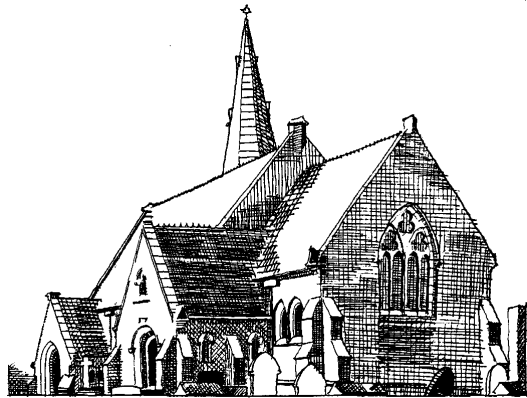


# Good News!



CHRIST CHURCH  
HOME GROUPS  
JUNE / JULY 2008

CHRIST CHURCH,  
MORETON  
2008

*You shine like stars in the  
universe as you hold out the  
word of life.*

Philippians 2:15-16

## HOME GROUP PROGRAMME:

Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup> June	The Power House
w/b Mon 9 <sup>th</sup> June	1. Good News
w/b Mon 16 <sup>th</sup> June	2. It's God's work
w/b Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	3. My story
Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	The Power House
w/b Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> July	4. Introducing Jesus
w/b Mon 14 <sup>th</sup> July	5. Go and tell

# 1. GOOD NEWS

## WELCOME

Where is the best place you have been to? What was so good about it?

## WORSHIP

Psalm 136 begins *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures for ever.* Thank God for the good things he has given you, and for the things he has done for you.

## WORD

Our theme verse for the year tells us *you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.* And that is something we will all want to do as God's people.

But, of course, it doesn't always come naturally or easily. Sometimes we just don't know how to 'hold out the word of life' – what exactly does it mean? And why do we need to do it?

When the people who wrote the books of the New Testament were looking for a word to describe what they were writing about, they picked on the word 'gospel'. Our nearest equivalent to that is 'good news'

They obviously thought that the story of Jesus was good news, and that it was good news which was worth sharing with others. And over the next few weeks we are going to think about how we might share that good news.

But before we do that - what sort of things come into your mind when you hear the word 'evangelism'?

The New Testament doesn't have the word *evangelism* in it (and the word *evangelist* only appears 3 times). Instead it talks about '*sharing the good news*'.

Read Luke 2:8-14

Why did the angel say that the birth of Jesus was good news?

Is this still good news today?

Do you think that knowing Jesus is '*good news*'?

In what ways has Jesus been '*good news*' for you?

But – even if it is good news, we might still be reluctant to share it.

How do you respond to these statements.

My faith is a private matter

I shouldn't force my opinions onto others

I'm not really sure about what I believe, so how can I tell others?

What if they ask me things I can't answer?

Nobody is interested!

I'm too shy

All of these are reasons why we might feel reluctant to talk about our faith. But – why should we want to do it in the first place?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

- Why does Paul say that we try to persuade others?
- Who is the Good News for?
- What difference does it make if someone puts their trust in Jesus?
- How does God pass on the good news of what he has done through Jesus?

## WORK

It is all too easy to spend time talking about sharing our faith without ever getting round to doing it! And, of course, there might be many reasons why we feel reluctant to do it. But over this term, I hope that you won't just talk about these things, but also put them into action.

That can be a daunting thought – but it isn't something that we have to do on our own. God has given us one another, to support and encourage each other. And he has given us his Holy Spirit – in fact if the Spirit isn't at work, then all our attempts to share the good news will be fruitless.

And that means that prayer is important. So over the coming week, my challenge to you is to think and pray about a couple of people you would really like to share your faith with. Then next week, I'll ask you to share those names with the others in your group, so that you can all be praying for those people.

But to end this session – spend some time praying that God will show you who you need to be praying for.

## 2. IT'S GOD'S WORK

### WELCOME

What is the best present you've ever been given?

### WORSHIP

In Luke 17 Jesus is met by 10 men suffering from Leprosy. They all cry out to him to heal them – and he does. But although all of them had asked for healing, only one came back to say thank you.

There are many things that we pray about – but I wonder if sometimes we are like those men – we forget to say thank you. So thank God for answers to prayer that you have received.

### WORD

I have to admit that when I hear someone talking about doing evangelism – it usually makes me feel very inadequate! There are people who have a gift for getting out there and talking to complete strangers about Jesus – but I'm not one of them. And ever since I became a Christian, one thing I've hated is being sent on a guilt trip about evangelism.

If you are one of those people who find it easy – well, that's great – the church needs people like you. But this course is really for those of us who know that it is important to tell others about Jesus, but who still don't find it easy.

Maybe part of the reason is that we all too easily separate action and prayer – whereas it seems that in the New Testament the two things were kept much closer together.

Read Colossians 4:2-6

- What are the connections between prayer and evangelism?
- What could 'devoting ourselves to prayer' mean for us?
- What do you think Paul means by saying we should be 'watchful and thankful' in our prayers?
- What does it mean to be 'wise in the way we act towards outsiders'?

Read John 6:35-44

& Acts 16:13-15

In both of these, who is the key person at work when someone believes in Jesus?

How does this make you feel?

Ultimately it is only the Holy Spirit who can bring anyone to faith in Jesus – he uses us in the process, but unless he is at work we will achieve nothing. And, of course, God doesn't always work as quickly as we would like him to! In the New Testament we read about Paul's spectacular conversion – but there is nothing to say that what happened to him would be the norm. And the experience of most Christians is that God has worked far more slowly in their lives. In fact some statistics I heard a few years ago said that for the average man, from the time they first hear about Jesus to the time when they make a commitment is 5 years. (For women it was 4 years – they are obviously quicker on the uptake!)

So we need to be prepared to keep on praying. And as we do, we will be praying for opportunities to speak.

Read John 4:1-30

Why did Jesus sit beside the well? (v.6)

How did he come to be on his own? (v.8)

Who started the conversation? (v.7)

Why was the woman surprised by Jesus request? (v.9)

What drew the woman into further conversation? (v.10)

How did the conversation get round to the woman seeing who Jesus was? (v.26)

What did the woman do having met Jesus? (v.28-30)

*The people of Jesus day thought holy men were unapproachable. But Jesus work was in the marketplace. He made people feel welcome, and that they had a place. His life was a constant demonstration that there were only 2 things that really mattered in this life – God and people. They were the only things that lasted forever.*

WORK

Last time I asked you to each think of a couple of people who you want to see come to faith. So now – share the names of those people (you don't have to give details unless you want to – just a first name will be fine.) Fill the names on the next page, and then please pray regularly (daily would be good!) for the group member, and for the people they have asked you to pray for. Pray that God will give them opportunities to *give the reason for the hope that you have.* (1 Peter 3:15)

Home Group member	Has asked us to pray for ...

### 3. MY STORY

WELCOME

What person has had the biggest influence on you?

WORSHIP

Philippians 1:6 says *he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ*. God continues to work in our lives, and so we should always be able to look at things he is doing for us now. Praise God for what he has been doing in your life.

WORD

I have an idea that one of the reasons that talking about Jesus is sometimes so difficult for us is that we keep being told we should do it! As far as I can see in the New Testament there is no nagging about personal evangelism at all.

But – there is the assumption that if Jesus has been good news for you, you won't want to keep it to yourself.

*'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...'*

1 Peter 3:15

What do you think Peter meant by 'the hope you have'?

Why should people ask you about it?

Francis of Assisi is reputed to have said *'Preach the gospel everywhere; use words if you must.'* How might our actions prompt people to ask us questions about our faith?

Let's look again at Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well.

Read John 4:1-30

For that woman meeting Jesus was quite dramatic! She was keen to share the good news about him with others, even though in the past she probably had little to do with them.

That is why it is important to ask ourselves what difference Jesus has made to us. We may not have had quite such a dramatic experience as this woman, but if we don't think that Jesus is good news, we probably won't be interested in talking to others about him.

As a start – think of one thing that is now different in your life from before you knew about Jesus.

Read Acts 26:4-23

What was Paul like before he became a Christian?

What happened to change him?

What was he like afterwards?

Of course, not everybody has such a spectacular conversion as Paul! More often, especially for those who have grown up attending church, people find that their relationship with Jesus grows gradually.

That doesn't matter – the important thing is to be able to speak about an experience that is real and meaningful in your life now, rather than some spectacular event in the past.

So how about you. Could you tell the rest of the group the difference that knowing Jesus has made to you?

## WORK

Sunday September 28<sup>th</sup> is going to be a big day at Christ Church. Along with many other churches in the diocese, we are using it as 'Back to Church Sunday', where we specifically invite people who used to go to church, but who for whatever reason have drifted away, to come back.

There will be a lot of work involved in making it work – the PCC have appointed a small group who are working on all the practicalities of the day. But the most important preparation we can be making is to pray. To be asking God if there are people we should be inviting, and then to pray for the opportunity to do so *with gentleness and respect*.

## 4. INTRODUCING JESUS

### WELCOME

What animal would you most like to have as a pet?

### WORSHIP

Psalm 116 is a hymn of praise to God for his salvation. Use the psalm (or parts of it) to give God your praise.

### WORD

Over the last 3 weeks we've been talking about sharing the good news of Jesus with others. We've talked about the difference Jesus has made to us. We've talked about who Jesus is and why he is so important. And we have thought about what motivates us to tell others about him.

1 Peter 3:15 says:

*'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...'*

So – if a friend of yours said to you, 'I know you go to church, and it seems to mean a lot to you. What is it all about?' how would you answer?



For most people, their first contact with Jesus comes through contact with Christians they know. If someone had been asking you about church, what would you want to tell them about Jesus?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Paul is writing about the 'gospel', or 'good news'. What four things does he say about Jesus?

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- 
- 
- 

Why do you think he says that these are 'of the first importance'?

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- 
- 
- 

In verse 2 Paul says that it is through this gospel that people are saved. What does he mean?

Jesus is at the centre of the gospel – it is the good news of Jesus. But to explain why he is good news we need a bit more:-

Read John 3:16-21

What does this passage tell you about:

- God's Character
- People's condition
- Jesus – God's solution
- People's response

Those 4 points make a useful outline to explain to anyone what Christianity is all about.

Of course – we may not often get a chance to explain all that to anyone! But it is as well to have it at the back of your mind, and to understand it yourself.

We have concentrated so far on how we would explain our Christian faith to others. But this isn't something we are supposed to do all on our own. As a church we are committed to sharing the good news about Jesus with others – it is part of being a WELL church.

So – if a friend had been asking you about Christianity, or more likely about church, would you invite them to come along to Christ Church to find out for themselves?

Or would you invite them to a special event at which someone was going to explain the good news?

What sort of things would make it easier for you to do this?

In what other ways could Christ Church help people to know Jesus for themselves?

#### WORK

One of the things that we can do as a church is to run courses where the good news of Jesus is explained, and where people are encouraged to follow him themselves. Over the past few years we have run 'Christianity Explored' several times, and we are planning to do so again in the autumn. In fact, we are thinking about running 3 courses – one in the morning, one at lunchtime, and one in the evening.

It would be very exciting (and tiring!) – but it will only work if a lot of people are involved. It might mean asking one or two home-groups to help organise a course. But it will definitely mean that many of us will need to be inviting our friends to come on the course.

Is this something you want to do? How about the people you've been praying for – would you like to bring them along. Even though the course(s) won't start till October, now is the time to start praying.

## 5. GO AND TELL

#### WELCOME

This is our last home-group until the autumn. If you could do anything you want, what one thing would you most like to do this summer?

#### WORSHIP

Psalm 145 tells us some wonderful truths about God – and also encourages us to tell others about him (v.4-7) Praise God for the things this psalm tells you about him – and pray that he will help you to *proclaim his great deeds* to others.

#### WORD

Today we come to the end of this course on sharing the Good News with others.

We've thought about why Jesus is good news for us, about what is so special about Jesus, and about why people need to be saved.

So – putting that all together, if a friend (rather conveniently!) asked you '*Christians talk about this Good News, but what is it – and why is it so good?*' – what would you say?????

As we were thinking last week, evangelism isn't something which we do in isolation, and it isn't something which happens in a vacuum.

## Christ Church & Evangelism.

Read Acts 2:42-47

Look at verse 47. What do you think was leading other people to become Christians?

How does this compare with Christ Church?

Is Christ Church doing things which demonstrate God's reality to others?

Are there other things we should be doing?

## Lifestyle & Evangelism

Read Matthew 5:13-16

How might our actions lead others to '*praise our Father in heaven*'?

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Could we be called '*a letter from Christ*' to our community?

Now read Romans 2:17-24

What sort of things in our behaviour might put people off becoming Christians?

WORK

This series is over – but the work isn't! Continue to pray for one another – and for the friends you listed on week 2. Be thinking about how you can be part of Back to Church Sunday and Christianity Explored – maybe your group could plan some social event over the summer that you could invite friends to as a lead in to inviting them to something in the autumn.

CHRIST CHURCH,  
MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

*Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him*

an **E**vangelising Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear  
the Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one  
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples,  
and disciples must always be learners*