



Parish Missions

Thinking afresh

Some people might wonder if a parish mission still has a part to play in evangelism. Surely “process evangelism” approaches such as Alpha are now firmly established as relevant for today?

Courses that help people to explore Christian faith are undoubtedly helpful ... for some. The problem is that not everyone is “searching”, and some people don't respond positively to study. Many others do not have Christian friends to invite them to things; indeed, they may not have related to “church” in a significant way for many years.

A mission can bring a fresh dynamic. Instead of saying to people, “Come ... to church, to Alpha”, we take the initiative to go to them. There can still be events to which people can be invited, but there is also the deliberate act of going out — sowing seeds, breaking up the ground, etc, without which there can be no harvest.

It must be admitted that many church members find such a prospect scary. They do not like the E word. For this reason, it makes an awful lot of sense to make use of expertise from outside of the parish. Evangelists can build confidence and bring resources to make this task possible for any church.

Can it work? See the report below ...

A Story of Good News in 2008

Earlier this year, a parish mission took place in a small town in Cambridgeshire:

- ◆ Hundreds of people heard the gospel message
- ◆ In a variety of imaginative events
- ◆ Reaching different groups — women, men, arty types, youth, etc
- ◆ The host church was in control of the programme and planned it with an eye to longer-term mission goals
- ◆ They drew in outside help from *Through Faith Missions*, an organisation based in Ely Diocese but with experience of evangelism in communities across the UK
- ◆ Part of the mission week involved visiting a remote part of the parish; there were some excellent contacts made
- ◆ Nurture of new Christians and enquirers took place through follow-on courses

How do I plan a parish mission?

Here are some outline thoughts to get you started on the process:

1. **Explore** the possibility in your church decision-making body. This can be a good time to call in “outside help” (see below).
2. **Commit** yourselves to a definite plan. “As you sow, so shall you reap” applies to missions as to anything else worthwhile.
3. **Prepare**. This involves many different aspects, outlined in brief below. More detail can be found as a download at:

<http://www.through-faith-missions.org/Index.asp?MainID=8679>

Preparation should cover the following areas:

- ◆ **Prayer**. For vision, for those who will hear the message, for boldness, etc
- ◆ **Programme**. How do you want to use the mission period? How many events can you sustain? What will be effective?
- ◆ **Equipping**. Is this an opportunity to give your congregation greater confidence in sharing their faith / inviting friends to events?
- ◆ **Publicity**. Make sure that the community knows about the mission!
- ◆ **Practicalities**. This will vary a great deal with the type of events and activities.
- ◆ **Follow up**. It's no good planning a mission unless you plan in advance how to respond to those who want to know more.

Outside Help

Ephesians 4 describes several types of ministry. Each was to be a blessing to the Church, not to be “exclusive” but to build up all of her people. One such ministry is that of evangelists.

Would it help you to have an evangelist come alongside you to help your church with a parish mission?

They can bring experience and, under God, a gift for this kind of ministry. One such local resource is Through Faith Missions. Please contact them for more information if you would value their input.

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