



Joining in with the Spirit: Session 4 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

1. Intro slide
2. What is the joint calling of God’s people?
3. As we have seen, the *end point of discipleship* is to faithfully do the same things that Jesus did, in the manner in which He did them, for the same ultimate goal. ① As God’s called out people (church) we are both *scattered* in various places, but also sometimes *gathered* as one. We have already looked at what it might mean to join in with God in our scattered places and everyday lives, and we have explored what it means to share faith with other people. In these next two sessions we look at how and why we can join in with God’s mission *together*, as a gathered church.
4. Sometimes ① we will be like salt – scattered throughout the world, influencing and bringing life in less visible ways. ① Sometimes we will be like light – gathered in one point as a visible sign showing God’s life together. ① God’s mission includes seeking *to be a blessing to others* as together we “respond to human need by loving service” (the third mark of mission).
5. What does it mean to be a blessing and how is it helpful in mission?
6. In its simplest use, to bless someone is ‘to speak well of them’. But in a deeper sense when we bless someone (whether formally or informally) ① we are communicating that we want for them what God wants for them, what God sees as good for them. ① We are naming the “*visible, perceptible, effective proximity of God.*” When we bless someone, we communicate in a way *which brings God close.* ① Blessing people is communicated through *actions* as well as words.
7. Using the language of being a blessing, particularly as a way of describing the last three marks of mission, may help us to: **Connect** ① **with God’s early calling to human beings.** Through Abram ① “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:3) ① **See the impact of who we are as a gathered community in new ways.** In the Church of England, ① the aim of working for the ‘common good’ has become increasingly highlighted in recent years.
8. **Change** ① **what we count as our significant activities** One church continues to make a weekly count ① of how many people attend services, how much money is given and how many are baptised. But they *also* report how many people are being blessed through their addiction recovery scheme; being counselled through their counselling facility etc. ① They are not counting who is coming to them, but *who are they able to be a blessing towards.*
9. **Find** ① **a way of talking about mission that everyone feels included in.** ① No matter what our background or level of confidence, we can hopefully all respond to the question, “How can I be a blessing to others?” ① **Be a healthy church community** Pope Francis has said that, ① “...if I had to choose between a wounded church that goes out onto the street and a sick withdrawn church, I would definitely choose the first one.” We end our services with the words, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord” - the more we are able to be a blessing to others, the healthier our sense of being God’s worshipping, sent people might be.
10. How does the Holy Spirit help me to be a blessing?
11. We have ① explored how ① practices such as prayer, worship, or stillness can become opportunities for us to allow the Holy Spirit to *influence the desires of our hearts*, and to change our character to become more like Christ. ① We have also seen how Jesus’ whole life and ministry was led by the Holy Spirit.
12. While most Christians know that we need God’s Spirit to empower us, we might have different understandings and expectations about how this might happen, and what our experience can be. ① Some expect there to be *two distinct stages*, in which someone can be *baptised in the Spirit* at a later stage to coming to faith. ① Some might emphasise being filled with the Spirit as an *ongoing journey* and not a once-for-all experience (“Keep on being filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)) ① Others might emphasise that a disciple receives the Holy Spirit when they first say they have faith in Christ
13. While these differences can cause confusion, and at worst a reluctance to seek the Holy Spirit, they all point in some similar directions: As we saw in Session 1, “**The Spirit is more than just one of God’s gifts among others; the Holy Spirit is the unrestricted presence of God in which our life wakes up...**” Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit as the *best gift* anyone can receive saying, “...how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11) ① **The Holy Spirit always brings strength for something new to happen.** ① **The Holy Spirit always sends us to be a blessing and enables us through giftings.** The writer ① Andrew Murray said, “We must not pray, ‘Come Holy Spirit’, unless we are prepared to go with the Holy Spirit.” This is why the Holy Spirit gives, or strengthens, particular gifts. They are “...given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12.7) and “for the service of others”. (1 Peter 4:10)
14. The Holy Spirit is promised to every disciple – there are not different levels of Christian. ① There are three ways in which the New Testament describes how the Holy Spirit comes to us, but they all speak of a complete dependence on

Him. ① We can be baptised with the Spirit, clothed with the Spirit be full of the Holy Spirit or be filled by the Spirit. ① **People and communities experience the Holy Spirit in different ways.** "The Spirit blows where it pleases." (John 3:8)

15. How do we receive the Holy Spirit in our lived experience?

16. The way that people are empowered by the Holy Spirit who "blows where it pleases" fittingly resists formulas. The Spirit can come upon people. He can fall upon people. He can be poured out on people. ① We are constantly encouraged to depend on the Spirit: "eagerly desire spiritual gifts". (1 Corinthians 14:1) ① Growing an awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives is part of everyday discipleship. ① Paul assumes that it is possible for us to be *in step* with the Spirit, but also to get *out of step* with the Spirit.

17. If we want to be individuals or communities who seek to be a blessing empowered by God's Holy Spirit, these questions may help keep us open: ① How am I or how are we receiving from God before we give? Am I/are we experiencing a balance between my/our effort and relying on God? Do I/we have the humility to know that it is God's work that matters and not mine/ours? Where am I/are we stepping out into situations in which I/we need His Spirit? Am I/are we prepared to give space to wait for God before acting? Am I/are we open to being used by God for His purposes? Am I/are we thirsty for His presence? Am I/are we able to trust God's love and goodness so much that I/we can surrender to His control?

18. How can our life together be a form of blessing?

19. We can become a ① "sign of God's reign and a foretaste of His rule," a way in which others might see what life looks like when God's healing life is present, a vision of God's blessing lived out in real lives. Clarence Jordan founded a community in Georgia, USA, in 1942, which sought to bring blacks and whites together in a way of life which spilled over into their community. He called their life together a ① "*demonstration plot* for the kingdom of God". Despite growing opposition, the way of life they displayed was a sign as powerful as the bus boycotts which started the civil rights movement, and out of it was birthed the vision for 'Habitat for Humanity', which has housed 2.5 million people. For Clarence, it was the modelling of a life of blessing that included anyone, and put God's kingdom on display, that was the basis of the church community. In a similar way, Paul writes to the Philippians that they are to be "citizens of heaven". (Philippians 3:20) Yet the idea is not that they ignore the world but that they live out the life of God's kingdom within it.

20. We can do this by: ① **Encouraging everyone's gifts.** A church in which people don't see a difference between those 'up the front' and those who are not will be a community which can bless for at least two obvious reasons. Anyone coming into contact with that community will *feel able to participate*. The energy of that church will be all the greater the *more people are involved*. ① **Seeking to celebrate diversity.** While Jesus prayed that we could be one, alongside this the more we are committed to celebrating people's diversity, the more we reflect the blessing of God's rich and varied world. This may lead us to look at how easily accessible our life together is, how varied our culture of worship is, the language we use, how we are modelling diversity or who is in leadership roles. In an ever-increasingly mobile and diverse world, where many are far from home, the more we can pay attention to becoming *intercultural* the greater the blessing for the world. ① **Being honest about being a work in progress.** Reformers in the church famously said, "the church must always be reformed". If we are humble enough to know that continuing to learn and wrestle should be normal, we will be able to pursue the difficult work of being changed. As hard as this is, the more we are characterised by humble growing and learning, the more our life together may be a blessing.

21. In what ways could being part of the 'Church of England' help us be a blessing?

22. If you belong to a Church of England (or Anglican – meaning 'of England') community, you are part of an expression of God's church with features which have the potential to help us be a great blessing together for these reasons: ① **Being a blessing by being set up to serve the whole country.** The content booklet outlines the various parts of the Church of England and the way this is done. ① **Being a blessing by having an emphasis on serving those who are not 'members'.** ① These commitments reflect the original meaning of the word 'parish', as a place of refuge for those on the outside.

23. **Being ① a blessing by seeking to be open and diverse.** ① The average Anglican is a black woman in her 30s, an evangelical, who has at least 3 children and is someone who lives on less than a pound a day. We are: ① **Continuous and new:** We continue to be 'Reformed and Catholic' – seeking to change but also drawing from our roots. ① **Rooted and varied in worship:** The first Anglicans looked to the earliest Christian churches to shape its worship - at the same time there is creativity and flexibility. ① **Led and democratic:** The Anglican church has 'mixed leadership', meaning there can be a sense of direction but also involvement from a lot of people. This means while some decisions can be made in the moment, other, more significant decisions are made over time and with discussion. This is done through a combination of bishops, who lead on the ground in their dioceses, and elected groups of people called synods.

24. **Being ① a blessing by being rooted in everyday life.** Anglican worship has a great emphasis on everyday life – with services and provision for many stages of life – and for everyday people. ① The first prayer book was for "common prayer" and was designed to put the kind of praying that had previously been done in monasteries into language that could be used in the world of daily work. ① Anglican worship celebrates both the world that God has made and the way He is redeeming it. ① Finally, Anglican ministers are set apart to serve in churches, but also in many other contexts, being a blessing by engaging people where they are – ① there are around 1000 Chaplains in prisons, the armed forces, in education and hospitals.

25. How might we start to discover where we can be a blessing together in our communities?

26. The ways in which we can be a blessing can make the good news plausible for people who might find our teaching or worship hard to understand. One key question is *where to focus*. We have a certain sphere of influence, people we interact with or our parish, and God calls us to love our neighbour, rather than the whole world. Whether we are wanting to a blessing as a whole church, or as a small group within the church two helpful questions might be: ① *To whom are we called?* ① *With whom are we called?*

27. As we try and listen for the answers to these questions together to see what the possibilities might be we might find one of these five strategies or resources helpful: ① ***Having a vision planning process.*** The handout 'Developing Vision: Questions and Activities for Each Stage' offers a complete process from forming a team, to discovering a vision, to seeing it put into practice from start to finish. It enables us to discern what the 'main thing' is, and results in a plan, which may include blessing others, which can be followed over a time period to see this come about. ① ***Doing a few things well.*** Natural Church Development <http://ncd-uk.com/> offers a framework of eight qualities of a healthy church community, based on international research. One of the qualities is needs-based evangelism – focussing on blessing others. By using a diagnostic tool churches can be helped to work out what their next steps might be.

28. ***Researching ① the needs of our area effectively.*** Know Your Church, Know Your Neighbourhood (KYCKYN) is a facilitated process that was designed by the Church of England Birmingham to help churches think about themselves in relation to the local communities they seek to serve, and make prayerful and informed decisions about their mission in those communities. ① ***Discovering the gifts of our area we can join in with.*** As we have seen, mission is about finding out where God is at work and joining in. The chaplain general to the prison service said that when he first went into the prisons, he thought he would take Jesus in with him. He soon realised that Jesus was *already there*. He said that from then on he went into the prisons in order to encounter Jesus. *Asset Based Community Development* begins with looking for the gifts and talents God has placed in your neighbourhood, and starting from there. It helps individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. This is a different approach from identifying and meeting needs. Rather than the church being a blessing *to* others, we seek to become a blessing *with* others in our community.

<https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/> ① ***Joining in with others to learn and plan together.*** Learning Community processes, in which teams from different church communities join together every six months over two years, to discern vision, learn from others, and report back, can enable us to focus over a shorter term and in a flexible way. They are focussed around the three questions, "What is? What could be? And What will be?" helping us under God to find achievable active steps in being a blessing.

29. How might we go to others?

30. We ① want the mission to shape the church, rather than our shape of church to dictate the mission. ① Crucially, church happens ① wherever people are OF something bigger than themselves, look UP to God in worship, look IN by being in relationship and when we are sent on the journey OUT – the meaning of being an apostolic (sent) church. ① Across the country, there is a growth of new Christian communities, which start with a desire to be a blessing, asking questions such as, "Where is God at work and how can we join in?" and "How might our life be shaped around the needs of others?" While they all share this common vision to *start with going out to others in blessing*, the way new Christian communities can be shaped is very different. The bookmark "Different forms of mission-shaped church" explains the similarities and differences between church planting, fresh expressions, missional communities, micro-planting, resourcing churches, revitalisations, and new congregations to help stimulate imagination.

31. How might we grow together in the practice of hospitality?

32. This practice is not so much something we do, but ① more *a way in which we live*. The practice of hospitality is more than entertaining, ① it is a reflection of God's character, a response to what we have received from Him, and an attitude of heart we have towards other people. It is an offer of friendship and welcome to guests and strangers. Growing in being a hospitable people may involve: ① ***Being willing to give and to change unconditionally.*** "Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'" (Luke 14:13-14) ① ***Being willing to listen patiently.*** The more we can understand others, the more effective hospitality will be in being a blessing. Offering the time to listen to others is a gift and learning to listen well a skill which can be developed. ① ***Being willing to be equal and to be changed.*** If blessing others always empowers them in some way, the practice of hospitality will enable me to create a situation where the other person or people feel themselves as equals, rather than only recipients. It is striking how Jesus brought transformation to Zacchaeus by receiving his hospitality, or dignified the woman at the well by asking for her help. Particularly as a church community, this may mean that we can be open to being changed through the gifts God brings to us through other people. The content booklet offers a framework for working with other churches to be a blessing.