**A Methodist Way of Life service outlines**

**Before using this service outline,
read the notes on** [**how to use the sessions**](https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwoloutlines)**.**

**Evangelism**

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

**Share**

**“We share our faith”**

**Key themes:**

* God involves us in the task of bringing love and restoration. We get to work with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).
* There are lots of ways to share our faith, not just using words, and not just on our own either. Creative activities and conversation spaces at community events (whether ones you organise, or ones you join) connect people with God’s love and provide natural, fun ways to share about faith. This might be easier at times like Christmas when people are more likely to connect with Christian themes or stories.

**Relevant Bible passages**

1 Corinthians 3:9; Colossians 4:2-6

**Background reflection**

The extract from the letter to the Colossians talks of sharing faith, but also of sharing life – it concerns behaviour as well as belief. This commitment to share is not necessarily about standing up in front of a crowd, but about sharing our faith with others, where we find ourselves, when it seems appropriate. Not about preaching *at* but sharing *with*. About sharing our story, honestly, as someone who has discovered that Christian faith makes a difference to life.

Sharing faith implies that the other person is given the opportunity to partake or not, and perhaps also to share their own experiences. Sharing faith can be a little like sharing food. When we share food with others we are respectful and mindful of their needs and preferences. A gracious host would never insist that food is eaten but would prepare and present food with care. It is intentionally offered, not just left on the side for someone to find (“have you ever tried…”) but also not forced upon people. Similarly, we share our faith rather than keeping it to ourselves, but we do so with gentleness and respect.

How many people do we meet who have ‘never tried’ faith, or perhaps been put off by past experiences? According to the words from 1 Peter, we share our faith with others who are willing to engage, who are curious to hear the reason for the hope that we have. Whether or not a person appears open to what we have to share may not be down to us. Sharing our faith is always invitational.

One reason people may have been put off is that they don’t see that the words of Christians meet our actions. So it’s important that our actions show God’s love just as much as our words. We can use creative activities and gifts to show love – undertake acts of kindness; put on or join in a community event; and much more. How we live our lives, and how we serve others, can be important ways that we share our faith. But we should be careful not to suggest a hidden, ulterior motive – that we do these things only to ‘make’ people into Christians. Instead, we can explain that we love others with an ultimate hope that they will know God’s love, but that our loving actions will remain the same regardless.

Ultimately, God is the active instigator in evangelism but God invites us into
an exciting partnership. We need to practise depending on God’s presence and power in evangelism and expecting God to work. We need to step out of our comfort zones and expect God to meet us there – this happens again and again in Scripture. People are called to do things they don’t want to do all the time, think of Moses who asks God to send somebody else. We should not allow our own feeling of inadequacy to prevent us from engaging in evangelism, God calls inadequate people all the time! God has gifted us with skills for evangelism, and will gift us with opportunities to use them. Whether you’re a good cake-baker, gardener, listener – whatever your skills – you can use them to share God’s love with others.

**Further notes**

* Sharing our faith deepens our faith; when we are in relationship with people, they can also show us God at work in our own lives as well. It’s amazing how much we can learn about God when we think we’re evangelising others! When we build relationships with others, we meet God together and are all transformed. Evangelism should not be one way, we should be prepared to meet God and be changed by these interactions.
* Both words and actions are important to share God’s love with others. After Jesus preached to a large crowd of people, he fed them with bread and fish (Matthew 14:13-21). How are we feeding people today? How are we meeting practical needs?
* To whom should we speak the love of God? Some of us may find it easier to speak with friends, others with strangers. Ultimately, it is a message for the entire world.
* As we listen to others we need to acknowledge the hard stories, the stories of hurt and of pain. What if those are sometimes our own stories, currently or in the past? What exactly do we choose to share? Our story is ours to share, and we decide when, and with whom, to share it.

* Methodists have long been persuaded that good works are a necessary outworking of Christian faith. They are necessarily works of grace, for “every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above” (James 1:17). Good works essentially provide practical evidence of the grace of God in our lives. Where good works are absent one might appropriately enquire how far God’s grace has truly been experienced.

**Song and hymn suggestions**

Ain’t no mountain high enough – Marvin Gaye

Beyond these walls of worship (*StF* 547)
Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine (*StF* 548)
God who made the stars (*StF* 7)
In all I do (This is my worship) (*MP* 1307)
Lord, your Church on earth is seeking (*StF* 410)
May the God of hope go with us every day (*StF* 411)

O for a thousand tongues to sing (*StF* 364)

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim (*StF* 340)

**Creative activity suggestions**

It is claimed that the Methodist minister, the Revd D T Niles, once said that evangelism (sharing good news) is “just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread”. Sharing our faith is like sharing where we have found ‘food’; where we have found a hope that sustains us. Hide some bread (or sweets or pieces of fruit) around the room (make a note of where they are so nothing is left behind!). Send everyone on a hunt around the room – once they find a piece, they must leave it where it is, saying nothing, and come back to the group. Each person must then try to direct someone else to the food (through words, actions, or drawing a map) but without simply speaking the location. For example, if it’s under a chair, they cannot say ‘chair’ but must draw or describe it.

**Discussion questions**

* How have you shared your faith recently?
* How have other people shared their faith with you?
* What opportunities to share faith are coming up?
* What could you invite people to at your local church?
* What are the reasons why people might not be keen to ‘try’ faith? How might you engage people like this?
* What do we do as a church that helps people outside the church to see something of God’s love?
* How does your church meet practical needs for people? Do you connect that appropriately with faith?
* What would it mean to step out of your comfort zone with faith sharing?
* How might you take a small step, perhaps together with others in your church?
* What are the skills you have to share God’s love with others?

**Prayer ideas**

Pass food around – perhaps pieces of bread or cracker, or fruit like tomatoes or raspberries (as much as is possible, be aware of any dietary restrictions). Each time someone takes a piece of food, ask them to pray for either:

* an upcoming church/community opportunity to show God’s love.
* good listening ears to know how to show love and share faith with neighbours, friends or family.
* thanksgiving for someone who shared faith and love with you.
* openness to be transformed by God as we share with others.

*Explore creative ways to pray with all ages, using the Methodist prayer cards, available as*[*a printed pack*](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/EGIPC22/intergenerational-prayer-cards)*for meetings and events,*[*a PowerPoint*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28465/intergenerationalprayercards-smaller.pptx)*for church services and meetings or*[*as a PDF*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28466/digital-prayer-cards-131222.pdf)*for digital use.*

**Ways to respond**

* Explore [methodist.org.uk/Share](http://methodist.org.uk/share) and [resources for evangelism](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/everyone-an-evangelist/), including [Everyone an Evangelist](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/practise-evangelism/equipped-for-evangelism/everyone-an-evangelist/).
* Buy and play [Conversations Against Mundanity](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/features/conversations-against-mundanity) with friends and family.
* Research events in your local community. Could you run an activity to share God’s love with others? It could be anything from a craft stall at a fair to free water refills at a music festival.
* Explore how [mission planning](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/write-a-great-mission-plan/mission-planning-toolkit/) and [faith-rooted community organising](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/faith-rooted-community-organising/) might help you share God’s love as a community.
* Consider how social media can be used to share God’s love with others (see [guidance from the Methodist Church](https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/digital-communication-guidance-for-churches/social-media/social-media-guidelines/)).