



CGfE 'Signpost' Resource Paper No 3a March 2009

Evangelisation and Proclamation in 21st Century

From the 'Churches Coordinating Group for Evangelisation' (CGfE) of Churches Together in England

"Proclamation in the 21st Century" is a key issue for many CGfE members. In much recent mission and evangelism, emphasis has rightly been given to 'service', 'relationships' and 'community'. Significant national initiatives like Hope08 and Back to Church Sunday illustrate this. As keen advocates for such excellent initiatives, CGfE members want to raise the question of proclamation in what many describe as a post Christian context. Whilst subscribing to the old adage 'action speaks louder than words', what place do 'words' have today? How is the Gospel heard by people in the 21st century?

Graham Horsley, chair of GfE, says, 'For too long the pendulum has been swinging away from proclamation. Relational methods of evangelism are important, but to be the best they need to be complemented by event based evangelism and a presentation of the word. The GfE consultation will consider how to do that effectively in the 21st Century.'

GfE Annual Consultation 2009

These questions are so key that GfE is hosting a major consultation on the topic. Bringing together as many people as possible in the evangelism network, it will look at examples of good practice and listen to stories of how evangelists, denominations and mission agencies have engaged with the questions:-

- How is proclamation possible in the twenty first century?
- What are the issues? Preaching? Children? Media? Secular? Multi faith?
- Can we talk about Jesus? Have we lost our voice? How is 'sin' perceived?
- Are we denying the Gospel if we do not use words as well as action?
- What can we say, and how, so that people will hear and want to respond to Christ?



The gathering takes place on Thursday May 7th 2009 and all details, including the web link for online booking, can be found on: <http://www.gfe.org.uk/proclamation.htm>.

Reflections on resources re "Proclamation in the 21st Century"



The Shack has been a phenomenal success as a piece of fiction which has brought people to faith in Christ. Heresy to some (http://www.leadingtheway.org/site/PageServer?pagename=sto_TheShack_Uncovered) others like J. John commend it highly. Randal Rauser has written a theological exploration: '**Finding God in the Shack**' to help seekers explore the theological themes presented in the best seller.

There is a long tradition of fiction exploring the Gospel and some have said **The Shack** could have the same impact as Pilgrim's Progress. What place did 'story' have in the teaching of Jesus? What place does 'story' have in our presentation of the good news today? How contemporary is our testimony? Is 'story' sufficient?

EA 'Square Mile' Evangelism in Holistic mission

A new initiative from the Evangelical Alliance in England is promoting evangelism as one of 'Four Dimensions' of mission which make up holistic mission in MILE: Mercy, Influence, Life discipleship and Evangelism. Resources help leaders think about how to engage with the square mile around the local church. See: <http://www.eauk.org/squaremile/>. What does this say about 'good news'? How does 'explanation' fit with 'demonstration'? How are 'word' and 'deed' related?



The Evaluation of Hope08 (<http://www.hope08.com/Group/Group.aspx?ID=69097>) suggests 'works' lead to more 'proclamation' not less. What event, means and method is possible and appropriate to explain why we do things?



HopeInfo is part of the public face of "Hope", the 2008 initiative which continues in many places in 2009. The website explores Christian hope to people outside church in video story form. See: <http://www.hopeinfo.co.uk/>. The videos explore contemporary issues and the

web links lead seekers to find out more about Jesus. This is via a booklet provided by the **Christian Enquiry Agency**, and a link to the **ReJesus** website: <http://rejesus.co.uk/>. Does your church website link to 'ReJesus'?



DISCUSS: Parable, metaphor and experience vis-à-vis teaching dogma and assertion. How would Jesus preach today?



Language questions from Roy Todd in 'Confident Communicator' course

Roy Todd is an Evangelist who has written a workbook for groups seeking to share their faith. He asks questions about the language we use and how it is understood by people who do not go to church.

He suggests some examples for group members to consider as 'alternative themes' which connect today: Salvation: from 'the saving of the soul' to 'change / hope / purpose'. Sin: from 'to rebel and disobey God' to 'past / wrongs / selfishness'. To be born again: from 'to be given new life' to 'second chance / new start'. Saved: from 'to be rescued from sin and death' to 'changed / transformed / freed' etc. (Mayhew 2008 p 43).



Preaching is explored by Jonny Baker in his blog article entitled 'Throwing a hand grenade in to the fruit bowl' on his blog: <http://jonnybaker.blogs.com/>. Find it under his menu called 'Recycled'. The text is for preaching in church but the hope is that the Evangelism Series of Grove Books will have a rewritten version re people who don't go to church. Look out on www.grovebooks.co.uk for possible publication in May 2009.

This picture is of an open air pulpit on Marylebone Road in London. What place does preaching have today? How do communicators get an audience to listen? Will people gather to hear an evangelist like Billy Graham? **Franklyn Graham** in Belfast 2008 and **Luis Palau** in Inverness 2009 illustrate a model. How do we ensure the audience is not all Christian? Is Britain so post modern that people will listen afresh?

The Speakers Corner Trust is a new initiative backed by politicians like Jack Straw to promote the Hyde Park Corner tradition elsewhere. Evangelists are permitted. Nottingham and Lichfield are leading the way. (<http://www.speakerscornertrust.org/>)

BBC TV programme 'Yes we can! The Lost Art of Oratory' illustrates President Barack Obama as an orator and suggests the skill is a lost art. Is this true of preaching in our churches? How do we preach for both the converted and the visitor with no faith in Christ? How do we explain the Gospel in the public arena? Is there a lost homiletic and if so how can it be recovered?

The Passion was a BBC drama production on the last week in the life of Jesus which cost millions to produce and went out on successive nights as a scheduling experiment. What does this commitment say about the interest in the person of Jesus today? Do Christians need to be less hesitant about speaking of faith? Tony Blair says we should 'Do God' in politics and other faith communities say local Councils need not avoid saying they have 'Christmas' lights. How should the Christian community engage with the opportunities? What place 'dialogue'?



Signpost to more Resources



Alpha models proclamation in the context of food and discussion. www.alpha.org.uk

Damaris provide video clips for group discussion on contemporary films: www.damaris.org

RUN provide media resources and network contacts for speakers: www.run.org.uk

Life4seekers is a Catholic resource which uses an electronic magazine format for articles and testimonies: <http://www.life4seekers.co.uk/onlinemagazine/index.html>

Viewfinder is a new video resource for people to explore 'Christian truth and relevance', with 'no background knowledge' in a 'framework of acceptance and affirmation': <http://www.nationwidechristiantrust.com/>

Lifewords historic Churches project connects with the 84% of the population who have been in a place of worship within the last year, to explain the purpose of buildings visited: <http://www.sgmlifewords.com/uk/en/engage-historicchurches.php>

Philo Trust supports the evangelist J. John who is noted for applying the Gospel to the issues of life eg 'Just10' tour. <http://www.philotrust.com/>. J. John, is attending the GfE Annual Consultation to explore "Proclamation in the 21st Century".

Christ in the Centre is one example of a number of places where Passion drama is retold to large crowds. Good Friday is a natural opportunity for churches to walk, witness, and speak of Jesus on the street: <http://www.christinthecentre.co.uk/>

Exploring 'Heaven' and 'Sin': The Bible in Transmission is a Bible Society publication available in pdf form. Exploring how people understand the theology we present can be found in 'Past Papers': (<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/l3.php?id=311>)

This Resource Paper is one of a growing series on different topics for local church leaders, being produced and posted on www.churches-together.net

These papers collate contributions from our immediate and wider network, and are presented in good faith for accuracy and representation. They cannot be considered formal statements or endorsements on behalf of all churches in England, and CGfE / CTE cannot be held responsible for material and opinions which have been quoted.

The Churches Coordinating Group for Evangelisation (CGfE), is a network of national evangelism officers of the major denominations and home mission agencies. Our aim is to help the churches in England work together in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

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To be continued ...

