

- How do we respond to the scepticism of others?
- Signs and wonders are a difficult thing to quantify. How do we point to God without the ability to perform signs and wonders of our own?
- How do we come alongside people in the special and wondrous events of their lives? (Births, marriages deaths etc)

### That would be an ecumenical matter...

Quite a few responses to the "Casting the Net" document celebrated the ecumenical connections we share across the circuit.

- What ecumenical links does your church have? How are they maintained?
- Does the whole congregations participate in ecumenical relationships or does it tend to be the minister?
- What further opportunities might there be to share with oter local congregations?
- What do you appreciate about the ecumenical links you share?

### Final Prayer:

Loving God,  
 help us to remember that, important as they are to us;  
 the buildings we use for worship are not your church.  
 May we long to see them filled,  
 not because we want our church to continue,  
 or because we are tired,  
 but because we want to see people come to know and love you.  
 We recognize the need to step outside our comfortable and familiar walls,  
 to meet people outside of our churches,  
 and to bring church to them,  
 rather than expect them to come to us.  
 Lord make us bold in stepping out for you,  
 and encourage us that we do so  
 not in our own strength, but in yours.

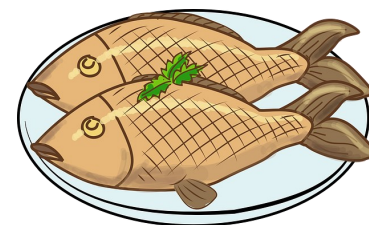
Amen

*(Opening Prayer taken from the Methodist resource hub and written by Mike Long, Action for Children Trustee. Final prayer written by Melissa Quinn for this study)*

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

# What do I do with all these fish?

## Session 5: Open the door, let Jesus return



### 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. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,<sup>[a]</sup> Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon 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.

<sup>4</sup>Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup>He 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

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

Eternal God, we seek clarity and reassurance in a bewilderingly complex world. Grant us the patient trust that will enable us to sense your hand in the emergent, the ambiguous, the random and the fragile. Give us courage to embrace your vulnerability seen in Jesus Christ.

May your Spirit help us to understand it is amid the darkness that your light can be seen most clearly; attune the eyes of faith so that we can detect and follow the glimpses of your kingdom's radiance. In the still, dark night of our days may we behold galaxies of divine light and love and be captivated by the vision of your glory. **Amen.**

### Starting question

What scares you the most about sharing your faith with others?

I worry that I won't have the right words to say, or that the words I use will somehow put people off. I also worry about being judged and stereotyped... What worries you when speaking about faith?

### Beyond these walls of worship

Whenever I imagine the passage from John 21, with Jesus telling the disciples to cast their net on the other side, I tend to imagine it on a quiet beach with no one else around. But I realise this is unlikely to be the case! If Peter had a fishing boat on the Sea of Tiberius, I suspect it was in a place where other fishermen kept their boats as well and it is therefore likely that others were there preparing their boats for the day, or setting out to fish. These miraculous events therefore did not occur behind closed doors and in isolation, as when Jesus appeared to Thomas. Similarly in Acts 2, after receiving the Holy Spirit indoors the disciples rushed outside and shared what they had experienced...

- What impact might the miraculous catch of fish have had on others on the beach at that time?
- Why is it important that Jesus didn't just appear to the disciples behind closed doors?
- What do our churches do outside of our church walls in our local communities? How do we make ourselves visible?
- How does your church advertise the things you do (inside and outside the building?) What could you do to engage more with people in your locality?
- What do you do personally to make your faith visible to others?
- What can our circuit do to be more visible in our area?

### Signs and wonders

The catch of fish is a seemingly miraculous event that others witness. Acts 2 talks about the Apostles doing many "wonders and signs" in those early days after the coming of the Holy Spirit and says that "awe came upon everyone". In contrast to the early days of Jesus' ministry where he repeatedly told others not to share what they had seen, these events are visible and causing quite a stir!

- What might be a modern equivalent of "wonders and signs?"
- How do we share the miraculous nature of our faith without putting people off?