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Layout & Design by
Church of Scotland Design Services.

Special thanks due to
Ann Davies, Helen Cuthbertson, Beryl Luke, Liz Orr and
Ian McKenzie as well as the congregations
in Kirkcaldy Presbytery and Kilmarnock
who piloted the material.

Published by the
Church of Scotland and Action
of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS).



Stats Have Faces – Introduction



Stats Have Faces – Introduction

Many years ago I remember hearing about a church in England that, having identified that there was a major alcohol problem within its community, decided to do something about it. After much planning and prayer, and with a flurry of publicity, they opened a counselling addiction service and waited for people to use it. And they waited... After six months of waiting they had hardly received a single referral. Then someone had the bright idea of finding out what else was going on. He discovered that there were already another six alcohol counselling services operating in the town!

St Thomas Aquinas, the 13th century theologian wrote: 'An error about the world redounds in error about God' (*Summa contra Gentiles*, 11, 3). Increased understanding of our communities will make us more effective in sharing the gospel.

Statistics for Mission, and the companion book *Stats have Faces*, have been produced to help local churches:

- understand their own community better,
- avoid some of the mistakes that we sometimes make when we jump too soon from problems to answers,
- but, above all to share and experience more effectively the gospel good news of Jesus Christ.

We hope that you will use them – enjoy using them – and that through your faith and commitment, you will help people to see and know the presence of God.

A Little Bit of Background

The *Statistics for Mission* project started in 1999, as a joint piece of work between the Information Technology Department and the Board of National Mission of the Church of Scotland. Its aim was to make the information generated through the *2001 National Census* available to local churches to assist them in their mission in local communities.

The success of the whole project was dependent upon gathering the

postcodes covering Church of Scotland parishes. That laborious and time consuming task was undertaken, in large measure, by people from different churches all over Scotland. The project would not have been possible without them. The staff at the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) has also been unfailingly helpful, giving a clear indication of their commitment to make the information from the *National Census* available in ways that will help to improve the quality of life for the people of Scotland.

Although the information generated by *Statistics for Mission* is specifically related to Church of Scotland parishes, it was clear from the outset that this information would be of immense value to all branches of the Church in Scotland. Representatives of a number of denominations have played key roles over the last four years and it is hoped that the resources can be well used by different churches, working together whenever possible.

The guide *Stats have Faces* has been written by an Ecumenical group. It has been designed to help a group of people from a church (or preferably churches) to learn more about their local community as a result of the Census information. It also attempts, more critically, to get behind the figures to the faces they represent. The book's authors believe that they will have succeeded in their purpose if we can see not just figures but faces. And not just faces, but the face of Jesus, calling us to follow him.

What is Included

This pack contains two main items. These are distinct from one another, but are complementary, and should, if at all possible be used in conjunction with one another.

- * *Statistics for Mission*. On the CD is a copy of the census data for each Church of Scotland parish within the Presbytery relevant to your area. Although the information is broken down into Church of Scotland parishes, it is of value to all churches seeking to gain a better understanding of their local communities. With the data is a copy of Super TABLE® (a programme which enables you to read the information) and a number of sections to help you to make best

use of the data. These sections give a range of information, from how to undertake very simple tasks to how to construct more complex calculations.

- * **Stats have Faces.** This is a six-session guidebook for groups. Copies of each chapter are also available on the CD. This material can be reproduced (or the book photocopied) to enable each group member to have their own copy. A copy of **Acrobat Reader®** is also included on the CD, if your computer does not already have it.

What Statistics are Available

The results of the **2001 National Census** produced a vast amount of information, too much to fit on a CD, and so much that it could easily lead to confusion, even for the most experienced users.

After consultation with Presbyteries and academics it was decided to include some of the key statistics, which are used regularly by governments and other agencies to shape decisions. These include:

- economic activity
- education
- health
- households
- housing
- mobility
- population
- population movement
- religious affiliation
- social class by occupation

While the information included is not exhaustive, it should be sufficient for the vast majority of situations.

For those who wish further information, some of this will be available through the **General Register Office for Scotland** (GROS). Their main page on the Census can be accessed at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/censushm. In addition, they have produced their own software to interrogate the data, called **Scottish Census Results On-Line** (SCROL). The home page for this is www.scrol.gov.uk/scrol/common/

[home.jsp](#). Although neither of these sites has information at the Church of Scotland Parish level, each might prove to be a useful source of additional information and is worth a visit.

How to Use the Book

In order to make the best use of **Stats have Faces**, it is important to consider a number of issues.

Flexibility is the Key

As with any guide of this nature, you will need to adapt what is written to suit the particular context of your local group and area. In writing the material the authors have sought to consider as wide a range of groups as possible, but inevitably your situation will be unique.

The Order of the Chapters

Different people and groups learn in different ways. Some learn best when faced with practical activities, while others want to visit a place in order to see things with their own eyes. Each of the six sessions represents a different starting point for the group. Although the book has been put together in a particular order, it is not the only (or even necessarily) the best order. If you are leading a group, look carefully at all the material and decide where it would be best for the group to begin. However, wherever you start, do try to use all the sessions.

The Size & Nature of the Group

Stats have Faces has been written to be used by groups of 10-12 people. It can be used effectively by a smaller group but if your number is much larger, you may wish to consider running two groups. Although it will be effective when all the people are from the same church, it represents an

opportunity for churches to do something together. Hopefully, the doing something together will last for longer than the course!

The material has been written to be used primarily with adults, although some of the activities would also work well with children. What is important is that no-one is excluded from being a part of the group because of other family responsibilities and commitments. Such exclusion would run counter to the whole exercise.

Preparation is Essential

At the start of each session there is a checklist of the aim, resources required and key things for the leader to organise. If you are leading a group, please don't wait until the session begins before you read what is required. Careful preparation will make an enormous difference. It will ensure that the activities run smoothly, that different people in the group can participate, and that people learn about more than your lack of organisation.

In the session [GETTING OUT](#), there is a group visit. It is essential that this visit is planned some weeks in advance.

Worship

Worship is a vital element of each session. Although there are specific times of worship, it is also intended that the entire session should be carried out in a spirit of openness to God and to each other. Creating the right space and atmosphere is important and worth spending time on.

Bible Reflection

The Bible passages to be studied have been included within each session. This has been done to ensure that the whole group is using the same translation and that no one is left feeling uncomfortable about where to

find a particular book of the Bible. A variety of different styles of Bible Study is used over the six sessions.

Additional Resources

At the end of the book there is a list of some additional resources that people might find useful as they continue on with the work hopefully begun (or invigorated) through the sessions. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and will also, inevitably, change over a period of time. It is simply there for those who, having dipped their toe in the water, would like to wade in a little bit deeper.

To the Faces ...

A great number of people has made this whole project possible. They include those who gathered the initial postcodes, the staff at GROS and in the Church of Scotland offices in Edinburgh, the authors of [Stats have Faces](#) and the groups that piloted the sessions in the hope that most of the problems would be sorted out. Thank you to all of them.

[Statistics for Mission](#) is dedicated to the faceless and forgotten people who lie behind the numbers in many of our communities. Our prayer is that the figures will become faces, and in those faces we will rise to the challenges of the Gospel and come face to face with Jesus.

Who are We?



Who are We?

Aim:

- To look at the questions asked in the 2001 Census Form.
- To consider what makes a group and what groups there are in your community.
- To reflect on how God shapes and changes us.

Resources needed:

- A flipchart and pens.
- A copy of the 2001 Census Form (available on the CD in PDF format). A copy of the form can also be downloaded from the GROS website at www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/grosweb/grosweb.nsf/pages/schoolhm.
- A small piece of playdough for each person. (A recipe for making your own is included at the end of this chapter.)
- Music for the [Closing Worship](#) (if desired).

Leader's Notes:

- Make sure that the resources are available.
- Invite different members of the group to read the Bible passages and to share in the [Closing Worship](#).

Welcome (5 minutes)

If this is the first time that the group has met take five minutes to welcome each other and to get to know each other a little better. If you have met already as a group, spend a few minutes catching up on each other's news.

Introduction (2 minutes)

In this session we are attempting to look at the question of who we are.

In our welcome of each other to the group we may have given a flavour of an answer to the question "Who am I?", but we will be encouraged to think more deeply about ourselves, how the community may regard us and how we imagine God views us, sharing those things we feel comfortable revealing.

Worship (5 minutes)

Leader: God, who has created and continues to create and recreate, we come here today from our different homes to learn more about your vision for the world, our community, and especially your vision for us.

All: May our ears be open to your voice and our eyes be open to the wonder of creation in ourselves and each other.

Leader: God, who dares to love humankind with a heart that encourages us to share that love,

All: Help us to deepen our love of you, our love of family and friends, and help us to love those whom we find unlovely.

Leader: God, who saves through the death of Jesus Christ, we come to discover and rediscover the nature of this eternal gift to us.

All: May our hearts, our souls, be so moved by the Spirit of grace and love that our words of thanks blossom into actions.

Leader: So surprise us Lord, with new thoughts, new pictures, new ways of living and loving as we study and bring ordinary things that we do into the circle of grace.

All: Amen.

Who Am I ? – Focus on the 2001 Census (20 minutes)

Every ten years a census form is completed by all households in Britain. Our latest census was undertaken on the 29th April 2001

- Do you remember filling in the census form, or helping someone else to fill it in?
- What do you remember being asked? NB: The information which you gave in the Census form cannot be accessed in such a way that, you

or your household, can be identified. (Write your answers on a flipchart.)

- Were you really asked for this information or have you imagined that you were? Check with the Census Form as to whether you have written down 'imagined' questions.
- We are more than facts. People often imagine things about us. Has anyone shown you something about yourself you did not know?

Hold onto any thoughts of "real" or "imagined" for we will use this again in a little while.

In filling in the form or giving the information to another member of the household who filled it in on your behalf, you may have revealed more about yourself than you would necessarily do to your friends and family.

- Spend a few minutes sharing what aspects of the census data you are generally willing to reveal to others in ordinary conversation. You may like to think of different scenarios here – What would you share with the person you meet for the first time, the close family member, the friend of many years?

Who am I? – Focus on our Community (20 minutes)

The group that you meet in today is but one of many groups meeting in your community.

- On a flipchart write up a list of the different groups you know which meet regularly in your community and where they meet.

The sort of information that you disclosed in the Census Form is sometimes the determining factor as to whether we join a group or not. For example, if we saw a Youth Club being advertised we would not ask to join it unless we were in a particular age-bracket.

- Can you think of other factors that determine whether we consider joining a group or not? List them on a flipchart.
- People imagine things about groups that help them to decide whether or not they will join them. Have you written up any imaginary factors in your list?

You have chosen to join this particular group, if only for a few sessions.

- Why did you choose to join this group and what do you imagine it is going to be like?
- What is/are the factor(s) that link the people in this group together?

Who am I? – Focus on God (30 minutes)

We now move on to the next stage of our thinking, when we consider how our lives have been and continue to be changed by God.

'Once I was blind, but now I see ...'

'New every morning ...'

- Do either of these quotations remind you of a time during your faith journey when you discovered something new about yourself?

Read together (or ask one member of the group to read out loud) Romans 5:8-11.

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

These verses remind us that our answers to the question "Who am I?" do not necessarily remain static.

- Pinpoint the words (or phrases) which show movement and change in this passage from Romans, focussing on verse 10.

We can be different from what we imagine we are. But how does this happen? Can it be real or simply imagined? Through the image of a potter throwing clay, Jeremiah is shown the relationship that God has

with his people Israel and what can happen when God is displeased. Ask a member of the group to read aloud Jeremiah 18:1-6.

¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:
² 'Go down to the potter's house and there I will give you my message.'
³ So I went down to the potter's house and I saw him working at the wheel.
⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as it seemed best to him.
⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me:
⁶ 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.'

Take a piece of dough and imagine we are clay in the Maker's hand. We mould the dough as we remember how God has moulded us through the difficult and good times, or to express how we understand God is shaping us now. God wishes to continue to change us from enemies and sinners to loved and saved people. Sit quietly for a few moments with your dough.

After a few moments either sing quietly the following chorus or allow the leader to say it, in order to signal the close of this meditation:

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me;
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.

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Share any thoughts you have on being clay in God's hands.

Worship (5-8mins)

Play a piece of music (if you wish) during which the group can reflect on the session. Invite people to offer a word of thanks for anything that has surprised them or touched them.

Voice 1: Who am I?

All: You are a child loved by God.

Voice 2: Who am I?

All: You are a unique being; no-one else is like you.

Voice 3: Who am I?

All: You are one who can love others and see their uniqueness.

Voice 4: Who am I?

All: You are one who can tell others that God loves them and has saved them.

Voice 5: Who am I?

All: You are God's friend.

Leader: Lord God Almighty, friend, lover and Saviour through Jesus Christ, we thank you for words shared, emotions roused, new thoughts raised and friendships begun. As we leave each other's company to go to our homes, through the Holy Spirit we are bound together by our love of you Lord.

All: Let us go in peace to love the Lord and serve the people.

A Simple Recipe for Dough (which only keeps for a couple of days)

3 cups plain flour

1 cup salt

1 cup water (might need a little more)

Mix the ingredients together and store in an airtight container until needed.



Why Stats?

Why Stats?

Aim:

To look at how statistics are used in the Bible and in our society today.

To learn about our local community through the use of the 2001 Census data.

Resources needed:

A map of your community and a pack of different coloured stickers (or *post-its*).

A flipchart and pens.

Copies of the information required for *Getting into the Census* (see *Leader's Notes* below).

Paper & pencils for drawing.

Leader's Notes:

Prior to the group meeting the leader will need a copy of the Statistics for Mission CD and/or access to the Internet. From these you will need to print out the information requested in *Getting into the Census*. If possible, this information should be distributed to the group the week before.

Try to use different members of the group to read the different Bible passages and prayers. Be aware that not everyone will be comfortable reading in a group.

Worship: (15 minutes)

Lay out the map in the centre of the group and give each member three stickers (or *post-its*). Invite them to put the stickers on the map: where they live; where they work or spend a lot of their time; and where they go to church.

Gather suggestions for prayer in connection with the different areas/streets that the group know.

Read together Luke 19:41-44.

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, 'If only, even you, had known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.

Invite the group to join in a time of open prayer for their community using the suggestions given. Conclude with:

Leader: Lord Jesus,
you wept over Jerusalem
as it rushed on, blind to God's salvation.
We pray for our communities.
For our neighbours: the ones we see and the ones we never see.
The students, the single parents, the elderly.
For our colleagues; who like us, carry their home concerns to work
and their work anxieties back home.
For our brothers and sisters in Christ, flawed people,
like us, in need of grace and forgiveness.
Help us to see past the crowd to individual faces,
beyond the figures to the individual lives,
through the statistics to people
that we may offer compassion
in the name of Jesus.
Amen

Trivia Quiz Icebreaker (5 minutes)

Some people seem to have an extraordinary capacity to remember very

trivial things. As a group try out this quiz. See who can get most correct answers. (The correct answers are at the end of this chapter but no looking.)

1. Most lipstick contains fish scales.
2. Each year more legal currency is printed world-wide than Monopoly money.
3. The longest recorded flight of a chicken is 13 seconds.
4. The weight of all the termites in the world is 10 times greater than the weight of all the human beings put together.
5. The longest bout of hiccups lasted 10 years.
6. A cockroach can live for several weeks without a head until it dies of starvation.
7. Toenails grow faster than fingernails.
8. The world's oldest piece of chewing gum is more than 9000 years old.

Lies, damn lies and statistics (10 minutes)

The expression "Lies damn lies and statistics" has been variously attributed to Benjamin Disraeli and Mark Twain. In fact it belongs to Leonard Henry Courtney, a Nineteenth Century academic and politician (from an article in *The National Review* (London) of 1895.)

Today, more than a century later, we live in a world dominated by statistics, targets and objectives. In the business world every activity has to be tied to some measurable outcome. Figures showing the number of people contacted or throughput or goals achieved are essential tools for management.

Statistics have also become an increasingly important feature of the voluntary sector and church life. Applications to funding bodies for church or community work are incomplete, and unlikely to succeed, without figures indicating the size of the problem and measurable targets for addressing it.

Yet we have also learned to treat statistics with suspicion. Figures can be

massaged, targets downgraded, figures spun one way or the other. Bare statistics may not be the hard facts they might at first appear.

- On a flipchart draw up a list of some of the statistics that people gather today
- What are some of the advantages and problems about statistics?
- Discuss how you feel about the way statistics are used today.

Statistics in the Bible – More than Just Numbers (20 minutes)

Statistics play an important part in the history of the Old Testament. The Book of Numbers is named after two "countings" of the People of Israel, in the early chapters and chapter 26. Ask a member of the group to read aloud Numbers 1:1-3.

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. He said: ² 'Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. ³ You and Aaron are to number by their divisions all the men in Israel twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army.'

- Why were the men so carefully and methodically counted? (Num 1:2)

There are dangers in census taking. Read 2 Samuel 24:2-4 & 8-10.

² So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, 'Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enrol the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are.'

³ But Joab replied to the king, 'May the Lord your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?' ⁴ The king's word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enrol the fighting men of Israel. ... ⁸ After they had gone through the

entire land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. ⁹ Joab reported the number of the fighting men to the king: In Israel there were eight hundred thousand able-bodied men who could handle a sword, and in Judah five hundred thousand. ¹⁰ David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.'

- After counting his fighting men David says, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done.' Why do you think he reacted like this? What was the nature of his sin?

Yet accurate numbers are necessary for informed decisions. Read Luke 14:28-30.

²⁸ Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

- What is the main thrust of this parable?
- What information would we need to weigh up the costs of discipleship?
- Having looked at these passages how would you summarise what they say about the Biblical attitude to statistics?

Getting into the Census (20 minutes)

The statistics from the 2001 census allow for quite detailed analysis and comparison. These figures can be accessed from the Internet through the Scotland's Census Results Online (www.scrol.gov.uk) as well as from the CD produced by Church of Scotland's **Statistics for Mission** project with material prepared prior to the session use the

statistics provided to discover, for example:

- What percentage of people live alone?
- Are under 16?
- Are over pensionable age?
- Own their own house?
- Have no car?
- Are unemployed?
- Are educated to degree level (Level 4)?
- Are not in good health?
- How do the figures for your area compare with Scotland as a whole (or even the wider Church of Scotland Presbytery)?

Discuss the picture which emerges from these figures? Does the group feel this is an accurate picture of your area? What other information is needed?

From Statistics to Mission (15 mins)

The name **Statistics for Mission** implies action as well as reflection.

- How would you describe the present mission of your church(es)? Write your answers on a flipchart. Or, if you prefer, invite each member of the group to draw a picture of how the local church(es) relate to the community.
- Do the figures you have looked at highlight areas, age-groups, or other categories of people that could be the focus of our mission?
- What would be the next step in enabling such mission?

Worship (5 mins)

You could have a few moments of silence for the group to reflect on this session together. Members of the group might wish to mention anything that has surprised or touched them in your discussions. Close by reading Psalm 85, inviting each member of the group to say a verse.

¹ You showed favour to your land, O Lord;

you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

² You forgave the iniquity of your people
and covered all their sins.

³ You set aside all your wrath
and turned from your fierce anger.

⁴ Restore us again, O God our Saviour,
and put away your displeasure toward us.

⁵ Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?

⁶ Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

⁷ Show us your unfailing love, O Lord,
and grant us your salvation.

⁸ I will listen to what God the Lord will say;
he promises peace to his people, his saints-
but let them not return to folly.

⁹ Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰ Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

¹¹ Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

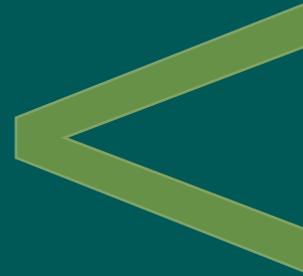
¹² The Lord will indeed give what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.

¹³ Righteousness goes before him
and prepares the way for his steps

Trivia Quiz (answers)

1. True.
2. False. More Monopoly money is printed than real money.
3. True.
4. True.
5. False. Charles Osborne had hiccups for 69 years.
6. True.
7. False. Fingernails grow 4 times faster.
8. True.

Stats Have Faces?



Stats have Faces?

Aim:

To consider the people whose lives lie behind statistics, and to hear some of their stories.

To think about people, both biblical characters of old and people in our communities today, who make a difference.

Resources needed:

A coloured cloth, Bible, cross and candle (with matches) for the worship point.

Tea & coffee.

A flipchart and pens.

Leader's Notes:

Make sure that the resources are available.

If you are reading [Susan's Story](#) as a group, make sure that you give readers some advance notice. The passage is written in the vernacular and readers will need to be comfortable with the text. Through the course of this session the materials around the focal worship point are gradually built up to help give a usual presentation of all the group is learning together and that all contributions are valued.

Worship (15 minutes)

Once the group has gathered in a circle place an open Bible, a cross and a lit candle on a raised coloured cloth in the centre as a focal point. This action reminds us that all that we do is in the presence of the God, who is at the centre of our lives and the life of our community.

Continue with a cup of tea and in small groups of two or three tell each other of two choices you've had to make in the last week.

In a moment or two of silence invite the group to offer silent prayer for

those they know who have hard choices to make, or those who have little opportunity or power to make choices.

Stories and Statistics (20 minutes)

The people who make up our community all have stories to tell about how they live. These stories often reveal the choices people can or cannot make in their lives. They are stories of the people and faces behind the statistics.

Below you will find Susan's story. Her story is part of a real life situation, during which the writer and Susan walked for a short time together. (Her name has been altered to protect her identity.)

Either read Susan's story in silence or, if you prefer, have four different voices each to share in the telling of her story. (The added subject headings will facilitate this.) If people are reading out loud, give them the time to read it over beforehand, but read the story as a whole before responding to it.

Susan's Story

Housing

Susan's family are offered no alternative to their five-apartment tenement with dampness in two bedrooms and a single bar fire in the living room as the only source of heating.

On a cold winter's night a visitor arrives at 7.15pm . All the family (including teenagers) are in bed. 'We have no other alternative,' says Susan. 'It's the only way we can keep warm.'

'Bloody Housing Association is the warmest place in the scheme ... and at the end of the day fifteen of them zoom away in their cars to their centrally-heated homes - God knows where.'

Education

Susan has two sons. One son, Darren, wants one day to go to college and is at the standard grade stage. 'Last week he came

in saying school had suggested they all bought a French text book where they could write the answers in the spaces - this cost £12. This week it was suggested that past exam papers could be purchased - four of them at about £7 each. I can't choose to spend my money on those things. By the weekend I'm scraping around to get money to buy something for the dinner on a Sunday and waiting to get my giro on the Monday, so that I can pay my Mum back the ten pounds I owe her.'

The other son, Nicky, along with a group of his friends often choose to "dog" school more often than they're there. 'It's no that he's stupid,' says Susan. 'There's nothing there for me - just books and work that'll no' even get me a job ... It's boring,' says Nicky.

Food and entertainment

One of Susan's daughters is at primary school. 'Yesterday she brought in a leaflet about "healthy eating". MORE FRUIT it suggests. The only way I can manage is to go to the cheapest shop and get food that fills the weans up. An' that's no fruit. Maybe that's not the best way. But it's the only way, I can manage.'

'Sometimes my Auntie Jeannie comes round. I'm a dab hand at cutting up the sausages in a casserole into smaller bits so that it looks a wee bit more when I divide it up.'

'Did you see that holiday programme on the Tele? All these exotic holidays to choose from. God, I coudnae even hiv a day at Blackpool - huvnae ever had the kids on a holiday. Don't suppose I will now! Nae wonder ma Joe says we'd be better aff deid. Hey minister, ... do you think heaven could measure up to Blackpool?'

The church

'I went once.....about ten years ago. God, I was at end of my tether. But it's no' for me... It was worse than goin' tae the dentist I didn't need to hear again that everything about me was "bad." I hear that often enough. The kids were wee and they couldnae sit at peace. I forgot you needed money and I didnae have any with me; I pretended to put money in the plate. There

was a tenner there... And it was "tickets for this" and "donations for that." I never knew the hymns. We were getting dirty looks cause Nicky was making a noise. ... God it was awful. I was dyin' for a fag. I came away sure I'd never go again!'

Invite the group to reflect in silence for a few minutes on Susan's story.

- How do you feel about the conversation you have just heard?
- What do you think are the issues it raises?

In both cases, write up people's comments on the flipchart and place the sheets of paper around the focal worship point.

Stories from your community (10 minutes)

Susan's story is unique to her and the situation in which she is living. What are the stories from your community? In small groups:

- Decide whether, when looking at the discoveries you have made about [Susan's Story](#), there are any echoes or contrasts with your own community and/or
- Share any stories, conversations from your community which raise these issues. (Remember to share people's stories sensitively and confidentially – this is not an excuse to gossip about people we know.)

In the larger group share what you have talked about, recording any key points on the flipchart.

Making a Difference (10 minutes)

Either look at the statistics for your community from the 2001 National Census or think a bit more about the stories from people in your community you have just shared about.

In the full group, on the flipchart:

- Try to assess how people in your local community might be feeling
- List the people and groups who know the 'heartbeat' (how it lives, how it operates, its culture, etc.) of your local community
- List the people and groups who are making a difference to your local community.

Place this information around the focal worship point and allow a time of silence, music or song for people to give thanks for these people and groups. (If singing together, one possible suggestion is [Common Ground 16: Brother, sister, let me serve you.](#))

Meeting a Sixth Century B.C. Biblical Community (30 minutes)

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah have a graphic account of the attempt to rebuild the community of Jerusalem. This is centred around the building of a second temple, the first temple – the Temple of Solomon – having been destroyed. Ask a member of the group to read aloud Ezra 3:8-13.

⁸ In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the Lord. ⁹ Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers – all Levites – joined together in supervising those working on the house of God. ¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. ¹¹ With praise and thanks giving they sang to the Lord: 'He is good; his love to Israel endures forever.' And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. ¹² But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. ¹³ No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people

made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.

Throughout the reflection on this passage, the Group Leader should act as a scribe, writing up notes on the flipchart sheets and placing them around the worship point.

- In threes share what jumps off the page at you (5 minutes)
- In the full group, and referring to the text outline, ask the group what they think is happening. (5 minutes)
- In the full group discuss the emotional responses of different characters/groups to the rebuilding of the Temple. (5 minutes)
- In small groups discuss what hurting or celebratory situations are around in your community at this time and then feed back to the full group. (10 minutes)
- Decide on one thing you can/will do in your faith community's life to make sure you take even more seriously your community's hurting places. How will you begin? (5minutes)

Worship (5 minutes)

Give people time to look at a few of the things which have, during this session, been recorded on the sheets already placed around the worship centre.

With hands on each other's shoulders ask a blessing on your journey through the day and on each other as you journey into the unknown tomorrow.

All: Till we meet again
May the road rise to meet you;
may the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face
and the rain fall slowly on your fields.
Until we meet again
may God hold you
in the hollow of His hand.
Amen.

Where are We in This?



Where are We in This?

Aim:

To identify inspirational individuals and groups, as well as our own gifts.

To consider how the church(es) might work with others to bring about positive change.

Resources needed:

A candle and a Bible.

A small table in the centre of the room.

Photographs or name cards of inspirational people and groups.

Blank cards (for people to write the names of those who have inspired them).

White paper, pens and scissors.

A flipchart and pens.

Blank postcards or some [post-it](#) pads.

Leader's Notes:

Make sure resources are available.

Bring along some photographs or name cards of inspirational people and organisations. These can be both historical and contemporary. Also make sure that you have blank cards for members of the group to write the names of others who have inspired them.

There is quite a lot of reading in this session. Try to split it up by getting different people to read (and ideally lead) the different sections. This will involve asking people to prepare for this prior to the group gathering.

Worship (15 minutes)

Place the photographs and names of inspirational people and organisations around a lit candle on the table in the centre of the room.

Leader: As we gather together in the name of Jesus, we are surrounded by the people of God, those who share our world and those from generations past. We honour their memory and give thanks for their inspiration.

All: Thanks be to God.

The leader invites each member of the group to choose a person or organisation that they have found to be particularly inspiring, writing the name on one of the blank cards if it is not already there. Each person can say what it is that they find particularly inspiring. When each member of the group has spoken, the leader places the open Bible beside the candle.

Leader: Lord, we present to you these people and the work of these organisations. We ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us by their example and to make us more Christ-like.

All: Amen.

'Hello Samuel, this is God calling' (15 minutes)

We are all called in some way to serve God in and through others, although we might often find it difficult to recognise our own specific calling. This reading, from 1 Samuel 3:6-11, tells the story of how difficult Samuel found it to hear God speaking to him.

⁶ Again the Lord called, 'Samuel!' And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.' 'My son,' Eli said, 'I did not call; go back and lie down.' ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

⁸ The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.' Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening".' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is

listening.’¹¹ And the Lord said to Samuel: ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.’

Allow some time in silence to reflect on the reading. Then, as a large group, consider these questions. If you wish, write your answers on the flipchart.

- Does anything, or any particular phrase, from the passage strike you?
- Have any members of the group ever felt that God was calling them to do something? What was it and how did you become aware of that calling?
- What are some of the ways that God calls us as individuals and as a church?

Recognising our Own Part (30 minutes)

Give out the paper, scissors and pens to each member of the group.

- Invite each person to make a snowflake. (Hopefully, at least one member of the group will know how to do this.)
- On one side of the snowflake ask people to write one (or more) gift or talents which they think that they have.
- Get people to place the completed snowflakes around the Bible, with the writing face down.

Invite a member of the group to read the following section (or you may wish for a number of different people to each read a paragraph).

Not long ago a group of people were asked to say who they really admired, who were their modern-day ‘saints.’ Many answers were predictable: Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, major global figures in our lifetime. When they were asked to think more locally, a strange thing happened. The people they most admired in their own community or church were rarely prominent or “high profile.” Typically, they were the people who worked quietly in the background, ensuring that things happened, meeting needs that might otherwise go

unnoticed. Oddly, while they were pleased to recognise the qualities of others, they were reluctant to acknowledge their own gifts.

When we look at our community and the needs of its entire people, do we recognise a call from God or do we shrink back because we are afraid the task will be beyond us? In the 1970s, the Russian poet Irina Ratushinskaya wrote a short play. Twenty people stood on a dark stage. As a spotlight shone on each in turn, the person said, ‘What can one person do alone, anyway?’

A missionary priest working in a poor community in Bangladesh found it very difficult to decide where to begin working with the local people. Eventually he decided to sweep the street in front of his small house and did this daily for many days. After some time his neighbours began to do the same until the whole street took part. A small action carried out with faith resulted in an unexpected change.

A few years ago, on a visit to Ireland, the South African writer Donald Woods acknowledged a small gift that he had been given by an Irish charity had enabled him to buy the typewriter on which he wrote his book *Cry Freedom*. This book, and the resultant film, helped to build the international support which played a significant part in ending the apartheid regime.

In small groups of 2-3 consider the following questions.

- Why are many of us reluctant to acknowledge our gifts?
- Can you think of people who have considered themselves unable to do certain things when you knew that they were capable?
- Can you think of any characters in the Bible (or from Church history) who have been reluctant to take on particular tasks because they did not think they were up to it?

Report your answers back to the large group, respecting people’s confidentiality where appropriate.

We need to remind ourselves that we are not alone and begin to make connections with others who share our vision. Each individual is unique

and fragile, just like individual snowflakes. Yet, when they begin to join together, they can exert a beautiful and powerful weight for change.

- Read out the gifts which have been written on the backs of the snowflakes without identifying the person who wrote on it.
- Consider in silence these gifts and what could be done if the people who have them chose to use them and to work together.
- In what ways could these gifts be used?

Building the Future (20 minutes)

As Christians we are called not simply, or even primarily, to be concerned about the Church. Instead we are called to be co-workers with God in the building up of his Kingdom here on earth so that it more adequately resembles heaven.

Divide a sheet of flipchart paper into two columns, headed **Probable Future** and **Preferred Future**.

- Under **Probable Future**, invite people to consider some of the things which they think are likely to happen to their community in the future and some of the issues which it is likely to face.
- In pairs, invite people to look at this list and to draw up suggestions of what they hope will happen.
- As a large group, list these ideas under **Preferred Future**. Did people come up with similar hopes?
- What action would be necessary to bring about the **Preferred Future**? Is there anything which could be taken on by the group or the church(es)?
- On the flipchart list any practical steps which you hope to take.

Jim Wallis, the founder and leader of the **Sojourners Community** in Washington DC, considers faith-based community groups to be extremely powerful agents of social change.

In today's world, the test of any authentic faith is action. In the Bible, faith is not something you possess but rather something you practice. You have to put it into action or it really doesn't

mean anything. Faith changes things. It's the energy of transformation, both for individuals and for a society...

People really had to believe such things could be done before they were possible. That 'believing' is the essence of faith, and the beginning of any change. You must believe the change is possible before it ever will happen. Indeed every important social change begins with some people believing it is possible. Hope always precedes change. Hope is the substance of faith and the only absolutely indispensable ingredient for individual and social transformation. I've learned that there is a spiritual chain of events in history: faith - hope - action - change...

I believe the making of the modern Christian, Jew, or Muslim will be through action. When put into action, faith has the capacity to bring people together, to motivate, and to inspire, even across former dividing lines.

© Jim Wallis, Faith Works: Lessons on Spirituality and Social Action, SPCK, 2002

Worship (10 minutes)

Leader: Longing for change leads to, and arises out of, prayer.

History belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being. If this is so, then intercession, far from being an escape from action, is a means of focusing for action and creating action. "By means of our intercessions we veritably cast fire upon the earth and trumpet the future into being" (Walter Wink).

All: "God has given us a vision of the way the world can be. It is not our job to make it happen, but to companion God and willingly carry the piece of the dream God gives us to carry" (Gordon Cosby).

Allow a time for silent prayer for the needs which the group has identified.

Leader: This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

All: Lord Jesus Christ, alive and at large in the world, help me to follow and find you there today in the places where I work, meet

people, spend money and make plans.

Take me as a disciple of your Kingdom to see through your eyes and hear the questions you are asking, to welcome all with your trust and truth, and to change the things that contradict God's love by the power of your cross and the freedom of your Spirit.

Amen.

(©John Carden, A Procession of Prayers, Cassel, 1998)

Finish by giving each person a blank postcard or [post-it](#). Ask them to carry it with them throughout the coming week and write on it one action they will commit to for the benefit of the community.

Getting Out

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Getting Out

Aim:

To meet with people in a local community project.
To consider ways in which the church(es) can become more involved.

Resources needed:

Map, compass, photographs, a local newspaper and a Bible.
Transport.
Flipchart & pens.
A concordance.

Leader's Notes:

This session is significantly different from the others as it is focused primarily around a visit(s) by the group to a project/facility in your local community. **This may require the group meeting at a different time, or for the visit(s) to take place out with the normal meeting time.**

Plan carefully where the group will visit **and remember that this needs to be planned some weeks in advance.** Read *The Visit* (below).

If your group is a large one, you may wish to arrange more than one visit.

If at all possible, it is important to include the visit(s) within the wider context of the worship.

Worship (10 minutes)

Stand in a circle around a small table. On the table have a map, a compass, some photographs of people in your community, a copy of your local newspaper and an open Bible.

Read the reflection around the circle, with a short time of silence after each voice.

Leader: Today we are going on a journey together to come face-to-face with some of the lives which lie behind the statistics about our community.

The Bible is full of stories of people who were willing to travel from the familiar into the unknown. Their journey changed those they met and also changed them.

Voice 1: Sarah and Abraham travelled the road of faith, trusting that even in their old age, God still had some marvellous surprises for them.

Voice 2: The road to forgiveness led Jacob's sons to their brother Joseph.

Voice 3: As the Exodus people wandered through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, God's presence never failed them.

Voice 4: The road of justice, undertaken by Esther, risked her own life and saved her people from destruction.

Voice 5: Mary and Joseph travelled the crowded road to Bethlehem, vibrant life ready to burst from a young woman's womb.

Voice 6: The wise ones journeyed along the star-marked road, a road that could be travelled only in darkness.

Voice 7: Jesus took the road into the desert, came face-to-face with his own struggles and came back with the power of the Spirit in him.

Voice 8: The prodigal son came home, too tired and hungry to do anything except return to the one place where he had always known love.

Voice 9: Jesus travelled the road to the place of the skull, bearing his cross and deserted by his friends.

Voice 10: The women went to the empty tomb, where the surprise of God filled the morning with light.

Voice 11: The road to Emmaus, travelled twice, once in despair and once in joy, having been transformed by a blaze of love.

Voice 12: On the Damascus road, Saul moved from arrogance to surrender.

Leader: In our own journey, may we know the God who travels with us, and be transformed by meeting him in others.

The Visit (1 hour)

Your visit(s) should reflect what you know/have learnt about your local area. Each community will have a wide variety of places where it would be worth the group meeting people. These might include:

- local schools
- credit union
- food co-operative
- counselling service
- community centre
- youth club
- elderly day care
- advice centre
- community transport
- etc. ?

The type of facilities available will vary from area to area for social, economic, geographical, cultural, historical and political reasons. Nonetheless, whatever your community, there are some useful principles which should guide your choice and shape your visit.

- Try to visit a project where local people are in charge.
- Don't go to somewhere that most of the group already know a lot about.
- Fit in with the requirements of the project.
- Draw up a list of relevant questions that you would like to ask and involve different people in asking them.
- Remember you are going as guests to listen and to learn, not to tell people what you believe or about the role of the church(es) – unless you are invited to do so.

After the Visit (30 minutes)

If at all possible the group should try to meet immediately following the visit(s) to share what they have learned together.

Ask people in pairs to reflect upon the visit.

- What did you learn?
- What most inspired you?
- What was most challenging?

- Are there ways in which the church(es) or individuals in the church, could get more involved?
- What practical steps should follow the visit?

Together, discuss your answers, recording people's comments on a flipchart. Try to ensure that the reflections of each member are included.

As a large group

- Identify if there are any Bible passages which seem to relate to the experiences that people have encountered during the visit(s).
- Try to find a number of these passages (no more than five) using a concordance.
- Invite members of the group to read the different passages out loud, allowing time after each for people to comment on how the passage resonates with the visit(s).

As a group agree on who will write to the place(s) you have visited, thanking them for their time, outlining some of the things which the group feels that they have learned as a result and informing them of any practical steps you hope to take.

Worship (5 minutes)

Stand (or sit) in a circle.

Leader: I have seen Christ,
in the neglected face of an unloved boy.
I have seen Christ,
in the gentleness and faith of an old man.
I have seen Christ,
in the quick hands of a nurse,
who knew that I needed her before I asked.
I have seen Christ,
born again in spirit,
in the joyful song of a bright-faced child.
I have seen Christ,
when my heart was breaking,

in the compassionate heart of a friend.
I have seen Christ,
in the forgiveness of a loved one.
I have seen Christ,
in the anguish of a mother for her dying son.
I have seen Christ,
in a dustman and a doctor.
God grant that they may see Christ in me.

© Joan Rowbottom in Jenny Robertson, A Touch of Flame, Lion, 1989.

Stand and face outwards.

Leader: God of this new time, we are walking into mystery.

All: We face the future not knowing what the days or months will bring.

Leader: Be love in us as we journey.

All: May we welcome all who come our way.

Leader: Deepen our faith to see all of life through your eyes.

All: Fill us with hope and trust that you dwell in us amidst all our joys and sorrows.

Leader: Thank you for the treasure of our life of faith.

All: Thank you for yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Leader: For the new steps we take,
and the people we meet on the way,

All: We praise you.
Amen.



Transformation – Health Warning!

Transformation – Health Warning!

Aim:

To encourage people to recognise Jesus in the faces and lives which lie behind statistics.

To challenge people to be transformed by recognising Jesus in other people.

Resources needed:

Two envelopes, each with three pictures of well-known celebrities cut up.

A watch.

A flipchart and pens.

Leader's Notes:

Make sure the resources are available

Try to ensure that you have asked readers in advance of the session, particularly for the reading of *John's Story*.

Before this session you will need to enlarge and photocopy two sets of images of three well known celebrities and cut them up into component parts, ears, hair, nose etc placing them in two envelopes. (Alternatively, from magazines, choose and cut up images of six well known celebrities. Put three celebrities in each of the envelopes.)

Introduction (10 minutes)

We are asking the question whether we can see within the statistics about our community the faces of ordinary people whose lives we are encountering. We are doing this as people of faith. Can the Holy Spirit help us see faces in the statistics and see in each of the faces the divine image of Jesus Christ? If we do begin to see such faces, and if we begin to realise the great truth that we meet Jesus in each and every person we see, then our lives may never be the same again. Do we want to be

transformed? Dare we live like this? Will it demand too much of us? Are we prepared for others to see Jesus in us?

- Spend a moment in quiet considering these questions.

Divide the group into two and give each group an envelope containing cut up pictures of three well known celebrities. In small groups you have 3 minutes to put together the right parts for each face.

- How well do we really see and know faces around us? The faces of those we see everyday? The faces of those closest to us?

Who do we see? (5 minutes)

In South Africa there is a traditional greeting 'I see you' – 'Sawu Bona'

- Invite the group to repeat the phrase.

The reply given is 'Sikhona' – 'I am here.'

- Ask the group to repeat the reply.

Among the tribes of northern Natal in South Africa, the most common greeting equivalent to 'Hello' in English, is the expression 'Sawu Bona.' It literally means 'I see you.' If you are a member of the tribe, you might reply by saying 'Sikhona' – 'I am here.' The order of the exchange is important: until you see me I do not exist. It's as if, when you see me, you bring me into existence... a person is a person because of other people. If you grow up with this perspective, your identity is based on the fact that you are seen – that the people around you respect you and acknowledge you as a person.

(© Peter Senge et al, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, 1994)

Worship (15 minutes)

Invite a member of the group to read the meditation included within the worship. Each person present is given a piece of card on which they write the name they are known by. The cards are placed at each person's feet

so that when sat in a circle everyone may see the names of all those present. (If there are those present with limited eyesight the group may choose to sit in a circle and say their names out loud and then continue in prayer.)

Leader: Sawu Bona

All: Sikhona

Leader: In the silence we pray for the faces in this place whose names we can see. (or whose names we have heard)

Leader: Sawu Bona

All: Sikhona

Leader: In the silence we pray for those faces we see and know from our own lives, our own communities (or we pray for those whose voices speak to us from within our communities.)

Leader: Sawu Bona

All: Sikhona

The following song may be sung quietly together or the words read together:

Open our eyes Lord,
We want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him.
Open our ears Lord and help us to listen.
Open our eyes Lord
We want to see Jesus.

(© Word Music UK, 1976)

Reader: Today I saw four things
That I had not seen yesterday;
As I let him out into the line of traffic
A bus driver gave me a thumbs up;
Walking her dogs, hood low as usual over her eyes,
The woman from number 58 nodded at my hello;
Deep in my newspaper on the bench by the swings
An unknown toddler interrupted to give me a jelly baby;

Noticing we wore the same baseball cap
A teenager grinned at me gratuitously.
I believe in Father, Son and Holy Ghost
(more easily today than yesterday)

(© Peter Graystone, in Geoffrey Duncan (ed), Seeing Christ in Others, SCM-Canterbury Press 2002)

All: Lord help us to see you in all people.
Help others to see you in me.
Lord help us to see the faces and hear the stories of our communities.
Lord help us to see.
Amen.

Be Surprised (10 minutes)

We see faces within the statistics and we hear stories from within the community and from our own lives. However, do we really hear within those stories the whisper of the presence of God, at work in the midst of life?

- In twos try to recall an incident when someone has perhaps challenged your preconceptions of who they are or challenged you to think about God in a new way.
- Was the experience of seeing and understanding exciting, scary, challenging, comforting?

John's Story (15 minutes)

Invite a member of the group to read John's story. John's story is true and his name has been changed to respect his confidentiality and that of the church where he worships.

John had been in care for over forty years. He has a form of autism and a tendency to Tourette's Syndrome, which means he can sometimes shout out inappropriate things. Now with a Care in the Community Scheme, he enjoys a supported tenancy. With

twenty-four hour support he lives in a lovely modern house and enjoys being out and about in the local community. With the help of his carers he takes part in such activities as the gym, shopping and going to church.

John's first visit to our church was on Easter Sunday. Whilst the minister was explaining the resurrection to the children, John shouted out "bastard", from the back row! The start of the relationship between John and the church was a little surprising, even shocking for some.

A year later, John is still part of the church. It has been, in some respects, a difficult year, but it has also been a year when the church has been transformed by knowing John.

The minister has visited John on many occasions and tried to learn more about him and the conditions he suffers from. She has explained to John how there are times in church when people want to be quiet. His carers have encouraged him in learning about patterns of behaviour which are appropriate in differing circumstances.

A Kirk Session meeting was held and there were fears and concerns were expressed about John and how some elderly members of the congregation were coping with the distractions. There were also many positive comments within the meeting and a realisation that Jesus would welcome John into his company. Elders were encouraged to sit beside John and live through and learn from him and his behaviour, which seemed so strange to our church.

John is learning when to be quiet in church. He is also learning some favourite choruses and the Lord's Prayer. To worship with John has changed our lives together. We are learning to love and be loved by him. And we are being challenged to find more ways of including John in our lives and within the life of the church.

It seems that transformation comes to all of us, as we open ourselves up to the lives of those within our community.

- After a moment of quiet after the story ends, invite any comment from the group which helps us to understand how the story of John can

lead us into new ways of seeing God within our communities.

Bible Study: The Story of Dives and Lazarus (25 minutes)

As with *John's Story*, the following Bible passage may disturb and challenge us. Ask a member of the group to read aloud Luke 16:19-31. (Alternatively, get each member of the group to read a verse.)

¹⁹ There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

²⁵ But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' ³⁰ 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

Divide the group into smaller groups of 4 – 6 people and invite them to discuss the following questions. Ensure each group appoints someone to feed back to the whole group.

- Does a phrase or particular word strike you?
- How do you relate this story with the concept of seeing Christ in other people that we explored at the start of this chapter?
- Where and how does this story surprise, challenge, disturb you?
- What might this story be revealing about responsibilities to your own community?
- Is there any action the group might wish to recommend?

Record the feedback from the groups on a flipchart and consider any action which has been suggested.

Worship (10 minutes)

Transformation is achieved as we come before God longing for our own lives to be transformed and for our world to be healed.

Leader: If you amend your ways and your deeds, deal fairly with one another, cease to oppress the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, if you shed no innocent blood in this place and do not run after other gods to your own ruin, then I shall let you live in this place, in the land which long ago I gave to your forefathers for all time (Jeremiah 7:5).

All: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me, a sinner (3 times).

Time for open or silent prayer for those in need.

Invite group members to move around the room and as they meet one another to stop and say 'Name' I see Christ in you. As people finish this is simple but moving exercise the following song can be sung.

Closing Song

Behold, behold,
I make all things new,
beginning with you,
and starting from today.

Behold, behold I make all things new
My promise is true,
for I am Christ the Way.

(© John L. Bell, Come all you people, Wild Goose Publications, 1994)

Resources



Some Resources

The list of resources to help you to carry on the journey hopefully begun through this pack is virtually limitless. These are simply a few which some people have found useful over the years.

Books

Tom Allan, *The Face of My Parish* (Loudoun Publishers, 1984).
Tim Chester (ed) *Justice, Mercy and Humility – Integral Mission and the Poor* (Paternoster Press, 2002).
Ian Fraser, *Reinventing Theology as the People's Work* (Wild Goose Publications, 1980).
Kathy Galloway, *Starting Where We Are – The Story of a Neighbourhood Centre* (Wild Goose Publications, 1998).
Wendy Godfrey, *Down to Earth – Stories of Church-Based Community Work* (British Council of Churches, 1985).
Laurie Green, *Let's Do Theology* (Mowbray, 1990).
Laurie Green, *Urban Ministry and the Kingdom of God* (SPCK, 2003).
Jeanne Hinton, *Changing Churches – Building Bridges in Local Mission* (Church House Publishing, 2002).
Jeanne Hinton & Peter Price, *Changing Communities – Creating Church from the Grassroots* (Church House Publishing, 2003).
Anne Hope & Sally Timmell, *Training for Transformation* (ITDG Publishing, 1995).
Trevor Hudson, *Compassionate Caring* (Eagle Publishing, 1999).
George Lovell, *The Church and Community Development – An Introduction* (Avec Publications, 1972).
David McAdam, *The Church and Community Involvement* (Hansel Press, 1992).
Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion – Recovering the Gospel for These Times* (Harper San Francisco, 1993).
Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger – A Biblical Study* (Hodder Stoughton, 1978).
Ronald Sider, *Churches that Make a Difference – Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Baker Books, 2002).

Jim Wallis, *Faith Works – Lessons on Spirituality and Social Action* (SPCK, 2002).

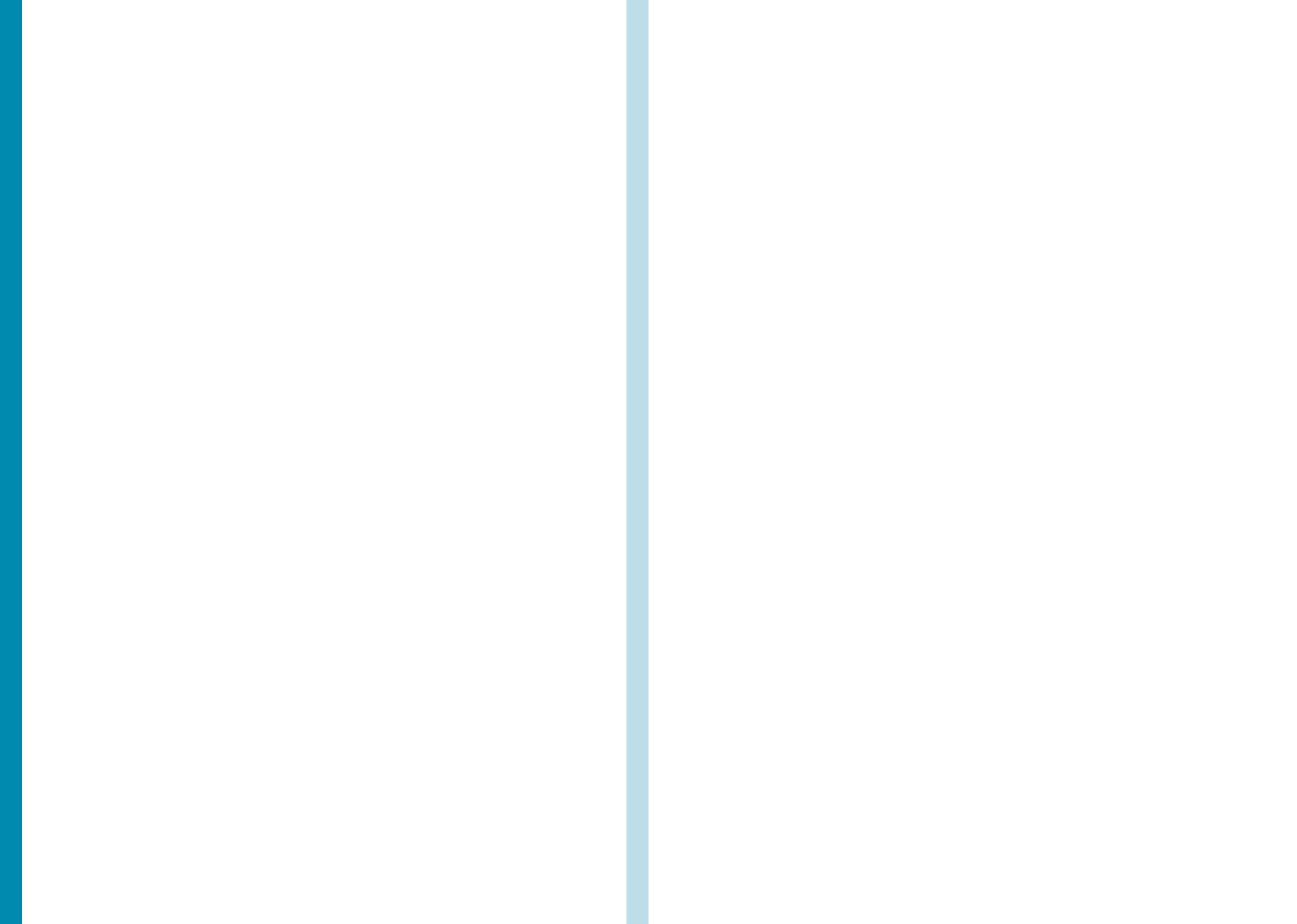
David Westlake, *Upwardly Mobile – How to Live a Life of Significance* (Hodder Stoughton, 2000).

David Westlake, *Outwardly Active – Evangelism as Jesus Did It* (Hodder Stoughton, 2001).

Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be – Theology for the New Millennium* (Mowbray, 1998).

Websites

www.churches-housing.org The Scottish Churches Housing Agency.
www.churchofscotland.org.uk/boards/parishdev The Church of Scotland Parish Development Fund.
www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk Communities Scotland.
www.cpag.org.uk The Child Poverty Action Group.
www.dsc.org.uk Directory of Social Change.
www.gro-scotland.gov.uk The General Register Office for Scotland.
www.jrf.org.uk The Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
www.menno.org.uk The London Mennonite Centre.
www.neweconomics.org The New Economics Foundation.
www.poverty.org.uk Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion.
www.regen.net The Regeneration Network for Regeneration Partnerships.
www.regeneratetraust.com Regenerate.
www.scrsj.ac.uk The Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice.
www.scct.org.uk The Scottish Churches Community Trust.
www.scdc.org.uk The Scottish Community Development Centre.
www.scotland.gov.uk The Scottish Executive.
www.scottish.parliament.uk The Scottish Parliament.
www.springboard.uk.net Springboard – The Archbishops' Initiative for Evangelism.
www.scvo.org.uk Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.
www.tearfund.org Tearfund – Christian Action with the World's Poor.
www.worldexchange.org.uk Scottish Churches World Exchange.



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