



## 2. What is the good news?

*What is the good news and why does sharing it matter?*

### Introduction

The Evangelism Consultation sought to capture the different theological streams within the Methodist Church, recognising that there are different ways in which people meet with God and are transformed. The key question for ongoing work is: In a mission shaped church and a church shaped for mission, what is the gospel and how do we notice it, share it and receive it in relationship with other people?

The online survey intended to bring out these theological themes; however respondents offered a more general observation on the nature of the evangelistic task in contemporary situations. Responses did note the importance of long-term relationships with people. The significance of doing the right things (eg social action and local community projects), rather than necessarily saying the right things was noted on a number of occasions. This dual approach to sharing good news – engagement and conversation – remains a significant feature of Methodism's calling to change the world and to change people.

### Why this matters

Throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, biblical scholarship attempted to discover the core features of the gospel – the key ingredients which made up the New Testament conversion narratives. This kerygma include:

- references to Jesus' fulfilment of the Jewish prophecies about the coming of the Messiah
- a narrative about Jesus' ministry
- the crucifixion of Jesus
- the resurrection of Jesus
- the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and to the early Church
- some mention of a judgement to come
- a call to repentance.

This has influenced the way that we now speak about the good news, and shapes the way that we communicate the gospel ourselves in our preaching and conversations, as the Evangelism Consultation demonstrated. Evangelism is often caricatured as being one-sided and ignorant (see The Fast Show's sketch, 'Holy Police'<sup>1</sup>), or is proclaimed and shouted from street-side pulpits on Speaker's Corner, or is scribbled onto large posters – often with the words "The end of the world is nigh". Good evangelism can be scary or difficult because of the prejudice Christians face, or the emotions which it brings out in us as we attempt to share good news.

Evangelism and the gospel has tended to be an individual and private matter. It is often been about getting the words right. However, the gospel needs to, and does, speak into different contexts and cultures. The simple 'one size fits all' nature of the gospel is all to do with the grace of God, and nothing to do with the words and expected outcome of evangelistic programmes and processes.

"The purpose of [sharing good news] is to give people permission to see how vast the Gospel is and to explore the many different starting points and connecting points that people might have with the message of Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

*(Juliet Kilpin, a part-time coordinator of Urban Expression, and part-time community minister with a Baptist congregation in Essex)*

What if the gospel was intended to be incarnated – to be lived and breathed and wrestled with – in a locality and in relationship with people; rather than deconstructed and taught verbatim in a classroom, church sanctuary, or university? What might the gospel look like then?

1. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO\\_sj2hAb84](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eO_sj2hAb84)

2. <http://julietkilpin.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/four-spiritual-laws-for-different-cultures/>

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## Further resources

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- *Hope – the heartbeat of mission* is a book full of ideas, tools, discussions and resources to help you, your community and your church engage with. It costs £5.99, or £3 for orders over 50. Available from <http://hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/133405/HOPE/Resources/Books/Books.aspx>
- The award-winning video 'Tell Show Be' is available for free download at [www.tellshowbe.com](http://www.tellshowbe.com) and is available in six languages: English, Welsh, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish and now Italian.
- A large database of free images and videos available for download and sharing is at [www.yesheis.com](http://www.yesheis.com).
- Online conversation, frequently asked questions, and free copies of Luke's Gospel can be found at the Christian Enquiries Agency website – [www.christianity.org.uk](http://www.christianity.org.uk) – a great site to put on notice sheets, orders of service and can be easily used in your mission events. It is run by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and is an excellent and 'safe' way of helping people engage with questions of faith.

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## Questions for discussion

The following questions are suggested as ways of taking the conversation forward.

### 1. What motivates/de-motivates you when it comes to evangelism?

### 2. What is good news for you?

### 3. What is 'good' evangelism? What do you expect to see?

### 4. How do we build up our confidence in evangelism?