Is mission a once-a-year conference** or a year-round passion?
 - **Are we** "standing on the promises" or just sitting on the premises?

Is your church a fortress with a "Please come" mentality, or a Holy Army with a "LET'S GO!" mentality?

• **DEMOGRAPHICS!** *Know your "hood."* Who lives around you? Ethnicity? Ages? Nationality? Religion? Economic and educational status? Spiritual, social, material and educational needs?

• **VISION: THINK PARISH—your parish!** The parish concept is powerful for it helps militate against our natural tendency toward *ingrownness*. It reminds us that God has put us in a locality to be salt and light. **Draw a large circle** around your church on a map (1/2-3/4 mile, walking distance) and, *as a congregation*, claim spiritual ownership of that sector as *your* parish! Don't be a fortress with a "Please come." mentality, but an army on the move with a "LET'S GO" mentality!

SMALL? Think sister church partnership! Numbers of churches in the UK have established links with stronger churches in other parts of the UK or abroad. Ministry teams fly over (both ways) to help their partner congregations. We are in contact with churches in England and Scotland who have such programs. Write for information.

SPECIFICALLY, how might mission look for you and your church? Here is a tiny sampling:

• **VISION: Signage - a simple first step.** Can people *find* your church? (My wife and I have visited 40+ churches in the UK, and twice we have returned home on a Sunday unable to find the place of meeting—using a SatNav.) **BE SURE you have bold signage** so visitors can find you. If they can't, no matter how brilliant your programme, you will not grow!

Many churches today moan that they're dying. Are they dying—or committing suicide?

• **VISION: Evangelism training!** Run an evangelism/apologetics training course. Train one another to answer the difficult (often good) questions post-modern skeptics are asking. Run an *Alpha* or *Christianity Explored* course. (Try meeting in your local pub. Yes, the pub!)

• **VISION: An Evangelistic Prayer Table!** Yes! Sam (who is a "BBC") and Daniel (who is German) are twenty-something members of All Souls Clubhouse. They set up a "Prayer Table" every Friday on a London street. Their signboard reads, "**May we pray for you?**" Yes, people do ask! And yes, many walk by mocking, but some return later in tears to apologise and ask for prayer. *Because* Sam and Daniel are there, the Holy Spirit works. *Because* they sow, they reap!

• **VISION: ESL Classes - Wilton Community Church** in Muswell Hill is small, but they have hired 2 full-time staff to teach English. They are seeing people come to Christ and join the fellowship!

• **VISION: Budget to lose money (with a smile).** One Saturday each month, WCC has a book table on the high street. Christian books are offered at reduced prices and people feel more free to converse about spiritual things.

• **VISION: A "Moms & Tots"** program provides a valuable service *and* builds Gospel friendships with the unchurched families nearby. Love!

• **VISION: Christmas Caroling** - Have a group of volunteers carol round your parish. Decide on a "programme" of three or four songs, interspersed with short Scripture texts. *Practice!* Yes, rehearse so you don't sound like rubbish. Carol one or two nights before Christmas. Offer people a tasteful Gospel tract and a flyer about your church and its upcoming services and ministries. Love!

• **VISION: The Rahab Project** - an outreach to prostitutes in Reading, England by Reading Community Church. Their church vision statement: *To be a church without walls, a place of comfort, welcome and access for our community where the love of Jesus can be shared.* See the website: <http://www.themustardtree.org>

• **VISION: A Reverse Confessional Booth?** (Viz. *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller) Yes, this one is radical! Put a small booth on the pavement in front of your church, dress in monk's robes, and when people come by, *confess the sins of the church!*

• **VISION: Ministries of mercy** - If your congregation's resources are meagre, partner

with other ministries. London City Mission, World Vision, The Tear Fund and Samaritan's Purse are reputable and worthy of support. *Keep the church informed with regular updates* so they feel a keen sense of ownership in the project. **Pray about** whether you (or perhaps your Home Group) might sponsor a needy child. Get *the textbook* on mercy ministry: *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Timothy Keller, 1997).

• **VISION: ASSIMILATION!** Have a plan for helping *visitors* become *believers*, *believers* *belongs*, and *belongs* *members!* **What is your plan** for welcoming and following up visitors? For learning their spiritual condition? For sharing the Gospel with them? Have one or more people designated as "Welcomers."

Find volunteers to take visitors out to lunch or to their homes after worship. **All Souls Clubhouse** has a Sunday lunch. If you have genuine Christians visiting, as soon as there is sufficient trust, give them a job. Pastor **Eddie Larkman** of Rayners Lane Baptist Church is a master at this. "*If we don't involve new people in ministry,*" he says, "*we make them permanent guests who never feel they really belong.*"

• **VISION: Regional spiritual renewal of the churches in your area.** When Jesus looks at the (Gospel preaching) churches in your area, he sees *all of you* as his flock. Are there pastors and churches nearby who need your encouragement? Are there pastors you could disciple in grace? Don't be locked into focusing only on your church. Jesus isn't! *Be an agent of Gospel renewal right where you are!*

EVALUATE your church's OUTreach

- 1) What are our strong points?
- 2) What are our weak points.
- 3) What steps do we need to take to improve the way we are reaching out into our "parish," our city and our world?
- 4) If we put question 3 to Jesus, what suggestions might offer?

DISCOURAGED? There is much to be discouraged about! *Seek help!* Get a group of leaders together—not to moan about how hard things are, but to *pray* to the Lord of the harvest to envision and empower you to bold initiatives. Brainstorm; share ideas; provoke one another to love and good works. **And**, hold one another *lovingly accountable* to do what you say you will do.

THINK KINGDOM! Consider a multi-church outreach. Show the world you don't compete, but rather serve One Lord!

The spiritual law of sowing and reaping.
Simple form:
Sow > reap.
No sow > no reap.

WINDING IT ALL UP: A FISH STORY

There is an old fish story told in America's deep south, and given the reputation of the French Cajuns living in the backwaters of Louisiana, it is probably true.

James "Buck" Simmons, the local fish and game officer (Game Warden) in Thibodaux ("Tibba-dough") Louisiana had taken note of a local fisherman, "Boo" Bellefontaine.

When nobody was catching fish, Boo would inevitably return home with a boat full. Suspicious, Officer Simmons questioned Boo as to what his method might be. There are two common (and highly illegal) methods used by Cajun poachers—spreading poison on the surface of the water, and using dynamite to stun fish. Much to his surprise, the Warden's query won him an invitation to accompany Boo the following morning with the promise "to see my secret in action!"

So, bright and early, they arrived at Boo's favourite spot, loaded their gear in the boat, and paddled away from the dock, making small talk as they went. Upon reaching the middle of the lake, Boo secured the boat with a small anchor, but, rather than picking up his fishing rod, he pried the top off an old wooden crate in the rear of the boat, produced *two bright red sticks of dynamite, lit the fuse on one, and tossed it over his shoulder into the water.* There was a thunderous **KAH-BLOOM!** as the dynamite exploded and dozens of fish floated to the surface.

The officer's jaw dropped. He could not believe his eyes on two counts, Boo's brazen disregard of the law, and his incredible success! But, just as Simmons sputtered, "**Y... you can't do this! It... It's against the law!**" Boo lit the second stick of dynamite, thrust it into the officer's hand and said, "**So what's it gonna be, officer? Are you gonna talk, or fish?**"

And THAT is the question we must answer today, isn't it? We have the Gospel; we have the Spirit. There is a lost and dying world out there in desperate need of our message. **So, brothers and sisters, as Boo put it so well, are we gonna talk—or fish?**

Matthew 4:18-22 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew.

They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "**Come, follow me,**" Jesus said, "**and I will make you fishers of men.**" At once they left their nets and followed him.

Acts Chapter 2 (selected verses)

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say...."

Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God... has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

And those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Peter was just a simple fisherman, but,

1. He understood the Gospel (finally).
2. He depended on the Holy Spirit.
3. He loved God and his neighbour, and...
4. He fished.



YOUR PERMANENT GRACE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Believe the Gospel.
2. Depend on the Holy Spirit.
3. Love God and your neighbour.
4. Fish.

To end this final Grace4Life session, as a response to what we have learned, the group may want to consider praying John Wesley's Covenant Prayer together (12-9), then close by praying for one another.

John Wesley's Covenant Prayer

1755

John Wesley wrote this Covenant Prayer in 1755 in the midst of the Great Awakening as a means for believers to reaffirm their baptismal vows. It is used by All Souls Clubhouse church of London at its Annual Meeting, and by Methodist and many other Protestant congregations around the world.

At All Souls Clubhouse, the prayer is printed weekly in the notices for one month prior to the Annual Meeting. The Vicar encourages members to study it seriously so that on the appointed day, it can be recited from the heart with integrity.

On Monday 11 September 1755, John Wesley held the first Covenant Service. He wrote in his journal: "I explained once more the nature of such an engagement, and the manner of doing it acceptably to God. At six in the evening, we met for that purpose at the French church at Spitalfields. After I had recited the tenor of the covenant proposed... all the people stood up in testimony of assent... about eighteen hundred persons. Such a night I scarce ever saw before. Surely the fruit of it shall remain for ever."

I am no longer my own, but Yours.

***Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.***

***Let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You,
exalted for You, or brought low for You.***

***Let me be full, or let me be empty.
Let me have all things, or let me have nothing.***

***I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to Your pleasure and disposal.***

***And now, Blessed and Glorious God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine and I am yours.***

So be it.

15 ... and afterward you will take me into glory.

***And this commitment now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.***

Amen

Psalm 73

An Antiphonal Reading

Congregation Left

Leader

Congregation Right

**1 SURELY God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.**

2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.

6 They scoff and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.

**8 They say, "How can God know? Does the most high have knowledge?"
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence.**

9 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God;

10 Then I understood their final destiny.

12 As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.

14 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel...

15 ... and afterward you will take me into glory.

(WOMEN - MEN - ALL)

16 WOMEN: Whom have I in heaven but you? And on earth, I desire nothing beside you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but GOD is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!

17 MEN: Those who are far from you will perish; you will destroy all those who are unfaithful to you.

18 ALL: But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge. I will tell abroad your mighty deeds.

3 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.

5 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.

7 Therefore people turn to them and drink up the waters of abundance.

11 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed - completely swept away by terrors!

13 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a brute beast before you.

The Confession of Sin

“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

- Matthew 8:2 -

1

**Minister: Let us
think about the times
we have failed to keep
God’s commandments.
When we would
prefer God
to be closing his eyes,
or blocking his ears...**

2

**Minister: What would we not want God
to see us doing?**

3

**Minister: What would we not want God
to see us doing?**

**What would we not want God
to hear us saying?**

4

Minister: What would we not want God to see us doing?

What would we not want God to hear us saying?

What would we not want God to know us thinking?

5

All praying:

***O God, You are worthy to be obeyed:
You see all things, You hear all things,
You know all things.***

***We repent of the times we
have broken your commandments
through the way we
act, speak and think.***

***Have mercy on us and forgive us,
and enable us to put things right,
Amen.***

Jesus reached out His hand...
'I am willing' He said. 'Be clean!'

- Matthew 8:3 -

All Souls Clubhouse



NOTE: These texts are used by All Souls Clubhouse London. Prepare 5 separate slides using MS Power Point (etc.) for use in leading a congregation in repentance.

Grace4Life - London UK - John W. Long, Jr. - www.grace4life.org

Preparation for the Lord's Supper

1

Minister

*'You are no longer foreigners and aliens,
but fellow citizens with God's people and
members of God's household, built on
the foundation of the apostles and the
prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself
as the chief cornerstone.'*

(Ephesians 2:19-20)

As the people of God, we break this
bread to share in the body of Christ.

People

**Though we are many,
we are one body -
for we all share in the one bread.**

2

Minister

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of the Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you -
and his blood which he shed for you.

Come to this table not because you are
strong, but because you are weak...

3

Minister

Come not because any goodness of your own gives you a right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come because you love the Lord a little and would like to love Him more.

Come not because you are worthy to approach Him, but because He died for sinners.

Come because He loves you and gave His life for you.

All Souls Clubhouse 

NOTE: These texts are used by All Souls Clubhouse London as well as by many other Protestant communions around the world.

Prepare 3 separate slides using MS Power Point (etc.) for use in preparing a congregation for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.