

A red brick wall serves as the background. In the lower-left foreground, a portion of a dark-stained wooden bench with vertical slats is visible. The text 'STORIES ON THE STREET' is written in a large, white, hand-drawn font across the center of the brick wall.

STORIES ON THE STREET

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
Transforming churches
and communities

mosaic
creative

Stories on the Street

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Mosaic Creative are committed to using the visual and performing arts in providing fun and accessible training and resources for the aid and voluntary sector in the UK and overseas.

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Welcome to 'Stories on the Street'

The Church in the UK faces a number of challenges, such as declining congregations and deprivation in many areas. For many, the church is seen as irrelevant, and yet we know the church is always there. It is a constant presence in the heart of any community, and has the potential for so much good.

The purpose of this resource is to envision churches with a passion for working with their communities and in particular, to respond to the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised. It comes in six modules, and each module includes Biblical reflections and practical tools and activities to help your church work alongside its community.

Where has 'Stories on the Street' come from?

Bill Crooks and Jackie Mouradian of Mosaic Creative have over 30 years' experience of working in community development both overseas and in the UK. They have written several resources for various agencies which have all contributed to this latest resource, 'Stories on the Street', designed specifically for churches in the UK. Mosaic Creative would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following agencies:

Tearfund

Working in partnership with Tearfund, Mosaic developed 'Discovery', their first church and community mobilisation resource for the UK. This drew on both agencies' collective experience of church and community mobilisation in East Africa. 'Discovery' was initially piloted in Glasgow with the Church of Scotland and in Bootle with the Diocese of Liverpool. Following this, Mosaic and Tearfund developed an international resource called 'Umoja' which is now in over 40 countries worldwide.



World Vision

Mosaic and World Vision worked together to produce the 'Empowered World View' series of resources which includes a facilitator's handbook and a church development resource, largely made up of a comprehensive set of creative Bible studies.



USPG

Working in partnership with USPG, Mosaic developed and piloted 'Encounters', a compact church awareness raising resource, focusing on three encounters with Jesus, and including a number of case studies and community engagement tools.



The Diocese of St Asaph

The forerunner of 'Stories on the Street' was the resource, 'A Hope and a Future' which was developed by Mosaic Creative and rolled out across the diocese of St Asaph. This was a comprehensive training programme for three mission areas, written in five modules and including a training of trainers support programme. The contributions of the trainers and diocesan staff shaped much of the current resource, 'Stories on the Street.'



The Anglican Alliance

The Anglican Alliance has played a key role in bringing together trainers and facilitators, both internationally and across the UK to share their learning and experiences of the church and community mobilisation process. Many of these insights have informed and been integrated into this resource. The Anglican Alliance continues to play a vital role in promoting networking and good practice.



The Mothers' Union

Working in partnership with the Mothers Union, Mosaic developed 'Awaken', a church and community mobilisation resource for working with illiterate groups. Similarly, they developed a resource specifically for the Mothers' Union in Uganda called 'Eagle'. 'Stories on the Street' is the main resource being used by the Mothers' Union for envisioning and enabling churches to work with their communities across the UK.



The Power of the Story

The name, 'Stories on the Street', not only describes much of the material in the resource but is also an acknowledgement of the power of story telling in the life of church and community. It is one of the main ways we build relationships with one another.

"After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."

Philip Pullman

Jesus himself was a brilliant story teller and on several occasions used stories as a means of bringing community transformation. It was allowing the woman who touched his cloak the time and space to tell her story that was the means of restoring her to her community. Through Jesus' non-judgmental interest in the story of the woman at the well, the woman's life was turned around and through her witness, a community was transformed. Jesus used stories to describe the kingdom of God and when he was asked a question, he would often answer by telling a parable. He knew the power of a story.

And so, stories take centre stage in this resource. Much of the biblical material can be described as stories on the street, and several of these stories are told in monologue form from the point of view of one of the characters in the story.

The result of using the participatory tools and activities described in this manual will be church and community members telling their stories as they gather information together and plan projects and initiatives which will benefit churches and communities.

Gathering stories of change is also the means by which we know we are making a difference, and these stories can also be a means of encouragement in challenging times;

"Although setbacks of all kinds may discourage us, the grand, old process of storytelling puts us in touch with strengths we may have forgotten, with wisdom that has faded or disappeared, and with hopes that have fallen into darkness."

Nancy Mellon

Finally, we are all part of a much a bigger story - God's story. This resource is about God's people, the Church, being salt and light on the streets in our communities, loving God and our neighbour as ourselves, to give us a taste of his kingdom here on earth.

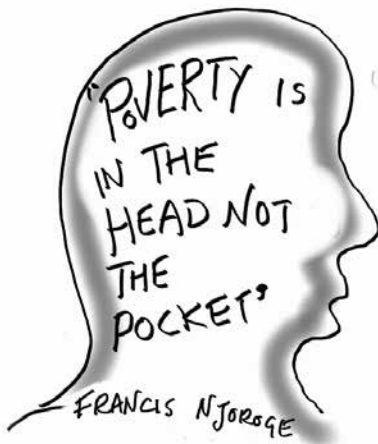


Transforming your community

As previously stated, 'Stories on the Street' is about church and community working together to transform lives, particularly, those of the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

Various factors can trap people in poverty, but perhaps one of the main factors is the negative mindset. The Kenyan facilitator, Francis Njoroge, coined the phrase, "Poverty is in the head not the pocket." In particular, it is the mindsets of fatalism and dependency that trap people. Fatalism is a mindset that says, "What will be will be. There is nothing I can do to change things." We see this all over the UK: people young and old who believe life is hopeless. They feel they are powerless to make any positive change, and in some cases are drawn to destructive, escapist behaviours such as drug or alcohol abuse. Even in our churches, people can have negative mindsets, believing they do not have the capacity to do anything in the face of all the need.

This resource seeks to challenge these negative mindsets. Experience has shown that as church members are envisioned by the Bible studies, and engage with the practical tools, they discover that they do have plenty of resources they can use for the common good, and they also discover their potential to be creative in addressing the issues they have in their churches and communities.

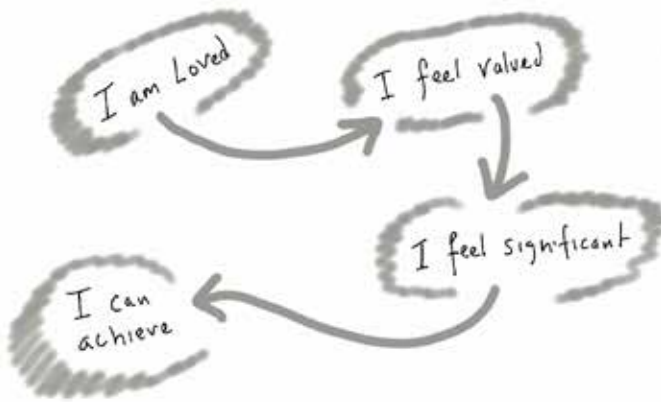


Triggers for transformation

1. Love and acceptance

This is the golden thread that shapes and informs the other triggers for transformation. Countless examples of positive change in this country and overseas have love and acceptance as the starting point.

Below is an adapted diagram of this principle by Frank Lake who realised that a person's self worth is not initially as a result of his or her achievements. This model suggests that when people are loved and accepted, they feel valued and significant which gives them hope and energy to act and achieve.



In an environment of love and acceptance, people have a safe space to look at themselves and the choices they are making and the consequences of those, and maybe consider more positive options. For some, this can lead to a desire for change to a healthier, more fulfilling way of life.

'Stories on the Street' contains three more triggers for transformation which are described on the following pages. Together with love and acceptance, they contribute to changing negative mindsets and behaviours into a positive way of life. They are the power of creative in depth Bible study, the quality of the facilitator and the way the process is carried out.

2. Bible studies

The Bible studies used in the process of church and community mobilisation are key to any transformation, and their effectiveness is dependent on three important elements.

Firstly, the Bible studies should be facilitated in a way that encourages the process of self-discovery. Participants read and study the Bible for themselves and do not rely solely on what is preached from the pulpit. Part of this process is critical reflection where, through the use of questions and discussion, negative beliefs and destructive behaviours are challenged, while at the same time, participants discover their true identity as being loved and valued by God.

Secondly, creative methods can be used to bring Bible passages to life, so that participants can identify and empathise with the characters in the stories and apply the lessons to their daily lives. In 'Stories on the Street' we use drama, art and learning games to bring the Bible passages to life. This is especially helpful for people with literacy issues.



Thirdly, it is a facilitated process where the insights and reflections from the group are considered important, and the process of sharing builds confidence in reflecting on scripture and exploring what it means to everyday life. There are several questions provided with each Bible study. The facilitator should choose the questions which are relevant to the group's context and experience.

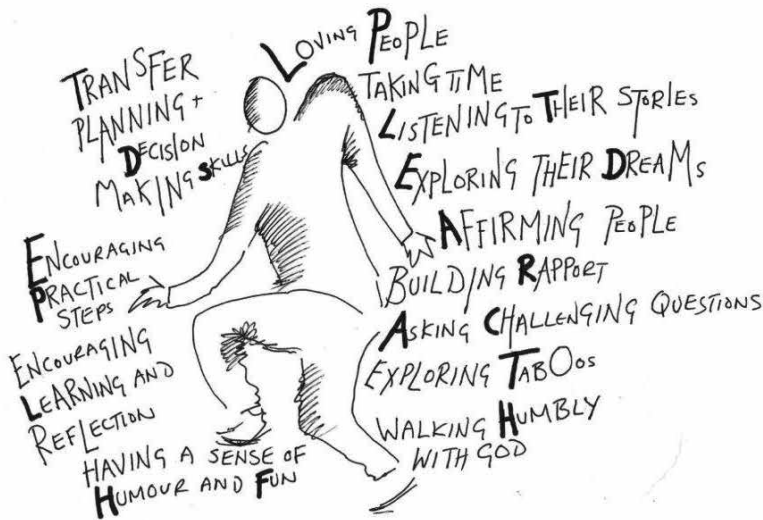
3. The quality of the Facilitator

"Facilitation is the art, not of putting ideas into people's heads, but drawing them out."

Being a good facilitator is key for community transformation.

The role of the facilitator includes the following:

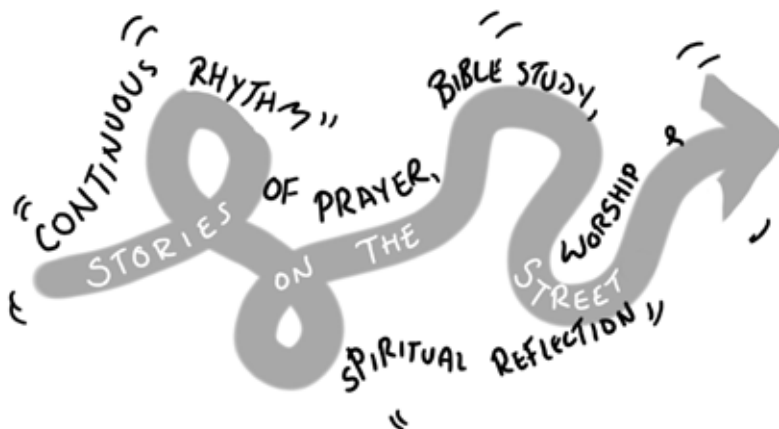
- Recognising the strengths and abilities of individual group members, and helping them to feel comfortable about sharing their hopes, concerns and ideas.
- Supporting the group, and giving participants confidence in sharing and trying out new ideas.
- Valuing diversity and being sensitive to the different needs and interests of group members. These differences might be due to gender, age, sexuality, disability, race, culture, profession, education, or economic and social status.
- In addition to this, the facilitator should have a love of people, an openness to work with others who are different from themselves, and a passion for transformation.



4. The Process

The process of transformation is dependent on a number of critical factors which need to be brought together in order to make change effective. These are as follows:

- Church leaders need to be envisioned to the extent that they own the ethos and approach, and are supportive throughout the whole process, even when it is tough going.
- Initially, the process is managed by the church and the working group, as they do the Bible studies and practise using the community engagement tools. However, later on, it is important that the process is driven by the church and community working together through the stages of describing their community, gathering information, analysing and prioritising, and planning and managing initiatives. For any change to be sustainable, there has to be ownership by the community.
- The process should prompt churches and communities to be dissatisfied with the way things are, which will provide the energy for transformation.
- The process should go at the pace of the church and community. It can take time for attitudes and behaviours to change.
- The process should be open-ended and free of any pressure to be completed within a certain timeframe, or to deliver a prescriptive outcome.
- The church's role is to be a catalyst for transformation, serving its community and building the community's capacity to be self-reliant and resilient.
- There should be a continuous rhythm of prayer, Bible study, worship and spiritual reflection, all the way through the process.



How 'Stories on the Street' is structured

This resource is written in six modules, with each one containing Bible studies and practical tools on a particular theme, to help your church engage with its community. The modules are as follows:

- Discovering our vision
Biblical reflections on Isaiah 65 and Acts 4, and practical exercises for helping your church reflect on the past and look forward to the future.
- Celebrating what we have
Biblical reflections on Elisha and the widow's oil, and the feeding of the 5000, and practical activities to help your church assess its own resources.
- A heart of compassion
Biblical reflections on the woman who touched the cloak of Jesus, and on blind Bartimaeus, and practical exercises on good listening and providing a sense of belonging.
- Building relationships
Biblical reflections on the woman at the well, and the Good Samaritan, and practical exercises to help your church reach out to different groups in the community.
- Understanding our community
Biblical reflections on Nehemiah, and practical exercises to help churches identify and analyse the needs in their communities.
- Stepping out in faith
Biblical reflection on Peter walking on the water, and practical tips on how to plan a community project. This module also includes a closing reflection on Isaiah 58.



We hope that, as a result of this material, you will be inspired, encouraged and equipped to work alongside your community in addressing local issues of poverty and vulnerability. Ultimately we hope that this resource will help your church to become a catalyst for change in your community.

Bill Crooks

Jackie Mouradian

Mosaic Creative



How to use this resource

This resource can be used in a number of ways, which are listed below:

- in a small group that is dedicated to working through the modules and acting on them at the end of the series;
- for the whole congregation, as part of a morning or evening service, which leads to some practical action by the whole church or selected members;
- as an initiative for a youth group who want to combine Bible study with something practical that they can do in their community;
- as part of a sermon series, which if possible can be linked to small group discussion and action.



Tips for using the material

Each of the six parts of this resource is structured in the same way. As a facilitator, you are invited to use all or some of the material, to pick and choose which would work best with your group.

Each part has an introductory activity which introduces your group to the theme of the Bible studies. Following this there are at least two Bible studies, and the main Bible study also has a film/ monologue that accompanies it. The film should be played or the monologue performed after the reading of the Bible passage. There is a series of questions to accompany each Bible study, and you can choose to use them all, or select the ones you feel are most relevant to the group you are working with. Alternatively, you can adopt a more open ended approach and use the 'Dwelling in the Word' method described at the end of this introduction.

Following each Bible study there are practical participatory tools, related to the theme of the study, designed to help a church or church group work alongside its community. Finally, there is a worship activity to help a church reflect on what God is saying to each individual.

If you are using this material with a church group who are wanting to engage in social action in the community, we have found that this material works well run over three Saturdays, held a month apart. Parts 1 and 2 are covered in the first session, parts 3 and 4 in the second session, and parts 5 and 6 in the third session.

It is a good idea to concentrate on Bible study in the morning, and then move on to the practical tools in the afternoon, finishing with a worship activity. On the following pages is an overview of the material, and suggested ways of using this material with your church.

This resource has more material than you can use on three Saturdays, so feel free to select what would work best with your church. You could always have supplementary sessions to cover the rest of the material, at times that would suit you, or your church leader may like to use some of the material in the church services.



Overview of the modules

	Module	Introductory activity	Bible studies	Next steps and practical actions	Worship activity
1	Discovering our vision	Paper bag exercise	Isaiah 65: 17-25; Acts 4: 32-37	Timeline of our past and future The stories of change fruit tree	Dreaming dreams collage
2	Celebrating what we have	The longest line	Elisha and the widow's oil, 2 Kings 4: 1-7; Feeding of the 5000, John 6: 1-14	Discovering our resources questionnaire and tables; Community resource map	Celebrating what we have; Cross activity
3	A heart of compassion	Back-to-back drawing game	The woman who touched the cloak, Luke 8: 40-56; Bartimaeus, Mark 10: 46-52	Listening skills and techniques	Cloak activity
4	Building relationships	Bingo	The woman at the well, John 4: 1-42; The Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 30-37	The chapati diagram; Building community relationships	Breaking down the wall of prejudice
5	Understanding our community	Market place	Nehemiah chapters 1-5 (5 studies)	Community needs map; The problem tree	Candles on the map
6	Stepping out in faith	Thinking about risk	Peter walks on water, Matthew 14: 22-33; Isaiah 58: 9-12	Priority table; Hot air balloon; Swimming pool	Reflection cards on stepping out of the boat

Suggested approaches for this resource

Approach	User groups	Format	Time needed
A	Home groups / Bible study groups (use of existing groups)	6 modules covered in evenings / day time	Approx. 2 hours per module
B	Core groups (specifically formed to work with 'Stories on the Street')	6 modules covered in evenings / daytime	Approx. 2 hours per module
C	Sermon series based on the modules done in parallel with group-based studies	6 modules as sermon and teaching series	As required
D	1-day workshops for congregations	6 modules covered over 3 Saturdays, 2 modules per Saturday, 1 month apart	5-6 hours to cover 2 modules per Saturday
E	Weekend residential retreat	Selected elements of the 6 modules	2 days with breaks and relaxation
F	Pick and mix	A combination of any of the above	

As previously mentioned, it may not be possible to cover all the material in the time you have. If this is the case, select the material which you feel most comfortable with, or which you think is most appropriate to your church and context.

Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the word is a deliberate listening to the text, to each other and to God. It is not about sharing information, or scholarship, or finding the right answers; it is more about learning about one another and about what God is saying to us individually through scripture. It requires real discipline, particularly for the task-focussed.

Method

- Make sure everyone in the room has the text. The leader begins by offering a simple prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the word.
- The leader then invites people to listen as s/he reads the text slowly, noticing where their attention lingers. It might be a particular word or phrase that attracts attention – either something they are curious about, or something which inspires, excites or challenges.
- After some silence, the text is then read again, this time by the group [if it is a small group], going round, or [if there are many people] by another solo voice.
- The group then splits into pairs, to share what it is that you saw and heard in the text. The idea is that you listen attentively to what your partner is saying because when you come back into the group, you will share, very briefly, what they heard and saw, not what you heard and saw – your listening partner will do that for you.
- As we listen together to what everyone has said, common themes begin to emerge and we begin to get a sense of what God is saying to us in that moment. The leader might make a note of these themes so that s/he can weave them together into a prayer at the end.



QUICK GUIDE TO SETTING UP STORIES ON THE STREET

FORM A SMALL GROUP OF LIKE MINDED PEOPLE TO WALK THROUGH THE MATERIALS IN THIS MANUAL

DREAMDREAMS

VISIT OTHER CHURCHES WHO WORK WITH THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

DRINK Lots of AND

DECIDE WHICH BIBLE STUDIES, TOOLS & ACTIVITIES WOULD WORK BEST IN YOUR CHURCH

SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS WITH THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

TOGETHER PLAN A SERIES OF EVENTS / MINI WORKSHOPS TO ENVISION THE CHURCH

AS A TEAM MEET REGULARLY TO PRAY, PLAN, TRY OUT THE MATERIALS AND HAVE FUN!



EAT MUFFINS PIZZA

UPDATE THE WIDER CHURCH ON WHAT'S GOING ON AND HOW PEOPLE CAN GET INVOLVED

PUT ON PUBLIC DISPLAY, ANY COMMUNITY MAPS, TIMELINES, CHURCH BASELINE SURVEYS AND STORIES FOR EVERYONE TO SEE & CONTRIBUTE TO!

THINK ABOUT HOW THE TEAM IS WORKING TOGETHER, AND CELEBRATE SUCCESS AND LEARN FROM THE CHALLENGES

GIVE YOUR TEAM A NAME AND PLAN SOME SOCIAL EVENTS

PART ONE: DISCOVERING OUR VISION



PURPOSE OF PART ONE

- To explore Isaiah's vision for the new Jerusalem, and how it applies to the context of churches and their local communities today.
- To be inspired by the way of life of the early church as described in Acts 4.
- To enable churches to have an appreciation of the history and journey of their community, and how key events have shaped it.
- To inspire individuals and congregations to dream about a vision for their own community.



Introductory activity: Paper bag exercise

This is a great way to get your group thinking about their communities, and working together as a group.

Write the questions below on separate pieces of card and stick them up around the walls of the room. Underneath each question, stick a paper bag or envelope, along with some post-it notes. Ask the group members to walk around the room, answer the questions on the post-it notes, and then put the answers inside the paper bags or envelopes.

Questions

- What is the best thing about your community?
- What is the most challenging thing that your community faces?
- What are your hopes for this workshop?
- What are your fears for this workshop?
- If your church was a form of transport what would it be like?
- What is a vision?

Once everyone has done this, divide the group into smaller sub-groups and give each sub-group one or two bags to analyse, grouping the answers into common themes. Each sub-group then feeds back to the full group.



BIBLICAL REFLECTION:

A new heaven and a new earth

Isaiah 65: 17-25

Read the passage or show the film of Isaiah 65: 17-25, using the following link:

<https://youtu.be/6Fg3rt2roYM>



After the reading or the film, ask your group,

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings and then ask for feedback.

Then ask your group to answer the following questions. Divide the group into smaller groups if appropriate.

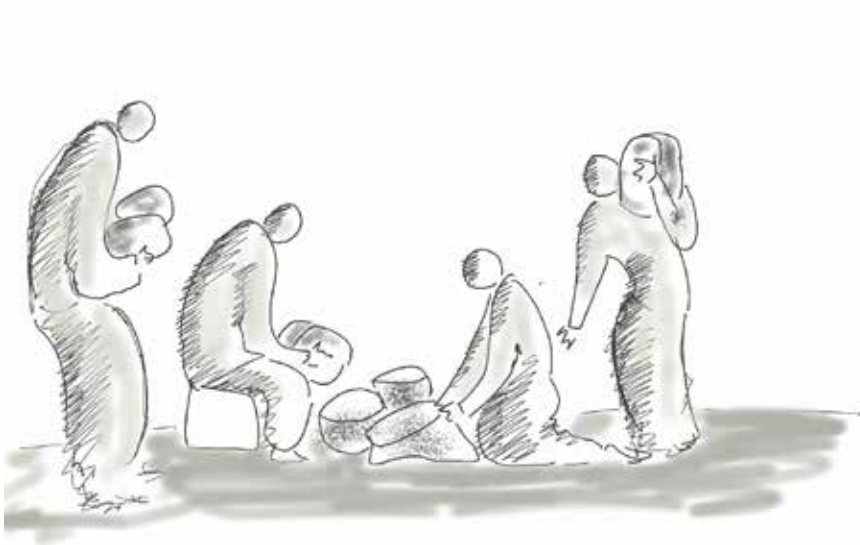
1. What are the changes that God promises to bring about?
2. What parts of Isaiah's vision would you most like to see as a reality in your community?
3. Do you have other hopes and dreams for your community? What are they?

BIBLICAL REFLECTION:

The early church

Acts 4: 32-37

Read the passage.



After the reading, ask your group to consider the following questions and issues. Divide the group into smaller groups if appropriate.

1. What similarities are there between this passage and Isaiah 65: 17-25?
2. Does this encourage you or frustrate you?
3. Where does the motivation to live in this way come from?
4. Compare the way this community lived to the way your own community lives.
5. How realistic is it today to declare that our possessions are not our own?
6. What steps can we take as a church and community to encourage the type of living we see in this passage?

QUICK GUIDE TO PRESENTING WITH FLIP CHARTS



FLIP CHARTS CAN BE FUN!
ATTRACTIVE FOR GUIDING GROUP DISCUSSIONS
AND FOR PRESENTING KEY IDEAS.



KEEP THE TITLE BIG

- AIM TO KEEP TO 3 POINTS PER CHART
- ALWAYS WRITE IN CAPITALS
- USE BULLET POINTS TO FOCUS THE READER'S EYE



KEEP IT SIMPLE - DON'T USE IT TO WRITE ALL YOUR NOTES ON!!

CREATIVE
BIBLE STUDY
FEEDBACK

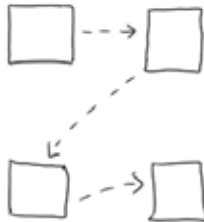
THIS IS AN INFORMAL WELCOME TO A GROUP ACTIVITY

WHAT IS OUR VISION?



POSING A QUESTION AT THE START OF A BRAINSTORM

NEXT STEPS



VISUALISING WHERE WE ARE GOING



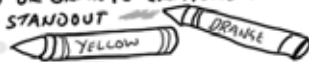
COMMUNICATING 4 KEY POINTS



TITLE

USE OF ARROWS AND CARTOON FIGURES TO SHOW IMPACT AND INFLUENCES

TIPS - CONSIDER SHADING AROUND THE TITLES WITH YELLOW OR ORANGE CRAYONS TO MAKE THEM STANDOUT



NEXT STEPS

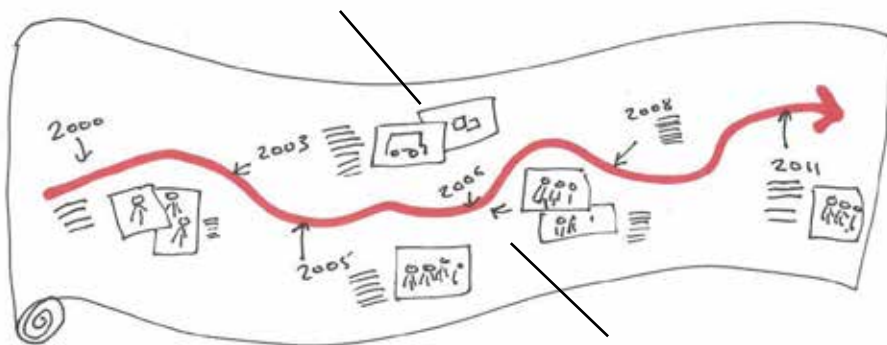
The timeline

This tool helps us to appreciate the things that have shaped the church and community, and made them what they are today. It provides a good opportunity for a group to discuss what has gone well in the past and what has been challenging. From this we can identify the key strengths and resources that are in the church and community, and what we can build on for the future.

Key steps for doing a timeline

1. Roll out a few metres of lining paper on top of some tables, and provide marker pens and colouring pens for all the group to use.
2. Explain to the group that you are going to draw two timelines, and that the first is to show what has been going on in the church for the last five to ten years. Start by drawing a horizontal line across the paper with the years marked on it. Then draw a second line tracing the journey of the church, with the positive experiences ('ups') marked above the horizontal line, and the negative experiences ('downs') below the horizontal line.
3. For each significant point on the timeline, ask the group to discuss the various experiences. If it was an 'up', what made it so and what can be learned from it? Likewise, if it was a 'down', what was the nature of it, and what can be learned from it?
4. By the end of this activity the group should be able to draw some conclusions about what they have learned from the past.
5. Take some time to pray over the timeline and give thanks to God.

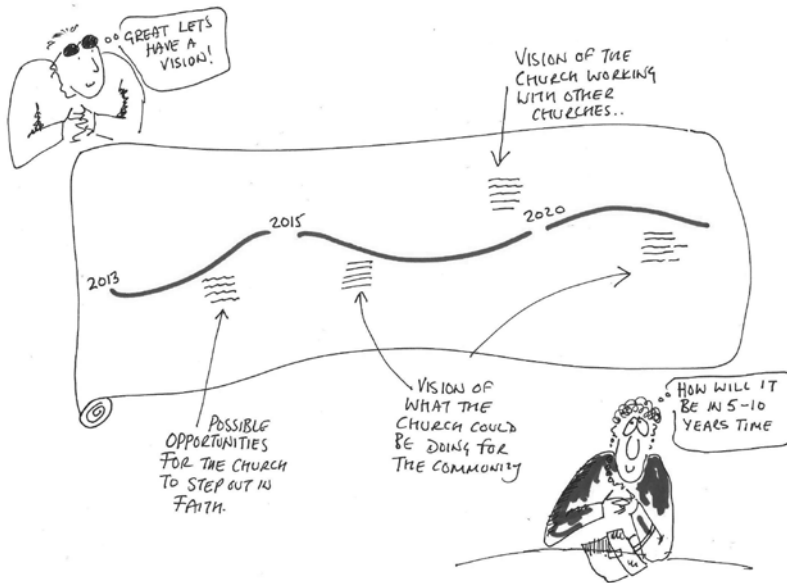
Describe the key events
in words and pictures



Lining paper

Timeline of the future

Take a new piece of lining paper, roll this out on another table and get the group to dream what the next five years could look like for the church. People should write their dreams on post-it notes or coloured paper, place them on the lining paper, and share them with the rest of the group in turn.



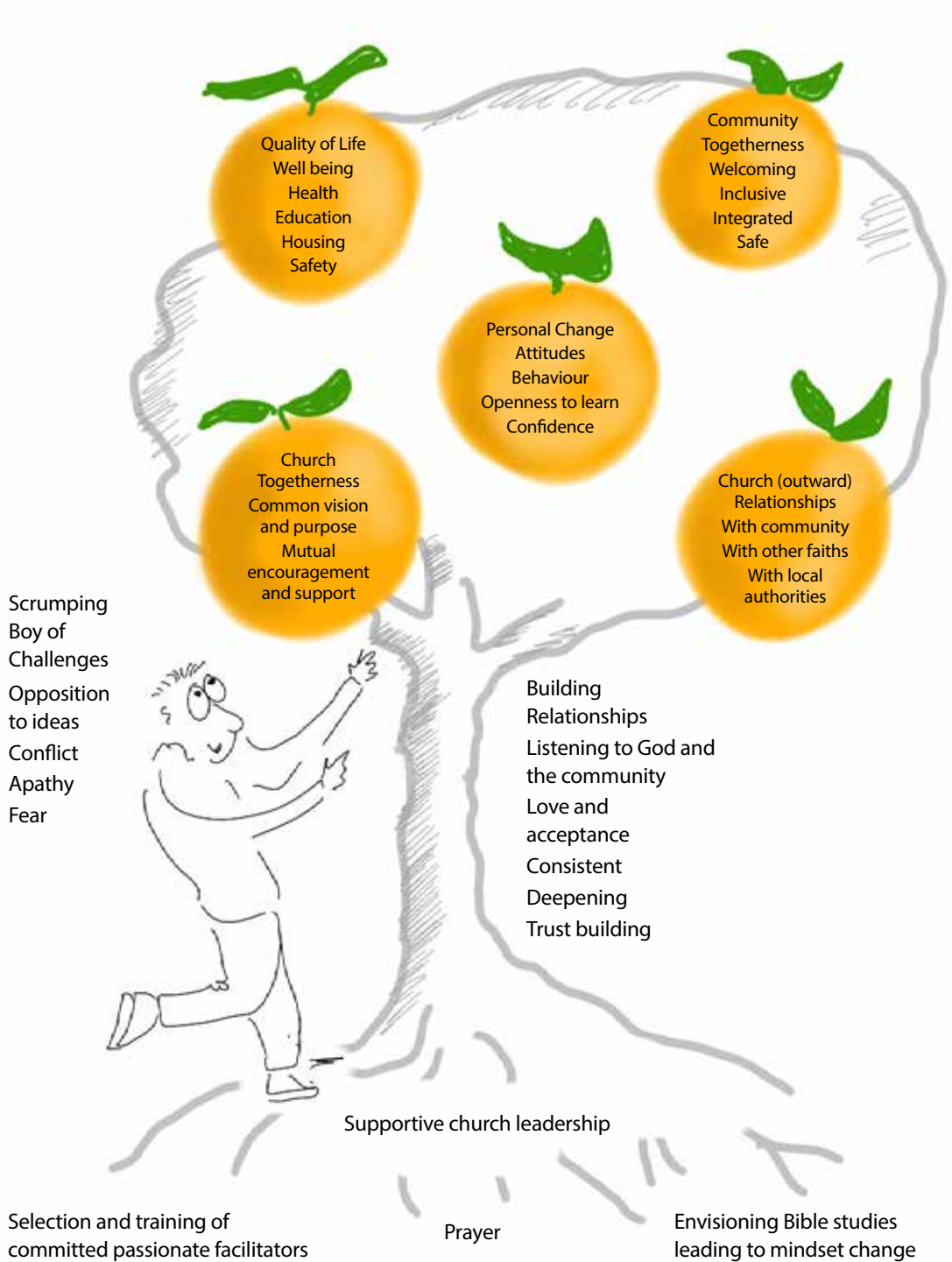
Explore together what risks the church might have to take in order to achieve these dreams, and identify some of the fears people might have about them. This is also a good opportunity to discuss what is realistic to achieve, but also what could be an exciting opportunity for trusting God as we step out in faith as a church.

As you do the timeline of the future, you could ask questions to help people explore their dreams for a community where:

- People are not living in fear of isolation.
- People are not living in fear of the effects of crime or unemployment.
- People are not drowning in debt.

What specifically can the church do to address some of these issues or others you may have identified?

The Stories of Change Fruit Tree



The stories of change fruit tree

Having explored people's dreams for the future, it is a good idea to think about how do we know we have arrived at our vision and made a difference to people's lives. One way of doing this is to ask people to share stories of the changes that they have been through as a result of 'Stories on the Street'. The method described here is called the 'Stories of Change Fruit Tree' which encourages everyone to share a short story of their experience. You can start telling these stories from the time you start doing the Bible studies, through to building relationships with the community and undertaking small projects or initiatives.

Key points

- The roots represent the key elements that help the changes represented by the fruit to come about. The support of the church leadership is essential if the process is going to be successful. Other key factors are the change in mind-set through time spent in creative Bible study and also the selection of relational, passionate facilitators. Most important of all is time spent in prayer.
- The trunk of the tree represents the act of building relationships. The changed mind-sets in the roots of the tree will include the desire to have a deeper relationship with God and build relationships with the community, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised. For lasting change to take place, it is also important to build relationships with those who have influence, including the local authorities.
- The fruit represents the key areas which we expect to change as a result of using this approach as illustrated on the previous page. This change includes personal change as well as change in the church and community.
- The scrumping boy represents the challenges that hinder growth and positive change taking place. It is important to collect stories about the challenges and difficulties as this will lead to discussion on how to address these challenges in the present and future.



Story telling

There are various ways of collecting stories:

1. People tell their stories at an informal gathering and the key points of the story are written down, or recorded on a phone.
2. People can share their stories by social media.
3. People can write a poem or a short story about their experience of change.
4. People could perform a drama or roleplay of the change they have experienced.
5. People could draw a picture that captures their experience which they can then explain to others.



As a guide, these are the key elements to cover when telling stories of change:

- Title of the story:
- Brief description of the story:
- What are the key changes in attitude or behaviour the story illustrates?
- Why do you think this story is significant?

The 'Stories of Change Fruit Tree' provides a framework on which to attach the stories of change. It may well be that some stories fit more than one type of fruit and this will lead to important discussion around where it should go.

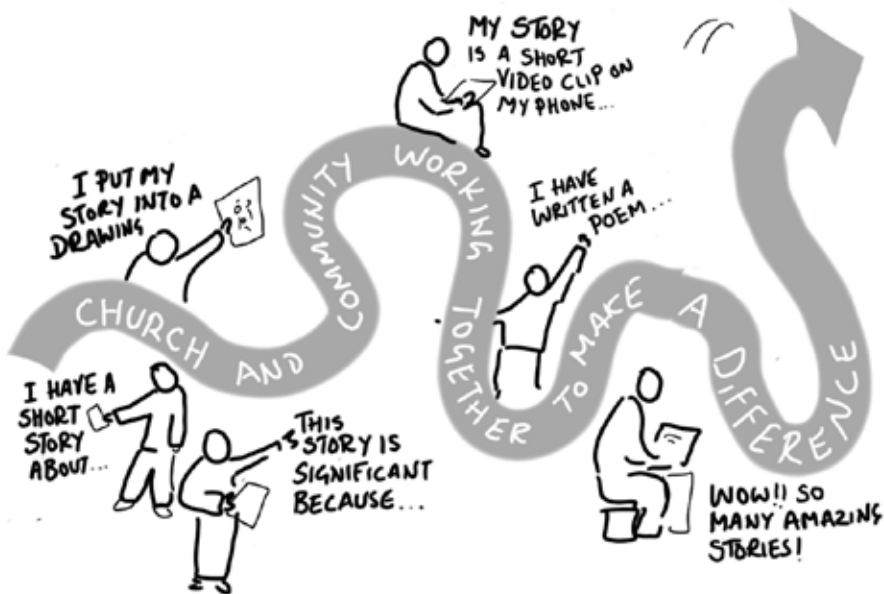


Summary

It is a good idea to get used to telling stories of change as you work through this resource. In this way you will be able to see the progress that has been made, identify the challenges that need to be overcome and encourage and motivate people. At the end of each section of this resource there is a reminder to gather stories. Whenever you meet together to share and record stories, make time to identify the common themes and reflect on the changes that are taking place.

The beauty about this method of monitoring change is that in itself, it is community building. The conversations about the stories and their significance can be as important as the stories themselves. It might be useful to nominate someone in the church and/or community who can be responsible for collecting the stories together and arranging story telling events.

We hope that 'Stories on the Street' will result in community engagement becoming a way of life for your church, leading to many stories of positive change in the years to come.



Worship response

Dreaming dreams

Art / collage activity

This is an opportunity to give participants some space and time with God to dream about their community, and what they would like church and community to be.

1. Play some reflective music and allow your group members to have some time on their own to listen to God and to dream about how they would like to see their church and community.
2. Provide a pile of newspapers, magazines and plain paper, and ask group members to draw their dreams on a piece of paper, or to choose pictures from the magazines / papers and make a collage.
3. After 30 minutes, bring the drawings and collages together and ask the following questions:
 - What are the common themes?
 - What can we build on?
 - What areas give us the most energy?

Pray over the drawings and collages, and ask for God's help to bring transformation to our churches and communities.



**“For I will create
Jerusalem to be a delight,
and its people a joy.”**

Isaiah 65:18

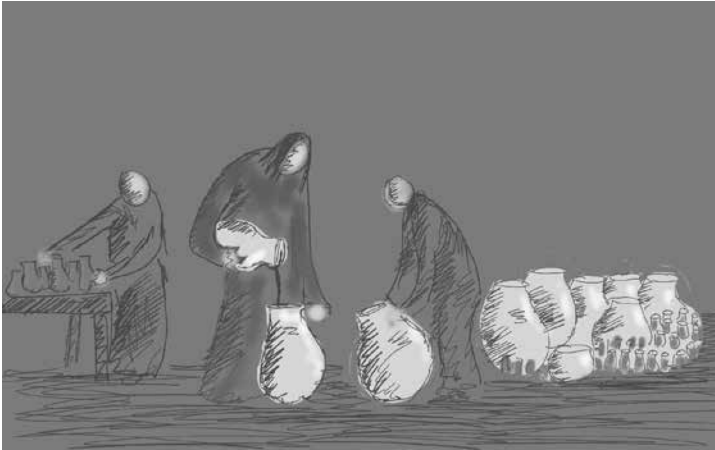


PART TWO: CELEBRATING WHAT WE HAVE



PURPOSE OF PART TWO:

- To gain insights from the Bible passages about Elisha and the widow's oil, and the feeding of the 5000, with regard to giving the little we have to God so that he can use it for his glory.
- To enable churches to identify and celebrate their own resources which they can use for the good of their church and community.



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

The longest line

This is a fun activity with some profound learning points about using our own resources for the good of others.



Method

1. Ask your group to form two lines with an equal number of people in each line.
2. Explain that the idea of the game is to make the longest possible line using only what they have on them. Set a time limit of 5-10 minutes, depending on the number of people you have.
3. Each person must be in contact with another person either by means of a part of the body or an article of clothing.
4. The team that wins is the one that forms the longest line.

Questions

- To what lengths were people prepared to go to make the line as long as possible?
- What were the barriers to people sharing what they had?
- What does this exercise teach us about using our own resources?

Reflections

- People suddenly discover things on them that they didn't realise could help.
- People encourage each other to take things off.
- Leaders naturally emerge.
- People become more and more creative.
- People discover their own bodies can increase the length of the line.
- Surprising small details can make a difference (glasses, socks, shoes).
- There is a sense of achievement – a feeling that everyone has given their all.

Application

- This is a good exercise for helping churches and communities to see what they can do with their own resources, before looking for outside help.
- When we rely on our own resources we can become more creative and more together as a community.
- This exercise highlights the sacrificial element of sharing our resources – it can be uncomfortable.
- When you feel something is worth it, you are prepared to sacrifice and take a risk, and by doing this, you may discover new talents and resources within yourself.
- When using this with a community group, ask them to make a list of their own resources.
- Discuss what might be the barriers preventing people from using their own resources, and how these can be overcome.

BIBLICAL REFLECTION:

Elisha and the widow's oil

2 Kings 4:1-7

Read the passage and then play the video of Elisha and the widow, by using this link:

<https://youtu.be/mhmKO63HbFc>

Alternatively, ask someone to perform or read the monologue on the following page.



After the reading or film, ask your group:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give your group some time to reflect on the questions and then ask for feedback.

Alternative to the film

Another way of presenting this passage is by doing a role play of the story. You could even bring the passage up to date by presenting it in the form of a radio or television interview. You could interview the widow, the two sons, or perhaps one of her neighbours, to show the effect of the miracle on the community.



Elisha and the widow's oil

It's been a good day today at the market. I sold quite a few bottles, certainly enough to get me and Josh and Daniel through this month. Well, it's good quality oil you see. It smells gorgeous – difficult to resist. And just look at how much is left. Yes, the future is looking pretty good for me and the boys. You wouldn't think so with Daniel sometimes. He's getting to that age now, when helping mum isn't as exciting as it used to be. Josh is starting to get on his nerves too. That's ok; he can be moody if he wants; he can be whatever he likes; he's here isn't he? Daniel and Josh – my boys, my beautiful boys. I was so close to losing them.

Six months ago, life was very different. Six months ago I was in the depths of despair. It was the worst possible situation.

My poor husband Obadiah died a few months earlier, leaving a large debt dating back to when there was a famine, and the man who had loaned the money wanted it back. I was very poor and had absolutely no way of repaying him, which meant that he was going to take my two sons, Daniel and Joshua, away from me, to be his slaves, as repayment for the loan. How can a man like that sleep at night?

So I was desperate. Where was I going to get the money from? We had nothing! The boys didn't really understand what was going on – they just knew we were in trouble. Well, I was in tears the whole time. How I missed Obadiah. I was so angry with God for taking him from me. He was so young.

And then I remembered Elisha. I'm not sure why. His name just came into my head as I was crying in my bed one night. Obadiah adored this man. He was a holy man, a prophet. Obadiah had been training to be a priest when he died, and he was learning so much from Elisha. I met him a couple of times, and he seemed so kind and so wise. Maybe he could help me!

So I went to see him. He welcomed me warmly. He treated me as if he had all the time in the world to listen to me and my problems, so I just poured out my heart. I told him all of my troubles. After I'd finished he was quiet for a while. And then he said, "What do you have that could be sold?"

My heart sank. I had nothing and I told him so. But he pushed me again. "Think a bit harder," he said, "Do you have anything at all in your house?" I thought about my house with its empty shelves; it was bleak and bare. On one table there was a jar with a tiny bit of anointing oil at the bottom.

"Elisha, I have nothing. The house is bare, I just have a small amount of oil in a jar."

Elisha was quiet again for a minute, and then he smiled. He looked at me and actually smiled.

"You have some oil in a jar!" he said. "That is a wonderful thing. This is what you must do. Go to all your friends and neighbours, and ask them to give you all the spare empty jars and pots they have in their house. Then, when you have gathered them all, shut the door of your house and pour your oil into the jars, setting aside the jars that are full."

My mind was full of confusion. I didn't really know how to feel. I should have been angry. What he was telling me to do made no sense at all! Did he not hear me say that I had just a tiny bit of oil? But I knew he wasn't making fun of me. That was obvious from the way he spoke and the way he looked at me. And my husband is a very good judge of character – he trusted him completely. So I decided I would too. I would do what he said, no matter what others thought or how foolish it seemed.

Actually people were very kind. Josh and Daniel and I went round all the neighbours asking for their jars. They knew I was in a desperate state, and I suppose they felt sorry for me, but they were very generous with their jars and some even shared a little food with me and the boys. By the time we had finished collecting, my little house was full of them.

Josh and Daniel wanted to build things with them but I said no – we mustn't break any. I shut the door and looked at them all. Then I looked at my jar of oil. There was so little in it. The more I looked at it the smaller the amount of oil seemed to be. How could the prophet tell me to fill up the empty jars with this? But I could see my husband's face in my mind. It was as if Obadiah was saying, "Trust him".

So I picked up my jar with the little bit of oil and started to pour it into one of the empty jars. It trickled out, slowly at first, but then it seemed to speed up, and before long it was half way up the jar, and still it came until the jar was full.

"How did you do that?" cried Daniel, "Mother you're amazing!"

"I don't think it's me," I said. Josh just gaped, his mouth wide open. "Give me another, Josh," I said. He pushed one in front of me and I kept pouring the oil from my jar. The second jar filled up, and then the third; the oil just kept coming. The room was beginning to smell wonderful. My hand was shaking a bit with the wonder of it all, but I didn't spill a drop.

The boys were really excited now. They brought me more and more jars, and each one filled to the brim as I kept pouring. We were all laughing now. This was the most exciting, ridiculous day ever. It took a while to fill all the jars – my neighbours had been so generous – but in due course we got to the last empty jar and I poured the oil in. Then the most amazing thing happened: as it reached the brim of the last jar, the oil in my jar ran out. I fell to my knees and thanked God in heaven.

Then Daniel and Josh and I hugged each other. We all knew what this meant: this was beautiful anointing oil; it would bring in a lot of money. I needed to thank Elisha, so we all went to see him, and I let the boys tell him what had happened. He laughed with joy as he saw their excitement.

"Now go and sell your oil," he said. "Sell it all and live without fear."

So that is what we have done. The horrible man was paid back and is now out of our lives. My boys are with me forever – well, until they find themselves some lovely wives anyway, and hopefully that won't be for a long time yet.

Questions

To deepen the learning, ask all or some of the questions below.
Divide your group into smaller groups if appropriate.

1. What were the needs in this story, and what were the resources? (Note to facilitator: this could be in table form – see table 1 on page 28)
2. Why did the widow come to Elisha? What was especially tragic about her situation?
3. What does Elisha's response tell us about his character? How do you respond to those in need?
4. What do you learn from the fact that he used what she had as a resource? Write a principle that you can derive from this. Can you make a specific application of this principle to your own life now?
5. List all the things that Elisha commanded her to do. Why do you think he told her to ask her neighbours for jars?
6. What impact do you think this had on her sons? In what practical ways can you show your children what God is like, and that He answers prayer?
7. What had she asked Elisha's help for? What did she actually receive? What can you learn from this?
8. What is your responsibility today to the orphan and widow? To the single parent? What do they need besides material provisions? What practical things can you do to help them? Is there someone in your family, the church or community to whom you can reach out this week?



BIBLICAL REFLECTION

The feeding of the 5000

John 6: 1-14

Read the passage and then ask someone to read or perform the following monologue which tells the story from the point of view of the boy who gave his loaves and fish to Jesus.

The boy's story

I woke to the sound of my aunt yelling at us to get up. We'd slept late, probably cos we talked so long into the night. I love these visits. Simon, my cousin, lives in Bethsaida, up in the hills with his big brother Aaron and his mum and dad and I go and stay with him a lot – sometimes for a few days. Don't get me wrong, I love my sisters – but it's good to get away and do boy stuff. My uncle's a farmer and I really enjoy helping out in the fields.

But it was time to go home – back to Capernaum. My aunt wrapped up some left over fish from breakfast and a few loaves and gave them to me, along with a big wet kiss.

"Here, take this for the journey" she said, "Can't have your mother saying I don't look after you."

I always enjoy this walk back home. As I make my way down the hillside there's usually hardly anyone about and I often find myself daydreaming and thinking about the fun we've had over the last few days. Today was different though. As I made my way down the hill, I realised there were crowds of people coming up from the lake, all talking excitedly. What was going on? I followed the people as they made their way to a different part of the hillside, and at last I could see what the fuss was about. Up ahead of me, I could see hundreds more people all standing listening to a man who was speaking from a rock. A woman rushed past me saying,

"There he is – there's Jesus, hurry!"

Jesus – I knew that name. Mother talks about him quite a lot at home. He's been healing a lot of people, like a doctor, but not using any medicines or potions. Mother says he just touches them or speaks to them and they are better. Mother says he's going to save us from the Romans. I'm not sure how one man can do that - the Romans are pretty scary - but mother is usually right.

I couldn't hear what he was saying, so I worked my way through the massive crowd - there must have been thousands by now - until I got a good spot not too far away from him.

I didn't understand all of what he was saying but I loved the way he was speaking - with such energy! I recognised some of his words from the scriptures that mother reads to me in the evenings sometimes. But the way he spoke was almost like he'd written the words himself. He kept talking about a kingdom, which sounded so good. No mention of getting rid of the Romans though. Maybe he'd get on to that later.

After a while some people brought their sick to him and he healed them – just like mother said. I wished she was here - she would have loved this. Thinking of her reminded me I should be getting back before it got dark.

I was starting to feel a bit hungry too, and was grateful for the fish and bread my aunt had given me. And I wasn't the only one getting hungry. I noticed there was a group of men round Jesus – his friends I think – who were getting agitated.

"We need to send these people away,' one said. "It's getting late, they can get food in the surrounding villages".

"You feed them," he said.

Well they all had a good laugh about that. One of them said something about not being paid enough and they laughed again. But Jesus just smiled.

"Go and find out what there is," he said.

They weren't laughing anymore – they realised Jesus was serious. They started to go through the crowd asking for food.

I knew I really should go home, but it was all too exciting – I just felt something was going to happen. Jesus had something in mind and I wanted to know what it was.

One of the men pushed through to where I was standing. "Do you have any food?" he asked. "Jesus needs it."

The people around me just shook their heads.

"I've got a bit," I said, "It's not much".

I wasn't even sure how much I had - my aunt had just shoved it in my hands. I unwrapped the cloth to reveal 5 small loaves and a couple of fish.

"You can have these." I said.

The man thanked me and took the food, signalling me to follow him. As we reached Jesus I saw the other men he'd sent into the crowd, standing around empty handed.

"This boy has 5 loaves and two fish" my man said "But what good is that among so many?"

'Yes what good is that?' I thought, but my eyes were fixed on Jesus now. What was he going to do?

Jesus smiled. "Tell the people to sit down in groups" he said to his friends.

Off they went again - looking really fed up this time. But I felt really excited. I'd heard Jesus speak and I had seen him heal people right in front of my eyes. I felt sure something even more amazing was going to happen. What, I didn't know - maybe manna from heaven like they had when Moses was alive. Mother loves that story!

Jesus raised his eyes to the sky. This is it, I thought, manna from heaven – here it comes. Here it comes!!

But it didn't come. Jesus wasn't waiting for something to fall from the sky. He was praying. He thanked God and then he took the loaves into his hands and started breaking them up. Then he tore up the fish and gave the pieces to his friends telling them to give it out to the people in the crowd. They looked at him, very confused by his request and the small amount of food in their hands but did as he'd asked.

I watched as they gave out the food, first to one group and then another but I couldn't believe what I was seeing. People were passing the bread and fish round from group to group and there was plenty of it! Everyone was eating. Then it was my turn, and I couldn't believe how much bread and fish there was - there must have been over 50 people sitting round me and we all had plenty to eat. It was really good too. Even Jesus' friends were smiling now.

'I hope they get some too' I thought – 'they've been working very hard'.

And they did. They sat round Jesus and ate and laughed.

But their work wasn't over – when we'd all eaten our fill, Jesus told them to collect all the left-overs.

'See that nothing is wasted' he said

Each of his friends collected a full basket of left overs. Unbelievable! My loaves and fish feeding all those people and with plenty left over.

It was starting to get dark now, and I thought again of mother and how worried she'd be. But I knew she'd forgive me when she heard my story, when she heard how my lunch fed thousands of people.

I set off with the groups of people heading back down hill, some carrying the baskets. Jesus's friends headed off down the hill too, towards the lake. And Jesus? Well he went the other way, further up the mountain. 'Where was he going?' I wondered 'To find some peace and quiet maybe?'

And as for me – I ran straight home to my mother. She was a bit cross I was so late and amazed when I told her I couldn't eat any supper. My sisters didn't believe my story at all but I'm sure mother did. She made all the right noises anyway.

"Jesus didn't talk about the Romans Mother", I said.

"Well maybe not this time," she said, " but he'll sort them out, I'm sure of it!"

I'm not so sure about that – but to be honest I don't really care. I'll let the grown-ups worry about that.

Questions

Below are several questions to deepen the learning. Choose the ones you feel are most appropriate and divide your group into smaller groups if appropriate.



Questions on the passage

- What were the needs in this story? What were the resources?
(Note to facilitator: this could be in table form – see table 2 on the following page.)
- In this story, what did Jesus focus on? What did the disciples focus on?
- How could Jesus have performed this miracle differently? Why did he not do it differently?

Questions for us as individuals

- Do you feel that you don't have enough to share? What do we mean by enough? Is it time? Is it money? Is it property? Is it possessions?
- What holds us back from trusting God with the little we have?

Questions for us as a church and community

- What are the resources and needs in our church? What are the needs in our community?
- What resources does the church and community have to meet these needs? (For questions 1-2 see table 3)
- As a church, to what level are we prepared to go in sharing our resources with others (money, time, venue, skills, experience, possessions)?

Needs and resources tables

Table 1

A needs and resources table for the story of Elisha and the widow's oil

Needs	Resources
Money to pay the debt	Small amount of oil
Protection of children from slavery	The wisdom of Elisha
Future income	Two sons
	Neighbours
	Empty jars and pots

Table 2

A needs and resources table for the story of the feeding of the 5000

Needs	Resources
The crowd were hungry	5 loaves and 2 fish
Spiritual teaching	Baskets
Leadership and organising	Disciples
	Jesus
	Prayer

Making your own needs and resources table

Having done the Bible studies and the respective tables that go with them, you can now try to create your own needs and resources table, relating specifically to your church and community context. See the example below.

Table 3

Needs	Resources
Isolated and lonely elderly	Members of the church available for visiting Venue to run a lunch club Special events Money for gifts
Church hall in need of decoration	Money to buy paint and materials Skilled painters in the church Willing volunteers to provide refreshments
Support for single parents	Church members available to provide baby sitting Venue for a creche Retired midwife to give parenting skills Practical handymen with time to help with issues around the home.

NEXT STEPS:

Discovering our resources

'Stories on the Street' baseline survey

This survey is designed to help your church identify the resources it has. You may be surprised to find you have more than you thought. This should not be an onerous task. It is a good idea to get a group together to fill in the tables, which should be a snap shot in time and should not require lengthy and complicated research.

You could make an event of doing the baseline survey by making sure you have some tasty snacks to eat while you are filling in the tables. The value of doing this is not only to discover what we have but also to identify those things that could be used to benefit our community, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised. It is useful to have this survey to refer back to, to see what has changed as a result of going through the process of 'Stories on the Street'.



About your church	Details
Name of church	
Name of contact person	
Contact number	
Address of the church	
Members of the 'Stories on the Street' working group	
Average size of congregation	
Start date of using 'Stories on the Street'	
How often does the working group meet?	

Who are the vulnerable and the marginalised?

Vulnerable and marginalised groups or individuals that the church is involved with	Details of involvement
Isolated elderly	
Single parents	
Physically disabled	
Mental health (Dementia , depression, etc)	
Victims of domestic abuse	
Homeless	
Addiction	
Refugees/.asylum seekers	
Unemployed	
Terminally ill	
Other - please specify	

Questions for reflection:

- What are the mutual benefits of the church working with these individuals or groups?
- Looking to the future, are there any other groups that the church could become involved with?



Discovering our skills

Skill	Who has the skill	Details
Caring for others (children and youth, illness, mental health, elderly)		
Catering / hospitality (cooking, organising, waiting, clearing, cleaning)		
DIY / building (painting & decorating, carpentry, basic repairs, electrical, plumbing)		
Digital (installing and fixing computers / printers / internet)		
Creative (art, music, drama, crafts, design)		
Sports (team player, coach, organiser, administrator)		
Office/Admin (planning, budgeting, filing, management)		
Sales (marketing, stock control, advertising)		
Professional (teachers, social workers, legal, medical, etc.)		
Other		

Questions for reflection:

- Which skills are used on a regular basis?
- Are there any skills not being fully used?
- Are there any specific skills that could be used to benefit the vulnerable and marginalised?



Discovering our assets

Asset type	Details of asset and location
Church / faith buildings (halls, kitchens, toilets, recreational assets, etc.)	
Use of community spaces (football, rugby, cricket pitches, parks, gardens, allotments, playgrounds)	
Use of community buildings (community centre / hall, youth centre, library, swimming pool, sports centre, health centre)	
Other	

Questions for reflection:

- Which assets are used on a regular basis?
- Are there any assets not being fully used?
- Are there any assets that the church can access in the community which can be used to serve the vulnerable and marginalised?



Church projects

Name of church project	Brief description of what it does	Who benefits from this project?

Questions for reflection:

- Which projects does the church have most energy for?
- Which projects are draining the church's resources and should be reviewed?
- Which projects directly benefit the vulnerable and marginalised?
- Which projects could be adapted to include the vulnerable and marginalised?



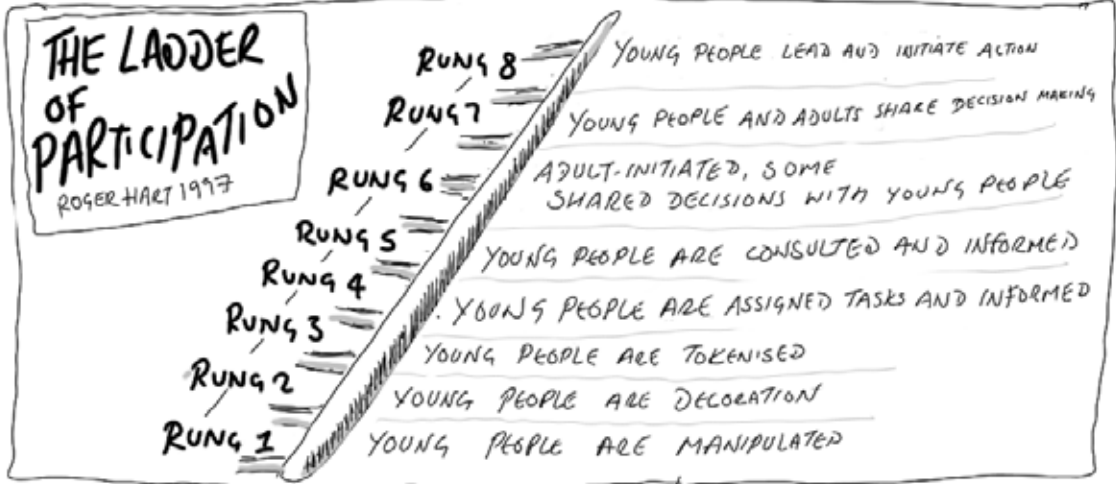
Questions for reflection having done the survey:

- What aspects of the church survey confirm the character and culture of the church?
- What insights are new and surprising?
- How would you like to share this information with the rest of the church?



QUICK GUIDE TO INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

THE STORY OF THE SWING



QUICK GUIDE TO WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY

1. BE YOURSELF.
YOUNG PEOPLE WILL ACCEPT YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE AND NOT WHAT YOU TRY TO BE

2. WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE NOT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MOTIVATED TO DO THINGS WHEN THEY CAN DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES

3. JUST HAVE FUN!

4. GO WITH YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENERGY AND INTERESTS

5. MAKE LISTENING A PRIORITY. THIS IS KEY TO MAKING THEM FEEL VALUED

6. REACT HONESTLY TO YOUNG PEOPLE. AGREE OR DISAGREE AND EXPLAIN WHY

7. MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR CREATIVE ENERGY. LOOK FOR PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO EXPRESS IT!



8. ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOMETHING GREATER THAN THEMSELVES. THIS IS KEY TO BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM, BOTH AS A GROUP AND AS INDIVIDUALS

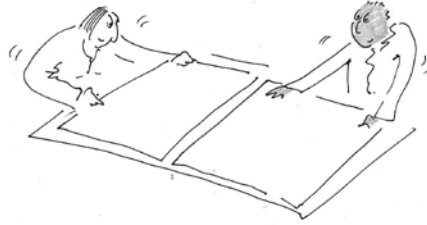
9. GO FOR SHORT TERM SUCCESSES WHICH THEY CAN FEEL PROUD OF

10. BE CURIOUS.
TELLING YOUNG PEOPLE WHAT THEY SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO GENERALLY DOESN'T WORK AS IT SOMETIMES REINFORCES THEIR PREJUDICE AGAINST AUTHORITY. A FAR BETTER OPTION IS TO CHALLENGE THEIR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS THROUGH OPEN QUESTIONS AND BEING CURIOUS

Community resource mapping

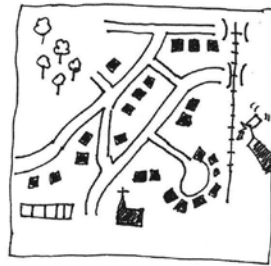
This is a really useful visual tool to help a group brainstorm what they see as the key resources and needs in the area, and then to prioritise them. This can be done in individual peer groups or interest groups, and then combined into one big map.

Step 1: Put some large tables together and put together 4-6 pieces of flipchart, on which to draw a map.



Step 2: Mark on the map, in marker pen, the main roads, rivers, railways, etc.

Step 3: Mark key buildings on the map, such as shopping centres, churches, mosques, pubs, clubs, etc.



Step 4: Discuss and mark on the map the resources that exist, such as community groups, buildings, services, leisure activities, centres of faith, and youth and elderly focused activities. Refer to your skills, assets and group's tables to complete the map.

Step 5: As a group you can then discuss the various needs or issues you have in your community and mark those on the map as well. Be aware that you are doing this as a church group and perceptions in the community may be different. In part 5, 'Understanding our community', it is suggested that you share your maps with community members and ask them to add their own ideas to the maps.



Worship response

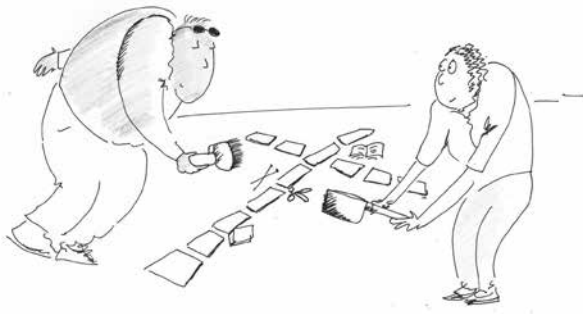
Celebrating what we have

This is an opportunity for church members to think about what they are personally bringing to God, and offering for the common good. You could play some music during this worship activity.

Some suggestions would be:

I will offer up my life
All for Jesus

1. Make a cross on the floor of the room. This could be made out of coloured paper or pieces of timber laid down in the shape of a cross.
2. Ask everyone to spend a few minutes reflecting on themselves and the resources they have to offer to the church. These could be a skill, a talent, a possession, a life experience, or time. When they have thought of them, ask the group to think of one of these and find an object that represents that resource, either in the room or close by. If there is nothing suitable, they could write their resource down on a post-it.
3. One by one, each person then lays down their object or post-it on the cross, and explains what it represents.
4. When everyone has laid down their objects, a prayer could be said for all the resources represented on the cross. Ask God to multiply the use of resources for the good of the church and community.



Heavenly father,

We thank you for all the gifts, skills and experiences laid down on your cross. We thank you for all you have given, and we pray that you will fill us with your love for our church and community, giving us the strength and will to give of ourselves for your service. Just as you laid down your life for us, help our lives to be living sacrifices for you.

In Jesus name,

Amen

**“Gather the pieces
that are left over.
Let nothing be wasted.”**

John 6:12

