

## 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 5 March 21st**

**What next?**

You have now read the book. Whatever Donavon achieved with the Masai it had a life changing effect on him. He began from where he was; a priest of the Church of Roman keen to further the Christian teaching of that church and all that meant spiritually and structurally: he ended up a committed priest who saw mission in a very different way from the establishment he was ordained into. He left Tanzania shortly after the end of the book to faithfully follow the call of his Roman Catholic order, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, to do other work. He never returned. The work was carried on by those who had been influenced by him and worked with him in particular a priest called Fr Ned.

**What next for us as missionaries of Christ here in these parishes within the Church of England?**

Hopefully we will be able to have a wide-ranging discussion drawing on the thinking of the last four weeks to provide a road map of what we might do individually and collectively to reach out to the parishes we serve.

What follows is just meant to help us try and focus our thoughts and discussion

We can talk all we like about what we could do if we didn't have to maintain churches and meet the demands of "them at Blackburn". But we are part of the Church of England warts and all. It's easy to take for granted the privilege it brings and the doors it opens not to mention the things it provides like trained full time ministers. The New Testament is littered with problems faced by the results of founding churches. The history of the Free Evangelical Church movement which sometimes kicks hard against the "established" churches can fill pages on the personal and collective pain of rejection and schism. If we believe in community ultimate you need structures

The reflections we have gathered over the past few weeks point us to find ways to reach out to the communities we serve; passing on the Christian message of love; finding ways of planting seeds; helping them grow; in communities which increasingly appear to have little or no knowledge (or need) for God's love and saving message. Communities who are at best ambivalent to the church and for many is totally irrelevant in their lives. Look at the reflections from each week and ask what they say for us for and our outreach in the next twelve months; five years; or as a part of Vision 2026.

There are different types of ministry and different gifts. We are not all called to do the same thing, or have the same gifts. How do we link pioneering to maintenance; vision to reality?

How do we integrate ministry beyond our church building, messy church, house groups, schools etc. so it is seen as part of the whole and not something separate or divisive?

What would "success" be by Lent 2019?

We love our Victorian/Edwardian buildings but are they suitable in their present incarnation for worship and mission in a very different 21<sup>st</sup> century society from the ones in which they were built

## Comments so far:

### Week 1 The Gospel Message

How to children pick up the faith  
How do you talk about the concept of god to those who do not have the language  
Tell people they are special, unique, worthwhile, not alone  
It OK to plant a seed We don't always have to see them grow  
Clerical clothes and rituals - Why?  
How do we start to tell people - need confidence  
Lack of informed knowledge  
Need to listen  
How do we make people jealous of what we have  
Expecting people to go to church is not working  
Do we do discipleship like Jesus did  
I have come to give life in all its fullness  
The church is the only institution that exists for those who are not members

### Week 2 Go make disciples

There is a lack of biblical literacy  
Look at ways that people can be reached through events like Messy Church and Jelly Tots  
Need to understand cultural changes as a starting point  
Is a meal with grace missional - without pastoral  
Find places to meet and SHARE your story  
Accept people and their culture  
At the moment our church is more biblical it needs to be more evangelical  
Ask God for "God appointments"  
Standing on neutral ground  
Why do we expect people to come into church culture and put off their own culture  
Be non-judgemental  
Every encounter is mission  
Small practical things for neighbours/help for those in need  
Pastoral work is care, support, friendship Missionary work is sharing God's word and Christian faith  
Going out and sowing seeds of friendship

### Week 3 Who do you think Christ is?

Talk to Each Other & Discuss  
Anyone who has seen me (Jesus) has seen the Father  
Outside Community Look In  
People no buildings  
Clergy should not stay too long  
Christianity makes sense outside Community Individual Christians have to step out to face the dark as well  
Christianity makes sense in community because we strengthen each other  
To tell some one or some group about Jesus you have to know them well and watch for an opening  
W should be a team not relying on one or two people  
Baptism is an individual conviction into a community  
Where you start depends on the group to whom you are talking  
It doesn't matter where you start as long as you start

### Week4 Our response to rejection and indifference

Community elderly needing visits and communion  
How to react when rejection comes Is the fault in us. Have we told the gospel  
Non Christians find it hard to come to church - find ways to attract them  
God will build his church "turn the tide"  
Decluttering - pews position of altar robing heating  
The revolution starts here  
A New Model Fresh expressions of church - acceptable to non-church goes  
Why all the rules?  
Have they rejected us? The gospel? The Church ?  
Having faith to leave the Holy Spirit with people then trust them to get on with it  
If the message is rejected we can give testimony to our faith in patient ways, continue to offer welcome and hospitality. But there  
Does come a time when we have to wipe the dust off our feet  
Church buildings are not necessarily suitable but we have to work with what we have got