

The parishes of St James Shireshead and St John's Ellel.

Lent 2018

What does it mean to be the church in the community?

The five weeks of meetings journey through Vincent Donovan's book Christianity Rediscovered - An Epistle from the Masai

Week 2 28th February

Go make disciples of all people

Ideally you need to read Chapters 3 & 4 bearing in mind the following comments and questions which will form the basis for our discussion when we meet.

These two chapters focus on how we help people, no matter where they are, and who do not believe what we believe to take the first step to understanding the message of the love of Jesus. People who do not have in their vocabulary the words we take for granted or use the words in a different way.

If, as the book asserts, we reach salvation through culture then understanding the culture of those around us is vital to communicating the gospel. How do you think the church generally and/or the church locally relates to, or engages with the culture in our communities?

The book refers to judging mission by reference to three concepts: "Is it biblical?"; "Is it evangelical?"; "Is it scriptural?". How do you view the mission of the church nationally and locally and your own mission against these three criteria? Do you accept them, or would you use other criteria?

These chapters spend a lot of time emphasising the universality of the message and that God is a God for all. They are clear that the traditional missionary message, that we are all sinners and we need to repent is nothing new, most people know that. What they don't understand is the concept of God's universal "forgiveness". How do we encourage people into a church which can, in the media and often locally, appear to be constantly "at war" with itself and unable to forgive?

The Church is very good at calling people to missionary work (outreach); The Decade of Evangelism; Parish and Diocesan Audits; Mission Action Plans; Vision 2026 to name but a few recently. Donovan is clear that mission must be "finishable" not in the distant future but now. What would you see as success; the aspirational but achievable end point, for mission in the parish?

Is there a difference between missionary work and pastoral work?

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