



Tynedale
Methodist Circuit

Circuit Lent Groups

Moving into the Neighbourhood

Contents

Welcome & Introduction	3
Ash Wednesday Services Information	2
Week 1 - Meet	4
Week 2 - Study	6
Week 3 - Pray	8
Week 4 - Bless	10
Week 5 - Reflect	12

Ash Wednesday Services - 14th February

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and across the Circuit there are a number of Ash Wednesday services to help you mark the beginning of Lent and our Lent journey '*Moving into the Neighbourhood*'. These services will be an opportunity to meet others who will be members of your '*Moving into the Neighbourhood*' group. Please try and share in one of the services if you are able. The services are taking place as follows:

Hexham Trinity Methodist Church, 7:30pm
led by Rev. Paul Dunstan/Rev. David Goodall

Wylam Methodist Church, 7:30pm
led by Rev. Jane Cook

Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to '*Moving into the Neighbourhood*'. The Tynedale Circuit is excited that during Lent there will be groups of Christians from different Churches meeting across Tynedale to study God's word together and to pray together as we prepare to celebrate Easter. As we journey together we will move into the neighbourhoods in which we are meeting, to pray and to bless these communities, joining in with the God who by his Spirit is very much at work in Tynedale.

The material for '*Moving into the Neighbourhood*' has been put together by members from across the Circuit and we are grateful to those who have given their time to write and prepare the material. Without those who have opened up their homes to host and lead groups '*Moving into the Neighbourhood*' wouldn't have been possible and we give thanks to God for all those who are leading and hosting groups at this time.

Lent is a time of preparation for the celebrations of Easter, for our remembering of and celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection. As you journey through Lent this year we hope this prayer will help you to focus on your preparations for Easter:

Loving God,
as you turned your face resolutely towards Jerusalem,
to offer your life for us on the cross,
help us to make space to offer our lives to you this Lent.
As we make space for you,
may the truth and power of your death and resurrection,
grow deeper within us, moment by moment and day by day.
As we learn more of your truth and love,
help us to share that love with others
in our neighbourhoods and communities.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Week 1 - Meet

Before the session have a think ...

1. Who do you think of as an ambassador? Any famous examples?
2. What qualities do you associate with an ambassador?
3. What does it mean to you to be an 'ambassador for Christ'?

What is your biggest challenge in sharing your faith?

Paul in the Spotlight

In today's session we will be looking at 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2. In this passage Paul describes and demonstrates being an ambassador for Christ and this first session will help us unpack what it means to be such an ambassador, with the authority and responsibilities that such a role brings.

A key part of our ambassadorial role, as discussed in the 2 Corinthians passage, is to spread God's message of reconciliation, which is open to everyone who accepts it. Paul advises us though, that this is a 'gift,' not only to be enjoyed and kept to ourselves, but one which is meant to be passed on to others, in order for the gift to be fully appreciated and used to its full capacity.

The passage reveals that being ambassadors for Christ, is an incarnational role, in that our whole lives need to demonstrate our faithfulness and commitment towards following Jesus and sharing the Good News he brings. In Ephesians 6:18-20 we are reminded that being ambassadors, requires more than our lifestyle choices and actions, but also necessitates us to 'boldly' speak about Jesus to others. Paul is not oblivious to the challenges this presents us, after all he wrote many of his letters whilst in prison, so this session will also be considering the challenges we face when sharing our testimony with others. Thankfully Paul also shares with us a very important tool to help us in living out our ambassadorial roles.

Week 1 - Meet

Bible Study Questions - 2 Corinthians 5:11 – 6:2

Focussing on verses 5:11-5:15

- What criticism does Paul lodge against those '*who brag about having a spectacular ministry*'? What ambassador for Christ quality do they lack?
- What should be the controlling force in our lives as ambassadors for Christ? Why is this important?
- What happens as a consequence of us accepting Jesus' death for our sin? What do we gain or lose? How does this affect our approach to being ambassadors for Christ? What does it imply about how much of our lives should be affected by our ambassadorial roles?

Focussing on verses 5:16-5:19

- What is the danger of '*evaluating others from a human point of view*'? How could it damage our approach to sharing our testimony/being ambassadors for Christ?
- What gift is mentioned in the passage, given to us by God? And equally what task has God given us?
- What does the message of reconciliation mean to you? Why is it so important that we share it with others?

Focussing on verses 5:20-6:2

- How does God plan to spread his message of reconciliation? What importance does that give our ambassadorial roles?
- When speaking on someone's behalf, in this case, us speaking on behalf of God, what authority/responsibilities does this give us when sharing our testimony/ being ambassadors for Christ?
- What does Paul warn us against from doing in the first verse of Chapter 6?
- What time is the right time for us to embody and live out our ambassadorial roles for Christ?

Getting ready for next week ...

What is the neighbourhood we are personally called to be an ambassador in? What do we know about it?

Week 2 - Study

Before the session have a think ...

Where have you seen God at work in your neighbourhood this week?

'mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God'

David Bosch



Video

As you watch the Fresh Expressions video have the following questions in mind. After you have watched the video you will have an opportunity to share your thoughts with the group.

- Where did you see God at work in the video?
- Where did you see Church in the video?
- How did you see the Good News being shared in the video?

Week 2 - Study

Bible Study

This week's Bible Study is on Acts 8:26-40 or Jonah Chapters 1 - 4. Your group leader will guide you through the study during which you will reflect on the following questions:

- In the passage how was God at work before Philip/Jonah came along?
- How did God ask Philip/Jonah to get involved with what God was already doing?
- How did Philip/Jonah respond?
- What happened to the Ethiopian Eunuch/The People of Ninevah after Philip/Jonah joined in with what God was doing?
- How can we see more clearly what God is already doing in our neighbourhood(s)?
- What stops us from seeing mission as joining in with what God is already doing?

Getting ready for next week ...

Where might you prayer walk next week?

Week 3 - Pray

Before the session ...

Spend time praying for your neighbourhood, ask God to show you where he is at work and how we can join in?

'Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

1 Thessalonians
5: 17-18

Prayer Walking Tips

- Walk with someone else rather than on your own.
- Look and listen, to see and pray.
- As you walk from place to place offer to God the places that you pass either in conversation with one another or in silent prayer.
- Be open to God's promptings for you to pray for a particular place or person, don't be afraid to respond.

After your prayer walk, share together ...

- How did prayer walking make you feel?
- What did you see, who did you meet, who did you talk to?
- Did anyone ask what you were doing?
- Did anyone ask for prayer?
- Did you offer to pray for anyone, or any situation?
- What did God say, or put on your heart?
- What did you sense God is already doing in the neighbourhood?
- Did God speak to you of how you could join in or bless the neighbourhood?

Getting ready for next week ...

Plan together your activity to bless the neighbourhood.

Week 4 - Bless

Before the session ...

Ask for God's courage and support as you step out in faith to bless the neighbourhood your group is meeting in.

An act of blessing ...

Use this space to plan your act of blessing and to record your experiences.

'May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.'

2 Thessalonians 2:
16-17

Week 5 - Reflect

Before the session ...

Think about your experience of blessing the neighbourhood last week. What was the experience like for you?

I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

John 13:34

Sharing experiences

At the beginning of this week's session each member of the group will be invited, if they wish, to share their experiences of '*Moving into the neighbourhood*' and how it has helped them to grow in their faith or their understanding of God. The following questions might help you to think about what you could share with the group:

- Is there someone in the group who has helped you during the course you would like to thank?
- Had you been on a prayer walk before? How did you find the experience of the prayer walk in week 3?
- How did you feel during the act of blessing last week?
- Has anyone from the neighbourhood talked to you about the act of blessing this week? What did they say?
- Can you share something new you have learnt about God during Lent?
- Do you see or understand God any differently now than you did at the beginning of Lent?

Week 5 - Reflect

The Easter Story

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection is the story which gives all of our mission and evangelism its purpose. As you hear the following passages read during the session ask God to speak to you through the words of scripture.

- Matthew 21:1-11
- Matthew 27:11-54
- Matthew 28:1-10

Next Steps

As '*Moving into the neighbourhood*' comes to a close you are invited to share together in groups of two or three your responses to the following questions and then share together as a whole group.

- How can you continue to pray for your neighbourhood?
- Do you think prayer walking in your neighbourhood on a regular basis would be a good idea? If so, when and how often?
- What might be the next step to share more of God's love with those you connected with through your act of blessing?
- How might you invite your neighbours to find out more about Jesus?
- Is there more for you to do as a group to share God's love with your neighbourhood? How might you do that?
- Would you like to meet again as a group? If so, when?

The image on the front cover is *The cross over the city*, from the Methodist Collection of Modern Art, used by permission of TMCP.

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www.tynedalemethcircuit.org