

JOURNEY TO FAITH: MATERIAL INCLUDED IN MODULE PACK

Introductory Material: (J2F Introductory)

Facilitator's Introduction

Material for Both Sessions: (J2F 1&2)

Equipment & Material Needed

- Whiteboard or flipchart at front to record group discussion points
- A3 Flipchart sheets (or larger) & various coloured felt tip pens, for participant use in groups
- Post-it notes, sellotape & scissors, for participant use in groups
- Laptop computer & digital projector, plus screen, if PowerPoint presentations are being used

Participant's Resource Manual

Material for Session 1: We're All Part of the Story (J2F 1)

Facilitator's Notes

Presentation (slides)

Six Serving Men poem by Rudyard Kipling

Quotes on Evangelism

Material for Session 2: Heartbeat not Hiccough (J2F 2)

Facilitator's Notes

Presentation (slides)

Rural Church Cycle

Jane's Story

Closing Liturgy sheet

Supplementary Material: (J2F Supplementary)

5 Is & Intentional Evangelism

A Truthful Story

B2CS (Back to Church Sunday) Year

Rural Church Year Cycle – document template

Simple Church & Community Profiling Tools

Six Serving Men with notes

The Big Welcome 2012

Useful Resources

INTRODUCTION TO “JOURNEY TO FAITH” FOR FACILITATORS

Thank you for offering to lead this module. The main aim of it is to see intentional evangelism as part of the warp and weft of the life of the rural church, and not some bolt-on extra.

In this module you will find a number of exercises that should mostly be self-explanatory. But, like all good teaching, the material will be enhanced and enlivened by appropriate stories from your own experience. However, it is important that such stories act as ‘servants’ to the main thrust of the material.

This module doesn’t offer an off-the-shelf ‘thousand and one good ideas for rural evangelism.’ Rather the underlying principle is that it is better for a local rural church to do things evangelistically rather than for them to do a series of evangelistic things. So the tools and exercises are designed to help individuals reflect upon their own journeys to faith and to help the church offer a pathway to discipleship that honours the starting place of anyone who engages with and explores the Christian faith.

The material here is not exclusive to the rural setting, but nevertheless it has a particular relevance given that in many rural settings there still exists a latent element of Christendom. On a wider scale this is changing rapidly, and the rural church can often find itself unable to articulate the things of the faith to those who have no prior background knowledge or experience, i.e. people who have not been birthed or socialised into the church.

As a result the material does not consider what is ‘rural’ or the specifics of different types of rural church circumstances. This is taken as a given in your own understanding.

The overall course has already been piloted with a rural congregation.

*Capt. Gordon Banks (CA), Diocese of Chichester
Simon Martin, Arthur Rank Centre*

AIM

This module is designed to help rural churchgoers gain a confidence in their faith, both as individuals and as a local church community, and to discover ways in which they are able to articulate that faith and invite others onto the Christian pilgrim path.

“... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:13

OUTLINE OF THE WHOLE “JOURNEY TO FAITH” MODULE

The module is divided into two sessions of roughly equal length – about 2-2½ hours each. These can be done on a single day dedicated to “Journey to Faith”, but there should be a substantial break between them (e.g. lunch). Perhaps a better arrangement is two consecutive half-days (e.g. Saturday mornings); however, feel free to divide up the material in a different way if that suits you (e.g. over 4 evenings).

Virtually all sections of each session require practical involvement by the participants, in some form. This is made clear at the relevant point. Ideally, delivery requires two facilitators working together who have good familiarity with the material and additional resources.

There is a simple PowerPoint Presentation available for you to use with each session. Use of this is not mandatory, but it does compliment the Participant’s Resource Manual and follows the Facilitator’s Notes closely.

Icons & Images in the Facilitator’s Notes

In the Facilitator’s Notes you will find several icons and images to guide their use:



An icon like this indicates action is required from the facilitator during the session – e.g. teaching input



An icon like this indicates an activity for the entire group of participants.



An icon like this indicates an activity for small groups of participants – either pairs or groups of 4-5.



This icon next to an activity indicates it is optional and may depend on time

Other images & icons that are found simply illustrate or highlight the content of a specific section.

Facilitator Guidance & Content

Within the individual sections of the Facilitator's Notes material is included that should guide how you conduct each session and the content you include. In particular, specific guidance is included at certain points by brief entries in a different font e.g.

Here the participants & groups get to reflect on how others describe evangelism ... and what they think it means

It is not intended that you stick rigidly to the wording of the material or illustrations that are included. However it is essential that you gain real familiarity with the material provided prior to running the course, in order to ensure that no core content is omitted in the process of delivery

Additional Resources, Material or Equipment

In some of the individual sections, additional material or equipment is required besides what is included explicitly in the Facilitators' Notes or Participants' Resource Manual. This is clearly indicated at the relevant point in the Notes and Resource Manual, and there is a separate list highlighting:

- (a) what is included as part of this overall module (e.g. the Six Serving Men poem)
- (b) what you must provide yourselves

In addition the overall module includes certain other – Supplementary – material that is entirely optional, but which may prove helpful if you adapt or develop some of the sections or wish to produce resources to use beyond the confines of the "Journey to Faith" module itself.

WHAT IS PROVIDED IN THIS MODULE? (see full list provided separately)

Session 1: We're All Part of the Story

Facilitator's Notes

PowerPoint Presentation

Participant's Resource Manual

Session 2: Heartbeat not Hiccough

Facilitator's Notes

PowerPoint Presentation

Participant's Resource Manual

List of Equipment or Material Provided or Needed - for both sessions
(with actual templates etc. where necessary)

Supplementary Material for use during the sessions or for later resourcing

List of Further Resources

(with description, source & links where necessary)

SESSION1: WE'RE ALL PART OF THE STORY

(Slide 1)

Aim: (Slide 2)

To help people gain confidence in their faith as individuals and as a local church community; and to discover ways in which they can articulate their faith and invite others onto the Christian pilgrim path.

Outline for the Session: (Slide 3)

- Accepting Evangelism?
- Story Time
- Process, Crisis or ...?
- Five Bs
- Conclusion, Questions & Feedback

Suggested Timings: (Total time up to 2hr 10 mins)

Accepting Evangelism? **(40 mins)**

- | | |
|--|---------|
| • The Journey to Faith | 2 mins |
| • Evangelism as Heartbeat not Hiccough | 5 mins |
| • Everyone a Witness? | 3 mins |
| • Map Your Community | 10 mins |
| • What is Evangelism ...? | 10 mins |
| • "Six Serving Men" | 10 mins |

Story Time **(30 mins)**

- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| • My Story – Part 1 | 10 mins |
| • The Jesus Story | 10 mins |
| • Our Church Story | 5 mins |
| • The BIG Story | 5 mins |

Process, Crisis or ...? **(30 mins)**

- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| • Hope | 5 mins |
| • Meet ANN & BEN | 10 mins |
| • My Story – Part 2 | 15 mins |

Five Bs **(10 mins)**

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| • All Different? | 2 mins |
| • Five Contributory Aspects | 8 mins |

Conclusion, Questions & Feedback (**up to 20 mins**)

- Conclusion
- Questions & Feedback

3 mins

up to 17 mins

ACCEPTING EVANGELISM?

The Journey to Faith



What does the “journey” image imply?

You might want to ask for suggestions from the group

Evangelism as Heartbeat not Hiccough in the Local Rural Church

This is an opportunity for some brief input on local church witness



Evangelism – i.e. sharing one’s faith with the intention that someone else may also embrace it – is very often viewed as something done by ‘specialists’, and often at a specific moment or within a short time-frame, e.g. a parish mission.

However, whilst some within the church clearly are called to be evangelists (cf. [Ephesians 4:11](#)), not all are. However, all ARE called to be witnesses and to bear testimony to their faith (to share this) with others. This might be termed ongoing evangelization.

You may want to use the following summary quotation (also used in Session2)

While evangelism focused at a specific time may bring a sharper clarity, it is more in keeping with the nature of rural communities that faith sharing (evangelization) is ongoing in harmony with the rhythms of people’s lives, the seasons and the turning of the year, and the features and nature of the local community.

(Laurence Singlehurst, “Sowing, Reaping, Keeping”)

Everyone a Witness? (Slide 4)

You might use these two quotes to expand on what being a witness implies

‘Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.’ (1 Peter 3:15)

‘The bonds of affection in friendship will shape one’s way of witnessing – make it respectful, considerate, and loving. The value of friendship militates against any sort of witnessing that will be deeply disrespectful and harmful of the other ... Christians ought to take how they would witness to a friend to be paradigmatic of how they should witness in general.’
(Miroslav Volf)

Map Your Community (Slide 5)

Here the participants get to reflect on the places and people they feel are significant in their communities.

As a result, it is important to recognise what is important in, and to, the local community. This does not mean looking at rural definitions or descriptions, but seeing what is in our own back yard.



Invite the participants to form groups of 4-5, each representing just a single community if possible.

Give each group a large sheet of paper and set of coloured pens and encourage them to draw a rough map or picture of their community – highlighting the things that its inhabitants think are most important. These might be places, people or events.



After a suitable time, encourage each group to feed back (to be listed on whiteboard or flipchart) the key things they identified. What do they have in common? What major differences exist?

What is Evangelism, and what do we think about it?

Here the participants & groups get to reflect on how others describe evangelism ... and what they think it means

(Slide 6)



Give each participant a sheet containing the Evangelism Quotes. Again, divide them up into groups of 4/5 and ask them to try and agree priorities for the quotes, i.e. put them in their order of preference.

You might encourage the groups to create their own definition, and then place it in a suitable position in the list.



After sufficient time for this, ask groups to give feedback on their choices. In particular, ask them to explain why they chose their top 2 or 3, and why they relegated their bottom 2 or 3. You might want to write up a summary of these points on the whiteboard or flipchart.



If there is time, you might ask them if they want to share their own definitions, and explain where they positioned them.

Six Serving Men: Questions as Servants



Without comment, read out Rudyard Kipling's poem "Six Serving Men" [From 'The Elephant's Child' in the "Just So Stories"]

The opportunity here is to introduce the participants to the value of asking the right sort of questions – both about their communities and about their own church's activities & motivations

(Slide 7)

The basic questions identified in the poem - What, Why, How, Who, When & Where – could form the basis of a very useful discussion for any local church that wishes to examine its activities and engagement with its local community.

Using the "Why?" question about evangelization & bearing witness

The previous exercise has looked at the "What?" of evangelization/bearing witness. And the community mapping activity was also asking "What?" questions about the important elements of the local community.



However, equally important for the "Journey to Faith" is "Why?" On the basis of the summarised results from the previous exercise, you can throw open discussion to the whole group, and introduce each of the following questions in turn.

- Why do we seek to share our faith?
- Why do we find it difficult to do this?
- Why do we often avoid using words like evangelism?



Draw the discussion to a close by pointing out that the "Why?" will have profound effects on the other four questions about evangelization/bearing witness, but especially the "How?" For example, you may believe that those who do not make a confession of faith prior to death will suffer eternal punishment. Or you may believe that it is in Christ we find fullness of life and we are called to participate with God in the realization of his kingdom come upon earth. Taking one of those positions will influence how you set about evangelism.

STORY TIME

My Story: Part 1 (Slide 8)

Introducing participants to the widespread use of storytelling, and thinking about their own stories in a limited way



Get participants into pairs, and introduce the following questions consecutively. Describe to your pair partner:

- How did you get here today?
- What was the journey like?
- How did you come to be involved with your church?

- How did you come to be involved with this course?

We use stories all the time. Sometimes these are our own personal stories, like the ones just shared; sometimes these are other people's stories; and sometimes they are larger stories in which we may play a part. Stories are very important as they help to earth and personalise things in the world around us.

The Jesus Story

Introducing the breadth of the story of Jesus, and its importance in what Christians have to share with others.

It also allows the facilitators to point out that this is one of several ways in which the Jesus story and their own stories interact.

(Slide 9)



Invite the participants to each write on a postcard *one* incident they remember from the life of Jesus. Give only a short time for them to reflect on this.

This should be done without participants referring to their Bibles, as it is intended to focus on (a) what they can actually recall, and (b) what has retained its significance for them individually.

Facilitators should help participants to peg these postcards on a washing line representing the life of Jesus - with a discussion on where the various incidents should be on the 'timeline' of Jesus' life.



If time, you can throw out an open question to the whole group: "*Why did you choose that incident or element in the life of Jesus?*"

Our Church Story (Slide 10)

Using the local church as a focus for witness and storytelling.



Get the participants back in pairs and ask them to discuss how their church came to be where it is and something of its history:

- Was there a time when there was no church building there?
- How did it come about?
- How has it maintained its presence in the community?



If time, for more open discussion:

- Is there any link between your church as it is today and how it was in the past?
- Is your church building a blessing or a burden in bearing witness to Christ in the wider community?

The BIG Story

A key part of the session, this encourages participants to see their own stories as integral to God's ongoing BIG Story – and so as important & valid for them to share with others in witness



Bishop Tom Wright is one amongst many who make much of the Church's call to be the New Israel and to be a blessing to the nations after the promise given to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3). This is the high calling and purpose of the Church, to fulfil God's once-for-all plan that through a dedicated people His will and purpose may be made known, "a light to the Gentiles". That we might evidence a realized Lord's Prayer with God's name being held in honour and His Kingdom coming upon earth, a foretaste of the time when heaven and earth will be joined. Bishop Tom often refers to the Bible as a single play or coherent story with a number of major acts or sections.

We are all called - individually and collectively - to be a blessing to "the nations" in the same covenantal agreement God made with Abraham and further ratified with David, Jesus and the New Testament Church. From our perspective, "the nations" begins with our own households, neighbours and communities.

(Slide 11)

"You are a unique and irreplaceable actor in the drama of human history, and Jesus Christ has need of you to make his salvific work known in this particular place and at this particular moment in history." (Michel Quoist "The Christian Response")

In other words, we fit into God's overall "Big Story" and are a vital part of its present-day continuation.

PROCESS, CRISIS OR ...?

Another key part of the session, where you need to emphasise that people's stories are never just backward-looking. Hope and the future are essential elements of both the BIG Story and our own stories of faith.

This also links closely with the "Now & Next" elements of the 'stories' of ANN & BEN (next). Our own stories should always have a forward-looking element.

Hope (Slide 12)



One of the elements of being a witness alluded to earlier ([1 Peter 3:15](#)) is giving “*a reason for the hope you have*”. Hope has a vital part in the Big Story, and is a recurring theme throughout both Old and New Testaments, and it is one we can develop for our own personal journey of faith.

(Slide 13)

HOPE has often been thought of as **Holding Onto Past Experiences**. As with the Big Story itself, our past experiences are not isolated from either our present life or what the future may hold. As a result they provide a useful means by which we can understand for ourselves how our faith has developed, and a helpful approach to share our faith story with other people. But it is important that we recognise that no two individuals have identical past experiences. This means that all of us have distinct stories of our journeys of faith.



Meet ANN & BEN

These are ILLUSTRATIVE of two common stories of how an individual’s faith may emerge & develop. You may need to stress that participants should not see themselves simply as either ANN or BEN; each individual’s story will be more subtle than these two models ... and definitely unique.

(Slide 14)



Some people’s faith story reflects an ongoing process:

- A** – Always ‘known’ God
- N** – Needed to develop an ‘owned’ faith
- N** – Now & next

Ann – means ‘full of grace’ thus reflecting that a person receives God’s grace

(Slide 15)

Others’ faith stories reflect a significant crisis:

- B** – Before
- E** – Encounter
- N** – Now & next

Ben – means ‘son’ thus reflecting that a person becomes a ‘child’ of God



My Story: Part 2

This section is the most practically relevant part of Session1, and potentially the most difficult for participants – who will need encouragement & support in being able to articulate their own stories, especially for the first time.

Clearly, though, your personal experience may be different from these ‘models’. And importantly, people to whom you talk and with whom you share the story of your faith journey will also have different starting points and will engage with God in different ways.



Get the participants back into pairs again, to reflect individually on their own stories. Let them think things through on their own for a little while, highlighting that – like all stories – there are past, present & future aspects. Our faith stories do not rest solely on past experiences. That is where HOPE is important – the past experiences have led to the present and imply a future.

(Slide 16)

For some, this may be the first time they have ever thought about ‘telling their faith story’. They will need time to **OUTLINE** it for themselves. For others, this will be something they have done before. In this case they will need a chance to **REFRESH** it – such a story is never static.

Then encourage each pair to **REHEARSE** – briefly – their stories with each other.

(Slide 17)



After this, bring the pairs back into the general group and reflect on the core element of hope:

What is the hope to which we bear witness?

- As an individual?
- As a Christian community?

It is important for participants to understand that there is no one ‘right answer’ to this question. They will emphasise different things, and articulate them in different ways!



And finally – going back to 1 Peter 3:15 and the quote from Miroslav Volf – you might consider how can we share these things “*with gentleness and respect*”?

FIVE Bs

All Different?

This section helps you to stress that every individual’s “journey to faith” is different, but there are a small number of common elements that may combine – in different ways – within any single experience



It should be clear that it is impossible to predict or determine how those others will respond to our stories. There are a range of elements that can contribute to an individual’s journey into faith – these may well include factors that were highlighted when mapping the communities at the start.

These elements may be part of a process, but people are drawn into a relationship with God and the Christian pilgrimage in many ways. Five key aspects are well-recognised.



Five contributory aspects (Slide 18)

This is the longest single 'teaching' section of Session 1. During it, you may find it important to ensure that participants understand each. (These will be revisited in Session 2 in a different way)

BEFRIENDING:



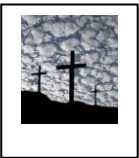
We encounter people by more than just 'being friendly' but by developing a genuine friendship with them. This is widely agreed to be the most frequent way that many begin a journey to faith ... across the bridge of friendship (not just 'pew-fodder').

BELONGING:



An individual begins to develop a sense of place and purpose within the life of a community of faith, even if they have no overt personal faith.

BELIEVING:



This may be a crisis or a process (as considered with BEN and ANN), but represents the individual's recognition and acceptance of faith in God. Often this may be accompanied by open confession of their belief.

BEHAVING:



In some ways this is a complex issue. At one level, confessed faith recognises that acceptance by God means that God wishes us to change & develop increasingly into the likeness of Christ; this is part of what the journey of faith implies. At another level though, this also represents an individual becoming 'socialised' into the community of faith ... especially if there is a strong sense of belonging. But behaving is more than an individual issue, and should be expected to include communal actions and joint decision-making.

BLESSING:



This represents the outworking of both belief & behaviour as an individual continues on their journey of faith. They themselves become a blessing to others ... increasingly becoming an outworking of the Lord's Prayer amongst family, friends & community. Again this is not solely an individual issue, as – for example - the church ought to be a communal blessing.

This may seem quite a significant step beyond our own bearing witness to our faith, but it is vital for us to recognise the various ways in which those we share with will engage with God, with us and with God's people. There is no 'one size fits all', and we need to be alert to the avenues along which individuals may approach the Christian pilgrimage.

CONCLUSION, QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

Conclusion (Slide 19)



We are all part of a story, and we all have (at least) three stories to tell:

- Our own personal story
- The local church story, past & present
- The Christian story

All together, these make up **His Story!** This is what we seek to share in the Journey to Faith – for ourselves and for those who are not yet consciously on that journey.

Questions & Feedback



Throw open for any questions or other feedback.

SESSION 2: HEARTBEAT NOT HICCOUGH (Slide 1)

Aim: (Slide 2)

- To help individual Christians and local churches recognise how they can make intentional evangelism an ongoing element of the life of their church
- To reflect on ways of including evangelism and witness as the heartbeat of the church's life – not a bolt-on extra for extra-special people or occasions.

Outline of Session 2: (Slide 3)

- Steps in the Right Direction
- Seasons & Cycles
- Third Agents
- Putting it all Together
- Questions & Feedback
- Closing Liturgy

Suggested Timings: (Total time up to 2 hr 15 mins)

Steps in the Right Direction (50 mins)

- | | |
|---|---------|
| • Nearly Always a Process | 5 mins |
| • But Often a Crisis or Tipping Point, too! | 3 mins |
| • Significant Rural-Specific Elements | 3 mins |
| • Recognizing the Helps & Hindrances | 10 mins |
| • Evangelization with Harmony & Rhythm | 2 mins |
| • A process of Intentional Evangelization | 7 mins |
| • What are WE doing? | 15 mins |
| • Everybody's Heartbeat | 5 mins |

Seasons & Cycles (35 mins)

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| • Strategy or Serendipity? | 5 mins |
| • Back to the 5 Is | 15 mins |
| • Using Cycles | 5 mins |
| • A Rural Church Cycle? | 10 mins |

Third Agents (10 mins)

Putting it all Together (20 mins)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| • At the practical level | 15 mins |
| • At a strategic level | 5 mins |

Questions & Feedback **(10 mins)**

Closing Liturgy **(10 mins)**

STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Nearly Always a Process (Slide 4)

Helping participants reflect on the value of the 5 Bs in real-life experience

Opportunity to re-visit **the Five Bs** from Session 1: *(especially if held on different days)*

- Befriending
- Belonging
- Believing
- Behaving
- Blessing



As in Session 1, these are all potential ‘entry points’ along a spectrum – gates through which people can enter a journey to faith and become part of the community of faith. It is important to recognise that different people ‘enter’ in different ways and that this is not a linear process. Consider:

Mrs. J has her garden dug by members of the local church, which she attends only very sporadically – she receives a BLESSING from the faith community. As a result she adapts her own BEHAVIOUR and starts coming along to church regularly, and she discovers a daytime tea, chat & knitting group that includes time to pray and read the Bible. She has found a place where she feels she can BELONG. With time she makes firm friends (BEFRIENDING) and realises she has an important decision to face; so she adopts an owned faith – she BELIEVES.

Real-life & local testimony is always more valuable than fiction

(You may have a testimony of your own, or from within the group, to share at this point instead of the fictionalised one above. If you do this, it is important to stress the ‘B’ steps in the process.)

But often a Crisis or a Tipping Point, too! (Slide 5)

Encouraging participants to see that process still involves recognising change



Re-visit our two characters BEN and ANN at this point.

- For BENs a critical time is clearly reached, with some form of identifiable occasion or experience when they make a conscious decision and can probably identify a point at which they join the community of faith.
- For ANNs there may be no such crisis, and it is likely that these sorts of people have had a long association with the church and the Christian faith without ever owning it for themselves. Here the picture is more of a tipping point, where an accumulation of experiences bring about a change of attitude – which may happen quite gradually.

Significant Rural-Specific Elements Impacting Local Evangelization (Slide 6)

It is important to highlight two contrasting features of rural communities in their impact on effective evangelization by the local church



There are two important elements that are true in the many rural church and community situations, and which have an impact on how this process may occur:

- In rural communities, especially those with a more elderly population, a substantial proportion of the inhabitants are likely to have had past churchgoing experience, a childhood memory of Sunday School or similar than in other communities. And in these same communities, there is greater awareness of the church amongst the wider population. There will even be those who have moved (e.g. retired) to a rural community with the intention of ‘buying into’ some form of rural idyll – which includes the village church.
- Alongside this, these same communities may often be quite well-informed about the activities of their inhabitants. There are often well-established local networks and groups that influence how and what happens there. Under such circumstances it is often hard for someone (a BEN or an ANN) to embrace or even explore the Christian faith in any anonymous fashion. People will know if someone starts going to church!

Recognizing the helps & hindrances in a personal ‘journey to faith’

Offering participants a chance to analyse their own ‘journey’



In Session 1, participants were encouraged to tell the story of their ‘journey to faith’ in pairs. Now get them into *different* pairs, to talk through these stories again. This time encourage them to help each other identify:

- (a) Where any of the 5 Bs played a part in their journey;
- (b) Whether there were any specific crises or gradual tipping points that contributed to their developing an owned faith; and
- (c) Whether either the two ‘rural-specific’ elements played a part in helping or hindering them in their ongoing ‘journey to faith’.

It is important that this section is closed by the facilitator reinforcing that these are all things that will equally affect anyone with whom participants share their own stories.

Evangelization with Harmony & Rhythm (Slide 7)

Introducing a theme that will be picked up in more detail later



This will affect the way the local church bears witness and engages in evangelization. (As mentioned in Session 1)

While evangelism focused at a specific time may bring a sharper clarity, it is more in keeping with the nature of rural communities that faith sharing (evangelization) is ongoing in harmony with the rhythms of people's lives, the seasons and the turning of the year, and the features and nature of the local community. (Laurence Singlehurst, "Sowing, Reaping, Keeping")

A Process of Intentional Evangelization (Slide 8)

Here you start typing participant's personal stories into the intentional activities of the local church



The 5 Bs focused on how a process of "journeying to faith" can be experienced by the individual concerned. Numerous elements may be included in a multiplicity of ways – no two people have the same "journey to faith". And the local church can intentionally involve the same type of process in providing a number of ways that people can engage with the faith at various stages of their "journey to faith".

These 5 'steps' are a helpful tool, not a mandatory approach

Don't let the participants get 'hung up' on these categories or descriptions; especially don't let them worry about "which category" an example goes in when they are working together in the next sub-section.



The local church can – and should – examine its common life and reflect on the opportunities it provides for people to engage during that journey. As before, it can be presented as continuum – in this case a series of 5 'steps' that can follow on a logical or chronological order – but different elements may be prominent at different times.

These are commonly presented as 5 Is (Slide 9):

- **Involvement** – where the local church is engaged in a variety of ways with the local community
- **Introduction** – where elements of the Christian faith are intentionally included or explained
- **Invitation** – the provision of an opportunity to respond in some way
- **Induction** – the recognition of a decision and a welcoming into the Christian community in some way
- **Instruction** – the conscious development of ongoing discipleship or faith formation

Two important general points that participants need to understand



The two vital elements that need to be held onto here are:

- (a) That these things are part of the ongoing life of the local church – its heartbeat – not things specially created for a one-off occasion
- (b) The individual examples need not be major community or church events, but can often stem from the nature of the relationships that congregation members already have with their neighbours



What are WE doing?

A vital part of Session 2, as it gets all participants thinking about what their local churches already do ... and what they could realistically do.



Participants should reform the groups of 4-5 introduced in Session 1 – ideally with all the members of a single group being from the same local church. Each group should be provided with five flipchart sheets and marker pens of two colours. Get them to head each sheet with one of the 5 Is. Then get them to write on each sheet two sorts

of items (using a different colour for each):

- (a) Things that fall into that category that their own church already does (**i.e. experience**)
- (b) Things that fall into the same category that their own church could **REALISTICALLY** start doing (**i.e. aspiration**)

Groups may well need some catalysts for their imaginations



Facilitators may need to go round the groups to give encouragement and perhaps an appropriate example in each category, e.g.

- **Involvement:** village fete
- **Introduction:** harvest supper with guest speaker
- **Invitation:** to a Lent Course
- **Induction:** confirmation or re-dedication
- **Instruction:** participation in a house group



Bring all the groups back together, and get them to report what they have found in each category – first with their **experience**, then with their **aspirations**. List these all together at the front on a whiteboard or flipchart. Throw open the following questions:

- Which areas do we tend to be less involved in?
- Why do you think this is?



Everybody's heartbeat

The core twofold message of Session 2, despite its simplicity: local church evangelization is only realistic if (a) it is an ongoing aspect of church life, and (b) all the faithful are involved with the skills, experience & gifts God has given them



This is evangelism as the heartbeat of a local church, when all that happens in relation to the church is seen as contributing to bringing people to a living Christian faith – i.e. to making disciples (Matthew 28:19).

And it is the task of the whole people of God, not just a few keen folk or a few gifted individuals or specialists, nor just for a limited season.

(Slide 10)

“Each of you has been blessed with one of God’s many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well. If you have the gift of speaking, preach God’s message. If you have the gift of helping others, do it with the strength that God supplies. Everything should be done in a way that will bring honour to God because of Jesus Christ ... Amen.” (1 Peter 4:10-11)

However, there will be occasions when a concentrated focus may be appropriate, as well as the involvement of folk from beyond the immediate congregation.

SEASONS & CYCLES

Strategy or Serendipity? (Slide 11)

Introducing the important aspects of being prepared and making the most of the natural opportunities that arise within the community for witness and faith-sharing



The “journey to faith” cannot be mapped out in advance for any individual. Yet the Christian life as a whole, and the life of the local church, reflects a balance between strategy – e.g. plans, preparation, reflection – and serendipity – e.g. the unexpected, ‘going with the flow’, the influence of the Holy Spirit. What is less well-recognised is that good strategy (appropriate planning – personal or corporate) leaves room for serendipity; and the faithful believer will always be open to the movement of the Spirit of God.

For a healthy local church BOTH are needed.



Now much of what happens in rural churches represents a repeated round of activities & events – often on a yearly basis. As a result of this regularity, two major issues emerge:

- (a) There is often little reflection on, or understanding of, WHY these things are done.
- (b) There is often little appreciation of how these activities & events can serve to maintain a heartbeat for evangelization within the local community.

As the local facilitator(s) you may be able to find a better local illustration:

As an example you might think of the Christmas & New Year period. The focus is very nearly always on Christmas, which most people might believe is well-understood. But New Year may be neglected, and yet the opening of a new diary or calendar is more than simply an invitation for resolution that will wither in a few days or weeks. It could provide a chance for a New Look ... at the Christian Faith, or a chance for the local church to re-assess the priorities for the coming year in a spirit of prayer & expectation.

Back to the 5 Is (Slides 12-16)

Through a story, participants are helped to understand what lies behind the process of the 5 Is, and how this fits into the ongoing life of the local rural church



These five steps help us to put all of the local church activities into a purposeful order. But as with the 5 Bs it is important to see what this means in practice.

You can use the accompanying resource “Jane’s Story” – which is a fictional story based on a composite of several real testimonies. Or you might provide one of your own. The important point is that it should be linked into the more detailed breakdown of the 5 Is, as illustrated in the series of five slides in the presentation.



But note that even in the fictionalised account, events don’t fall out in a neat order ... and certainly not according to the 5 steps as outlined originally. So use what is relevant, note what is missing – and emphasise the combination of strategy and serendipity that come into play!

Using Cycles

Seeing Back to Church Sunday (and other potential points of focus) as tools to be used as part of the local church’s ongoing mission and witness



The fictionalised story effectively started with Back to Church Sunday, but this was not seen (either by the church or by Kathy) as something that stood on its own. Rather it was incorporated as a part of the ongoing cycle of events within the local church’s year.

Back to Church Sunday is merely one ‘focus’ that a local church can use. It may be inappropriate in some situations – e.g. when the main issue is with people who have never been to church at all; or when the type of community doesn’t lend itself to the approach that Back to Church Sunday uses.

There is supplementary material available for use at this point.

A Rural Church Cycle? (Slide 17)

The opportunity now to bring all this down to earth in the local rural church



However, the life of many rural communities and churches lends itself to the adoption of a very helpful yearly cycle that strengthens the links between the local church and the community it serves. It also makes the most of opportunities and events that are already part of the ongoing life of the community.

The pattern that is provided here has a number of distinct advantages:

- It gives a sense of direction and continuity – both within a given year and from one year to the next
- It provides clear aim and purpose tied up with the church's own cycle of liturgical celebrations
- It enables folk to join in at many different times and places, without obliging everyone to be involved in everything
- It serves to remind everyone – within the local church and outside – of who we are and why we do what we do ... including the way we worship

The participants have the opportunity to start constructing their own rural church cycle, imaginatively fitting in things that they may never have thought of before as 'assets' for their witness.



The year cycle in the slide is a model (developed in the Diocese of Chichester, and provided with their permission), and lends itself to easy adaptation for a specific local church and community. These might include regular items like:

- The village fair or fete
- Beating of the bounds
- A well-dressing celebration
- The patronal festival

But it also lends itself to events and circumstances that are irregular or unique, and yet are of great significance for the community:

- The opening of a small affordable local housing development
- The presence of seasonal or migrant workers from e.g. Poland



Get the participants back into their groups of 4-5 – especially if they are from the same church or group of churches. Provide them with the printed copy of the Rural Church Cycle from the module pack, and get them to start suggesting events and occasions that could be included in their own year cycle.

The supplementary material includes a copy of the rural cycle which can be printed or sent electronically to participants to use individually or with their churches.

THIRD AGENTS (Slide 18)

But it is important to realise that there is an important place for 'outsiders' with special communication skills, or a particular testimony to share. The benefits that can accrue all come from this being an integral part of the local church's own regular heartbeat of evangelism and witness. If you used your own local story instead of 'Jane's Story' you may need to adapt some of the points below.



As far as possible, all we have been thinking about has been 'home grown' – what is possible for a local rural church or group of churches. However, in 'Jane's Story' we did introduce an 'outside' element – the assumption was that the guest speaker for the Harvest Supper was not a member of the local church, but someone invited in because of their experiences and ability to communicate.

In particular, this brings in important extra dimensions to the local storytelling and bearing witness:

- It can help overcome the feature of many small rural communities where nothing is secret, and relationships between individuals (e.g. a churchgoer sharing faith with a non-churchgoing neighbour) can be viewed with suspicion.
- It can help provide input where ALL members of the community – churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike – can 'go and listen'.
- As a result it can provide content for discussion that moves things one step away from the personal testimony of the Christian villager ... although they can easily bring in their own story at an appropriate later point (e.g. with Kathy in 'Jane's Story').
- It can (like Back to Church Sunday, though more geared to the specifics of the local community or church) provide a focus for other activities and elements of a broader cycle of witness that we've already considered.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Enabling friendships within the community to be preserved without being spoilt by the weight of there being a sole means of witness.
- It helps both local church and community see that the Christian community there is part of something much bigger – even worldwide.
- An 'outsider' of this sort may be able to particularize the Gospel when local sensitivities and relationships make it hard to do so (e.g. in offering a challenge to commitment or an owned faith).

But Third Agents are not an excuse for non-involvement of the local church



But in the long run, the engagement of such a so-called 'third agent' will only be meaningful in the long-term if it is part of the regular heartbeat of the witness of the local church. i.e. only if what is done on Back to Church Sunday is informed by the rest of the year, or if what is said by the Harvest Supper speaker is in tune with the way the local Christian community relate and witness to their neighbours during the rest of the

year.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER (Slide 19)

An opportunity for participants to begin the process of creating a heartbeat for evangelism within the life of their own local church

At the practical level



Get the participants back into their groups of 4-5 – especially if they are from the same church or group of churches. Provide them with the printed copy of the Rural Church Cycle from the module pack, and get them to start suggesting events and occasions that could be included in their own year cycle.

Are there places where work with or by others might make it more effective?

[Electronic templates of this Rural Cycle are available in the module pack, so that all participants and their churches can take them away and adapt them to suit their own particular circumstances.]



At a strategic level (Slide 20)



The final slide simply puts all the elements from both Sessions together as an overall picture of how the local (rural) church and the local community of Christians can and does bear effective witness to their neighbours and community; how they share with them the Good News of Jesus Christ in an appropriate and relevant way:

- (a) Through the recognition and use of the power of stories – personal, communal, church, biblical.
- (b) Through the recognition of the many entry points that exist into the lives of others for effective witness – the five ‘gateways’ (the 5 Bs) show how what we do as individuals and as the church collectively bears witness to our faith and to our Lord.
- (c) Through appropriation of 5 key ‘steps’ (the 5 Is) to build an ongoing framework for the witness of the church in which our own evangelism is the ongoing heartbeat.

This is within the reach of any local rural church.



QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK



Throw open for any questions or other feedback.



Also take this opportunity to distribute copies of the **Participant’s Resource Manual** to each individual.

These contain about two-thirds of the material from the two course sessions, plus other material and suggestions for further activities that can be undertaken once they are back in their own church. There is also reference to further useful resources.

ALL the course materials are available for any course participant to download for free from the Arthur Rank Centre website. They should be encouraged to make the most of this opportunity, and all the other resources of the Arthur Rank Centre

CLOSING LITURGY (Sheet for reproduction included in module pack)



Finish by using the one-page liturgy together. It is a more powerful act of corporate worship if participants & facilitators are encouraged to engage in symbolic actions with light (candles) and salt.

Once the written liturgy is over, encourage the individual participants to remain quiet for a while and think about what one thing they might be able to start doing as a result of attending the course. Give them the opportunity to write this down on a blank postcard – either as a reminder for themselves, or as something to share with others.