

- What are our strengths in our individual churches?
- How can we share our strengths and good news stories to other churches in the Circuit and the wider community?
- What are you good at? How do you use this to serve God?

Our responses

How are these passages challenging you and your church in the light of “Casting the Net”? We want to look at some of the responses we received and ask your advice on how we might address them.

- There were many responses which indicated how tired and stretched people in our churches are. How can we address this in a positive way?
- Responses recognised the need to have fewer buildings / worshipping congregations, but were understandably hesitant to indicate which might close. How do we look at possibly closing buildings whilst also bearing in mind the mission opportunities in those areas?
- What justice issues arise from our need to close buildings?
- What ecumenical / interfaith links does your church have and how do you work together to act justly in your community?

Final Prayers:

Father God, help us to use our gifts and strengths to do your work. Let us be like the people of the early church by sharing what we have with everyone. May we reach up to You with one hand and reach out to those in need with the other. **Amen.**

God of margins, edges, and thresholds,
Open our minds to listen and learn from people on the margins.

God of justice,
Open our ears to the voices of people trapped in cycles of debt and hardship.
God of unbounded love,

Open our hearts to nurture new relationships with new people.
God of life,

Give us courage, to step into your imagination and vision for new Christian communities amongst people on the economic margins.

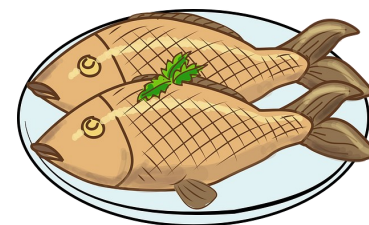
Amen.

(taken from the Methodist Prayer Handbook)

This weeks study was written by Lesley Richardson, a member of MVT

What do I do with all these fish?

Session 2: Acting Justly to all



Casting the Net: John 21: 1-6

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,^[a] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

Holy Habits: Acts 2: 42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds^[b] to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home^[c] and ate their food with glad and generous^[d] hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

What do I do with all these fish?

I've never been fishing, but I have cooked some very large salmon for a lot of people, so I know that after you have caught your fish, you need to do many things before you can share the fish in a meal. You inspect the net and throw back anything you did not mean to catch. You wash the fish, you remove the scales, and you prepare it for cooking. In this Bible Study we will be looking at the key readings from the "Casting the Net" document through the lens of the responses (fish?) we received from the "Casting the Net Process", along with our circuit Mission Priorities. We hope you will join us on this journey.

The study can be used as part of your individual devotions, as a group in your housegroup or church, or by joining in the sessions online.

During this study you might like to have available:

- a candle for prayer and reflection
- Paper and pens to record any thoughts, if you'd like to.

Before you start this study, take time to pause and reflect.

When we meet together for bible study we always start with a hot drink, maybe some cake or biscuits, and a chat as we catch up with people after another week. Pause for a while to catch up with those around you or yourself.

Opening Prayer

God of love and God of peace, we commit ourselves to your service. Help us to work for justice and peace between all nations and all peoples. Help us to heal the wounds of greed and conflict, of inequality and oppression. May your Holy Spirit guide us; grant us wisdom and courage; give us hope and keep us faithful in your ways through all our days. Amen.

Starting question

What is a safe and familiar thing that you always go back to?

It could be a hobby, or a place, or something you do in your work, home or church life. Where do you feel safe and in control, like you know what you are doing?

Safety in Familiarity

Read John 21: 1-6

The disciples had gone back to Galilee but Jesus hadn't yet appeared. They were probably restless and perplexed not knowing what to do, so Peter said 'I'm going out to fish' because that was something he knew how to do; something that he had done in his life before meeting Jesus. When we are feeling out of our depth and out of control of things around us, it can be comforting to take refuge in the familiar and safe. The Disciples are no different—Fishing was their life, it was what they knew inside and out. Imagine then, how it might have felt for them to return to the thing they knew themselves to be good at, only to seem like they have failed.

- What danger was there in this old way of life?
- How did Jesus remind the disciples of their true calling?
- How did he remind them of their dependence upon him?
- What other lessons of spiritual value do you find in this story?
- The familiar is comfortable for us, but how might it feel for others who are not used to the same things?
- How can familiarity become a justice issue within our churches?

(you might also like to refer to Luke 5 1-11 and Mark 1 17-18)

Something New and Scary

Read Acts 2: 42-47

After receiving the Holy Spirit (in a very dramatic way!) Peter and the other disciples move outside where they address the crowds in ways that each person can understand in their own language. Some ridiculed them, but others were moved by their words and welcomed the message. It began a surge of new followers, with people joining them daily.

- What's happened to Peter?
- How would you describe the church of these first days? Compare it to the church of today.
- Have we gone back to our old ways like Peter did when he went fishing?
- How can we be bold and be obedient to God?
- How can we, the church of today be fruitful?