

- What justice issues local to you is your church involved in?
- How does your church / you challenge the inequality we witness in society?
- How can the circuit help churches to be more ethical in their consumption of resources from our world?
- What steps can you personally take?

Our responses

“Casting the net” revealed a recognition that some of our buildings will close in the next few years, whilst also illustrating that every church thinks it shouldn’t be them! This is totally understandable, but also leaves us with the question “if not you, who?”

- How do we make courageous decisions about the future of our churches?
- What does “living generously” look like in response to this?
- If your church were one of the ones to close, what would you do as a congregation? How would you respond?
- What could you do differently if you didn’t have to consider assessments, leaky roofs and troublesome boilers?

Final Prayers:

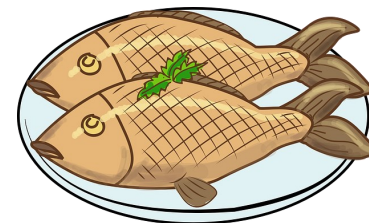
Holy God,
 creation is your gift of grace,
 pregnant with your presence.
 You have adorned it with goodness,
 with jewels of kindness
 that shimmer and cast light into life.
 The radiance of your Spirit refracts
 through the lives of your people
 and illuminates the darkness,
 disturbing it with hope.
 As your hand unveils what is hidden,
 may we reflect what you reveal
 for the good of all you have made. Amen.

(Prayers taken from the Methodist resource hub. Opening Prayer written by Revd Inderjit Bhogul, and final prayer written by Revd Kerry Tankard, Chair of the Yorkshire West District)

This weeks study was written by Melissa Quinn, a member of MVT

What do I do with all these fish?

Session 4: Being good stewards



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

Holy and hidden God, your mystery and majesty fills the earth and all creation. You take sanctuary in the core of our being, and in your being we find refuge and strength. All people bear the stamp of your image – an embodiment of your abounding treasure, your delight and pleasure. Keep us open to your gifts we carry within us and unveil before us your grace and generosity – the shower of your blessings in our engagements and interaction. Hold us in our brokenness. Illuminate us in our darkness. Speak to us in all languages. Bless all who live and give their lives to show us the world you desire. **Amen.**

Starting question

What is the most expensive thing you have ever bought / paid for? Not Houses, or cars necessarily, but items or experiences that you have purchased. Why did you buy it? How did you feel handing over all that money?

Money, Money, Money

Money isn't a topic we like to talk about much in church services, although it definitely comes up a lot in church councils, Circuit Meetings, and anywhere else where we need to think about how much our assessment is, how we will pay for a new boiler or what the eye watering cost of the roof repairs will be. Money was something that was often mentioned in the responses to "Casting the Net" as well, with questions about how the circuit got into debt (it isn't in debt) and about how we have enough money circuit wide to afford the ministerial and support staff that we want, whilst also hearing that many churches are already struggling to pay what they need to.

- In the Acts reading we hear about the early Christians sharing everything and holding everything in common so that no one has any need. How do you think those first Christians felt about this?
- Do we hold everything in common across our circuit? How can we realistically uphold this principle today?
- Our city and therefore our circuit is very diverse in terms of affluence. How can we get money to where it needs to be and help people understand the needs of the less affluent areas?
- What would your church do if it had unlimited financial resources?
- How does your church make sure you are being good stewards of the resources you have?

It's a rich mans world?

In the news you will often hear about the exploits of the worlds riches people, from trips to space and submarine dives to luxury yachts and extravagant parties, those most well off in our world seem to have endless resources to spend on the most frivolous of things whilst others are struggling to cater for their most basic needs. Being good stewards doesn't just mean using what we are given carefully, but also challenging those around us and setting good examples with our own actions.

- Can you think of a time where Jesus and his disciples modelled justice not just in their words but also in their actions?
- What environmental steps has your church taken to reduce your cost to the world? What others could you consider?