

Trinity Circuit Own Arrangement Service for June 2019 – August 2019

“Our Calling: Evangelism”

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this Local Arrangement service resource. It is the last of a set of four such services focussing on the four themes of the Methodist 'Our Calling' priorities, reaffirmed at the 2018 Methodist Conference. The theme for this service is “Our Calling: Evangelism”.

Please feel free to 'customize' your service to your own congregation... e.g. ... The hymns are only suggestions - if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, feel free to use those. This is *your congregation's service* of worship to God, so make it as individual as you think appropriate!

On page 4 * there is a reference to each member of the congregation receiving a piece of string with four knots on. This is as an aid to prayer. There will be members of the congregation quite capable of tying their own knots (!), but there may also be others e.g. those with arthritic hands, for whom this would be difficult. You will know what would be best for your congregation. Ready knotted strings seemed the simplest idea!

More information about Our Calling can be found on the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

and

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/responding-to-our-calling-questions-for-churches/>

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“Our Calling: Evangelism”

Introduction to the theme of the service: - Leader 1

Welcome to worship *this morning*. A few years ago the Methodist Church produced the statement ‘Our Calling’ in which they listed the four main callings of the Christian. They are: Worship; Learning and Caring; Service; and Evangelism. We have been asked to look again at how, as a Church, we might best respond to ‘Our Calling’ today. In our Own Arrangement services this year we have been looking at each calling in turn. Today we focus on the fourth of those callings - to evangelism and will be thinking how best we can share the story of God’s love. But first let us turn our hearts and minds to God, the Author of all, as we worship him. We sing our call to worship:

Call to Worship: - Leader 1 For our call to worship, we sing together....

Come, now is the time to worship..StF 24; MP1040 OR

Come let us all unite and sing... verses 1&2...H&P 31

Prayer: - Leader 2

God of past and present and future, God of eternity,
We gather together today to worship you, to offer you our praise and thanksgiving,
As our ancestors in the faith have done down through the years.
We are filled with wonder, Lord, that you can be the same yesterday, today and forever;
Our grandparents’, parents’ and children’s God as well as ours,
And that your love is born anew in every Christian’s heart and life,
Your words spoken afresh to each new generation.
God, we praise you, for you are truth; the truth for our lives, yesterday, today and forever.
In the name of Jesus, **Amen**.

Psalm: - Leader 2 (to be read responsively) Psalm 145:1-14 ...StF 836 or H&P 884A

Comment: - Leader 1 - We are called to evangelism. But what does that word ‘Evangelism’ mean? It comes from two words, meaning ‘good message’. The word ‘angel’ means ‘messenger’. We are called to be like the angels, delivering God’s good message, the Good News, to all. We learn much of what that message is from the Bible, where we read the continuing story of God and humankind, the ‘History of Salvation’, God’s Story. When we become evangelists, we are telling God’s Story. ‘Story’ not in the sense of a fairy tale, but in the way we tell the story of an event, a human life, a country or a community. Stories that bring truth to people, that explain and also get a response. This is what Jesus charged us to do...

Reading: - Reader 1 – Matthew 28:16 - 20

Comment: Leader 1 – But the first Christians found that there was so much more to telling the Good News than repeating Jesus’s teaching. They not only had the stories that Jesus told, but they had the Story of Jesus the Saviour itself.

Reading: - Reader 2 - Romans 10:10-17

HYMN: We have a gospel to proclaim...StF 418; H&P 465; MP 728

Sketch: - Readers 3 & 4

3: That was a good service today! I feel set up for the week. It gave me things to think about and encouragement for my Christian life. But the bit I didn’t enjoy was the challenge at the end. About sharing what I have received in church this morning with another person this week. Page 1

That made me feel uncomfortable. I'm no evangelical. My faith is a private, personal thing. I don't talk about it much, even to other Christians ... and I wouldn't know where to start.

4: I know what you mean. I get really embarrassed when people bounce up to me and ask me if I'm saved – which I am – or if I know what the Bible says – which I mostly do! If I feel like that, how would people who don't go to church feel if I did it to them? It would be as if I went up to them and started jabbering away in a foreign language! I just couldn't do that to them – whether I knew them or not! I should think it would put them off!

3: Then there are all those things that people say about Christianity. I haven't got an answer for them and I'm not sure whether, if I did, it would sound convincing. You know the sort of thing ... 'I'm just not religious'...'You don't have to be religious to live a good life'...'Christians, and the Church itself, are very hypocritical'...'Religion is the root of so much evil in our world.' 'I don't need faith and I can't believe in any of that religious clap trap.'...'If God exists, why does he allow so much suffering?'

4: Yes, somehow saying 'Jesus is the answer', even if we believe it, doesn't seem enough. But I do believe it. And every day I meet people I know who would be so much happier if they knew that God loves them, so much more fulfilled if they had a purpose for their lives, so much stronger if they were part of a loving, supporting community. Which is why I feel I really need to rise to the challenge of sharing the story of God's love with others....

Comment: - Leader 1

It's not easy, is it, telling the story today? We live in a society that is sceptical, where every idea and belief is questioned. We live in a society that is cynical, where goodness itself is treated with suspicion. We live in a society that is secular where faith in a loving God is seen as irrelevant to most people's lives, outdated, weird, out of touch with reality. Yet in other parts of the world Christianity is growing and thriving – often despite persecution and poverty. Our society may feel that it knows better, but it is not a happy, healthy society. How can we tell God's Story to our neighbours at this time, in this place? And can we find the wisdom and courage to do so?

Prayer of Confession: - Leader 2

We're so sorry, Lord, for the times when we've missed opportunities,
Through our silence, our judgemental attitudes, our slowness to help,
To reveal to others the story of your transforming love.

We confess to you:

Our lack of confidence in our Christian witness;
Our paralysing fear of what others will think of us;
Our loss of hope for our future.

Forgive us Lord, and give us the help of your Holy Spirit

To be your messengers in the world today. **Amen.**

Hear then, the Word of grace – our sins are forgiven – thanks be to God. Amen.

Offering:

Prayer: - Leader 2:

Loving God, with this offering we dedicate to you
All that we have, all that we are, all that we do and say.

We ask that you bless all we offer

And use it to share the Good News of Jesus with humankind. In his name, **Amen.**

HYMN: God forgave my sin*StF 424; MP 181*

Comment: - Leader 1

The challenge of evangelism in today's society is a big one. But we know that, despite the ways in which society has changed over the last two thousand years since Jesus came, God's love for us has not changed, and that human beings, with all their hopes and dreams, their fears and failings, have not changed either.

So it's fair enough to ask how did Jesus share God's story with those of his day? Yes, by his ministry of healing and friendship. Yes, by his death and resurrection. But also by his story telling. Jesus used stories that started where people were, that weren't difficult to understand, but carried a deep understanding about God and his kingdom. We call those stories 'parables'. Jesus taught in parables, because he knew that we can only learn Truth when we are challenged and helped to understand it for ourselves. As his followers we need to find such parables for today's society. How people respond to them is up to them...but we must try.

Reading: - *Reader 1* – Luke 8: 4-8

Reflection: - *Readers 4, 3, 2 & 1* – Reflection on the Parable of the Sower

4: I heard his words. They made sense at the time. 'That's right!' I thought. 'He's got it in one!'. But then a friend said to me 'You don't want to listen to him! He's only a working man – what can he know about the Almighty? Now, if you ask me, the truth is.....' And my friend's words made sense to me, too.

3. I heard his words. He certainly convinced me. What he had to say was wonderful news! I joined his group. I went to his church. It was great! But then, well, I got this really good new job. I had to work some Sunday mornings. And my family wanted me to spend more time with them.

2. I heard his words. I listened *almost* to the end – then I remembered I'd left the dinner on too high. And it had started to look like rain and the sheets were still out. And I mustn't forget it is my turn to make coffee later. I heard his words – *I think*.

1. I heard his words. And I heard him, too. And in him I found God.

HYMN: Seek ye first the kingdom of God...*StF 254; H&P 138; MP 590*

Comment: - *Leader 1*

'But I'm not Jesus!' you might say. 'I can't make up parables!' 'How can I tell the story?' But every day we tell stories – about the things we've been doing, about something we've seen, about our families and our friends. We all have a story to tell – and we know how to shape the telling of that story to those who are listening, because, like Jesus and his listeners, we know where they're coming from. The greatest story we have to share is the story of our lives – and as Christians that story is also God's story of us. Part of our story tells why and how we became followers of Jesus and why that is important to us. Perhaps it's not easy to share that bit of our story? Perhaps we need to practise it with one another first? (Perhaps we might consider taking part in the course 'Talking of God Together', published by the Methodist Church?)

Reading: *Reader 3* – First letter of John 1: 1-4

Prayers of Intercession: - *Leader 2 (Reader 4 could read the words in italics)*

Response: Teach us to share the good news: **that the world may believe.**

'The Word of Life – we have heard it.'

Word of Life, you call us to share the good news of your saving love with those searching for a message of forgiveness and an offer of a new way of living. Speak to them through our conversations, our witnessing, our words of hope.

Teach us to share the good news: **that the world may believe.**

'The Word of Life – we have seen it with our own eyes.'

Word of Life, you call us to show the good news of your saving love to those blind to your presence in the world. Reveal yourself to them through our loving attitudes, our smiles of friendship, our willingness to stand up and be counted on issues of justice and respect.

Teach us to share the good news: **that the world may believe.**

'The Word of Life – we have felt it with our own hands.'

Word of Life, you call us to make the good news of your saving love tangible to those who do not know your touch upon their lives. Reach out to them through our caring actions, our willing support for those in any kind of need, the warmth of our affection.

Teach us to share the good news: **that the world may believe.**

'We share in the common life with God.'

Word of Life, you call us to embody the good news of your saving love by being the Body of Christ. Unite us in love for you, for one another and for the world.

Teach us to share the good news: **that the world may believe.**

In the name of him who comes to us that God's undying love may be seen and believed, Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Comment: Leader 1

When we meet another person, the telling of stories goes both ways. I tell you my story, and you tell me yours. I listen to you and your story and learn about you – the kind of person you are, the way your life is going, your priorities, your hopes, your needs and your fears. Listening to your story, I can connect it to mine, see where our lives touch, learn how to share with you what is important to me, and help you find what it is you are looking for. We become friends and fellow travellers.

Prayer: - Leader 2

Our lives are interconnected. We are bound together by the love of God. **When you arrived here, you will have received a piece of string with four knots on it. These knots represent the lives of people we know - people who we would like to come to know and trust in Jesus for themselves. We are going to pray in silence for these people now, and then when you are praying at home. Spend a few moments thinking of the four people you want to pray for, then, one knot at a time, pray for each person, their needs, and that they might know the presence of God in their lives. Finally, hold the string and pray that God might use you to help these people find him.*

Let us pray: *SILENCE (approximately 3 minutes, but try to gauge how people are responding)*

HYMN: God's Spirit is in my heart...*StF 404; H&P 315*

Comment: - Leader 1

The story of God's Love for us in Christ Jesus is not my story or your story, it is **our** story. Each life that is lived is part of that story. It is the story we share and the story we are called to share with friends and the strangers who will become friends. It is the story that we hear afresh every time we worship. Why not invite a friend, whose story you have shared, to come and listen to the Good Message with you? No-one wants to come alone.

Prayer of Commitment: - Leader 2

Let us pray:

Loving God, thank you for sending us your Son Jesus to invite us all to be part of your kingdom: A kingdom of love, joy and peace; a kingdom of wholeness and belonging.

Thank you that the invitation is for all.

Thank you that you appoint us and equip us to deliver that invitation to others.

With your help, we will do our best as messengers for you, in Jesus's Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: Lord, your church on earth is seeking...*StF410; H&P 774*

Blessing: - Leader 1

We go out in the name of God
to love and care for all his children.

We go out in the name of Christ
to share the good news of salvation.

We go out in the power of the Holy Spirit
to share the riches of life in God.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, goes with us. **Amen.**