**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).

**Tell**

**“We speak of the love of God”**

**Key themes**

* It’s natural to want to pass on good news. Evangelism is about passing on the good news of Jesus’ love for you, and it flows out of our excitement about what we have discovered.
* Your story matters. You’ve got a story to share about how God’s love has affected you, a story that might make all the difference to another person (Mark 5:19).
* Speaking should always be accompanied by listening – allowing others to tell their story and allows us to notice God in them. Evangelism is not about us talking at other people, but forming meaningful relationships with others, and sharing our stories and experiences of God together.
* Evangelism is something many Christians think is difficult and scary. But once you try, you might be pleasantly surprised by how it makes you feel. When we have faith conversation, our own faith deepens.

**Relevant Bible passages**

Psalm 89:1-2; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15

**Background reflection**

Evangelism is a weighty word. A few people love it but many fear it. Some may have never heard it.

Evangelism simply means ‘sharing the good news’. We can feel a burden to have all the answers, to solve other people’s pain, but sometimes this is not possible – or wanted. We are asked instead to share God’s love. This might include facts – like explaining the Trinitarian nature of a God who is Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. But it’s also about sharing experiences and connecting with people on an emotional and spiritual level.

We are being invited to verbalise the love of God, but our verbalisation must explain what this love is. Jesus’ love and death for us can sometimes seem distant and abstract, so it is good to illustrate it through our own experiences, telling real stories of encounters with this love. Jesus did this too, sharing parables and stories.

We may be aware of a time when God felt very close and real. These can be both good times in our lives, and very tough times. Perhaps we can share times when God’s love was poured out upon our lives now.

*Ask a discussion question about sharing stories of God’s love.*

We may also be aware of doubting this love, or being unable to feel it. A famous biblical example is David in Psalm 22:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
    Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
    and by night, but find no rest.”

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

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. 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 something you do *to* other people but *with* other people; we should also be prepared to meet God and be changed by these interactions.

*Ask discussion questions about how we share faith.*

Speaking on behalf of God is arguably more important than ever in a society in which there is palpable anger about structural inequalities, systemic racism, and widespread fear for the future amongst many who are in a precarious economic or social position. In 2 Timothy 4:2 we are told: “proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching”. Speaking prophetically in this way takes courage, whether it is ‘speaking truth to power’ or challenging our society and communities with truths which people would rather not hear. Telling of God’s love and challenging injustice are inextricably entwined together.

Our words need to be accompanied by actions, sharing God’s love as well as speaking of it (see the “Share”, “Live”, “Care” and “Serve” commitments). But it is not enough simply to act and never to “tell”. We – like Jesus – need to use words as we nurture relationships and speak of faith. Verbalising how we feel helps other people to capture and make that love of God their own. Our words must be authentic and honest so that God’s love touches listeners at the core and causes a strong reaction in them. When we speak of our faith, we pray that the people who hear us will notice God in our words, and as we listen to the authentic and honest stories of others, we pray that we would be open to noticing God in their words.

**Further notes**

* If we are given an opportunity to share our faith, we might choose to tell a story of how God makes a difference to us. We can share honestly how our faith helps us in the ups and downs of life, and our declaration may be as simple as saying “I felt/knew that God was with me when…” and giving an example of something we have experienced.
* If you find it hard to talk about your faith, why not begin by chatting regularly with another Christian friend about where you sense the presence of God in your lives? Use ordinary everyday language, and tell it how it really is, doubts and all! Then perhaps pray for each other, that you will each notice the opportunities to share your own faith with others, with gentleness and respect.
* It is important we challenge the tendency to equate God’s love with a trouble-free life, as this can lead to doubting God when we face trouble and at times of uncertainty. We have a certain God, who died and was raised again, and by God’s Spirit is with us always. This isn’t always easy to accept, but is important to find peace.
* There are times when, to show God’s love, we need to know when *not* to speak; when to simply walk alongside. Sometimes being present and showing love is exactly what people need (this connects with the “Live” commitment of MWOL).
* Most people don’t have a ‘road to Damascus’ moment. We should not be disheartened if our prayers seem unanswered and our conversations continue for months, years, even decades. God often works in a different time frame to us. We might just be called to prepare the soil/water the plant/nurture somebody’s journey (see [Be a travelling Companion](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discipleship-pathways-travelling-together/being-a-discipleship-leader/be-a-travelling-companion/) for more thoughts on how we accompany others on their discipleship journey).

**Song and hymn suggestions**

Never gonna give you up – Rick Astley

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing (*StF* 297)

Go to the world! (*StF* 402)

God’s spirit is in my heart (*StF* 404)

Hear the call of the kingdom (*StF* 407)

In the wonder of creation (*StF* 110)

Shout for joy! The Lord has let us feast (*StF* 598) *communion*

Thuma mina (Send me, Lord) (*StF* 782)

Wake every heart (The highest and greatest) (*MP* 1363)

**Creative activity suggestions**

* Who will you spend time with, and where, in the next week? Write, draw or speak aloud some specific examples – neighbours, family members, members of a gym class, fellow students. What could you tell them of the love of God? Make some commitments of small ways you could do this. It may help to share ideas with each other as some people will find this easier to think about than others. You could write their first names or initials inside a giant heart as a reminder.
* Tell each other stories: of God’s love in your life; of God’s love in other people’s lives. Draw a timeline of the last few years of your life, how far you go back is up to you. Write on the timeline words that describe your faith during different moments, for example you might write “I was angry with God”, “God felt close then”, or “I felt God’s love and peace”. Include moments of doubt, questioning, insight, deepening. Then pair up with somebody else and tell them about your timeline.

**Discussion questions**

* Who talked to you about God as you became a Christian or grew in faith? How did it help?
* What’s your story of the difference God’s love has made in your life?
* Can you share a time when you have struggled to know God’s love,
and how you responded?
* When was the last time you told a story about God?
* Do you find it easier to talk about faith with friends or strangers? Think about why this is.
* Who do you know with whom you could share something of your faith this week?
* How do we help to create a more just and inclusive society? How might we explain that God’s love is at the heart of our vision for a new, restored society?
* What are the situations in the news that you need to talk about, or the situations in your local area where you need to make God’s love known, as an individual or a church?
* Who do you discuss faith with?
* **If we had to teach a four-year-old about who God is, what would we say?**
* Do we only share our faith when it is strong and resolute? What do we do in those periods when our faith feels shaken and shaky? Do we stop sharing honestly with those who ask us about our faith?
* Over recent years some Christians have described how they have ‘lost’ their faith, or how their faith has been ‘deconstructed’. What do you learn, or what questions do you have, in reading or listening to their stories?

**Prayer ideas**

Speak these words often used at funeral services, then ask God to bring people into your mind’s eye: “Help us to love and comfort each other in God’s love; to know when to speak and when to be silent.” Ask for guidance on how to speak, or simply be alongside, the people God brings to your mind.

*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/Tell](http://methodist.org.uk/tell) 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/).
* Talk to other Christians about your faith – it’s a good way to get started. Use the ‘beliefs’ deck in [Conversations Against Mundanity](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/9781858525242/conversations-against-mundanity) to help with this.
* Be open with your friends and family about what the good news means in your life. You could talk about a specific church project so they understand more about how you spend your time.
* Ask people their stories. This might just be: “What’s happened to you this week that’s given you hope?”
* Recruit two to three people in the congregation who can talk to ‘enquirers’, or anyone who is ‘spiritually seeking’, to meet with them and speak to them about their faith, answer their questions and bring them into community.
* [Thy Kingdom Come](https://thykingdomcome.global) is a movement that encourages prayer for just five people to come to know Jesus, and to ask God’s guidance in how to

speak of God’s love with them. God is already at work in people’s lives, but we can help them to notice God.

* Read Walter Brueggemann’s *The Prophetic Imagination* (Fortress Press) for more on speaking truth to power.