
**H O M E M I S S I O N
S U N D A Y 2 0 1 9**

S E R V I C E R E S O U R C E S



Methodist
Home
Mission
Ireland



HOME MISSION SUNDAY 2019

SERVICE RESOURCES

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1)

ALL AGE TALK IDEAS

There's a little verse in the Old Testament in the book of Zechariah which says: *"Do not despise the day of small beginnings"* (Zechariah 4:10a). The prophet Zechariah was talking about the new temple that would be built to replace Solomon's temple that had been destroyed by Israel's enemies. The foundations of this new temple had been laid, but opposition arose from neighbouring people and the work had come to a stop for several years. Zechariah told the people not to be disheartened about the "small beginnings" of this new temple, because from these small foundations, a time would soon come when it would be completely rebuilt, and God would be glorified through it.

Another way of saying: *"Do not despise the day of small beginnings"* is *"Do not dismiss small steps"*.

Have you ever helped to complete a 1000-piece jigsaw? Or even bigger? Well, if you have an adult helping you, the first thing they will probably do is separate the outside pieces from the inside pieces. Once that is done, then next thing they will probably do is to place the 4 corners on the table. And having achieved this important step, they might decide that they deserve a coffee break. Now if someone came along during their coffee break and looked at the table and saw that only 4 pieces out of 1000 were in place, and those 4 weren't even joined together, they might scoff and say something like: *"You haven't done very much with that jigsaw yet, you'll never finish it at this rate!"* But those small steps of separating the outside pieces from the inside pieces and putting the corners in place means that the whole outside can now be completed fairly quickly and then over time, the inside of the jigsaw is pieced together, little by little, until the whole picture finally emerges.

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Small beginnings often start with small steps, and God can take our small steps and use them to do great things. (You might like to tell the story of Mary Jones and her Bible: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Jones_and_her_Bible or use another contemporary story, or the story of the boy stepping up with his 5 loaves and 2 fish).

Finish with a prayer encouraging us all to take small steps of faith and trust God to use them for His glory.

Readings: Romans 10:9-15 & Isaiah 52:7-10

SERMON NOTES

The inspirational author Roy T. Bennet writes: *'Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart'*. I think that for many of us, when it comes to the whole concept of Mission, our heart tells us that nothing would bring us greater joy than to see people come to faith, but our mind fills with dread at the thought of having to share the gospel with those same people.

In our reading from Romans, Paul highlights the importance of reaching people's hearts with the gospel. Inward belief leads to outward profession of faith. We need to target people's hearts by blessing them with practical expressions of God's love, and relevant communication of the gospel. *'And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?'* This doesn't mean we have to preach to them 'pulpit style', but at some point, we do have to use words. Relevant communication of the gospel might start with small steps - a personal testimony, a prayer offered, a spiritual conversation. The ideal setting for this is a relationship of trust built up over time.

Verse 12 reminds us that the good news of Jesus is for everyone: *'there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.'* When this was written, the cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles were enormous! Sometimes, God calls us to take small steps in mission to those that we have very little in common with and would naturally avoid.

SERMON NOTES

The videos which you will see later (or hear about later if not shown during the service) tell stories of those who took small steps to bless people, build meaningful relationships with them, and share their faith. All of them, at some point, found themselves reaching out to people of different social and cultural backgrounds. Why did they do it? Because they felt called. *'And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?'* The church of the New Testament was commissioned from the outset. In Acts 1:8, Jesus reminded his apostles (literally sent ones) of his Great Commission to make disciples of *'all nations'* when he said: *'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'* We are a 'sent' church and a 'sending' church by definition and by design.

The reading from Isaiah picks up where the one from Romans left off! In Romans 10:15, Paul quotes the first part of Isaiah 52:7 and when we read further, we find out more about the nature of God's *'good news'*. The gospel is a really positive message! It's a gospel of peace – peace with God as we are reconciled to Him through Christ. It's a gospel of salvation – freedom from slavery to sin. It's a gospel of comfort – assurance of God's presence with us at all times and in all circumstances. It's a gospel of redemption – we have been bought with a price and we now belong to Jesus. It's a gospel for absolutely everyone – *'all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.'* No wonder there are shouts and songs of joy in this passage – it's the only fitting response to this marvellous 'good news'! But there's also a challenge. This good news has to be shared before it can be received. Real people with real feet have to bring it to 'all the ends of the earth'. And that's where we come in. It starts with small steps in response to God's call, and the wonderful thing about stepping out in faith and trying to be a blessing is that we end up being the ones who are blessed. It's a win-win!

VIDEO RESOURCES

There are three videos in the Service material and we're going to use these stories to bring out 3 key points about Mission.

Let's watch the first video about volunteering with a homeless ministry in Dublin (or describe its contents if not being shown).

Ask the congregation to respond:

- What did you hear?
- What fears might hold us back from taking a small step?
- How might we overcome those fears?

The key point about Mission that is highlighted in this first story is that Mission is vital to the health of the church. Notice what Alison said: *'It has strengthened my relationship with God and I can see God at work in Dublin and in the lives of volunteers that serve on the team.'*

A church can have vibrant worship, passionate spirituality, dynamic small groups, and lots of other good characteristics, but if it doesn't have Mission as a core value and practice, then it will be missing something essential to its health.

Let's watch the second video about The Hub Belfast (or describe its contents if not being shown).

Ask the congregation to respond:

- What did you hear?
- Have you ever felt like giving up when trying to take small steps?
- What difference could prayer make in these situations?

The key point about Mission that is highlighted in this second story is that Mission is grounded in prayer. Feeling discouraged, they stopped and began to meet for "campus prayer" once a month. They gathered to worship, pray and seek God's direction for the ministry, the city and what they were being called to do. After 9 months of prayer they relaunched with a barbeque and it just completely took off!

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Too often, we launch into an evangelistic initiative without seeking God first. When we overlook prayer, we are building a house on sand, however good our intentions might be. We tend to overlook prayer when the activity looks fairly achievable, when we think we should be able to handle it. Perhaps we should be taking small steps towards something that simply will not work unless God shows up? That's more likely to bring us to our knees and seek God in prayer and humility.

Let's watch the final video about a Life Group in Movilla (or describe its contents if not being shown).

Ask the congregation to respond:

- What did you hear?
- What would it look like for you to listen to the people outside the walls of our church?
- What small steps could we take to do this?

The key point about Mission that is highlighted in this final story (and indeed is also shown from the other two) is that Mission is best done in community. God has designed the church to be made up of a community of different people with different gifts. This is deliberate, because God wants us to be dependent on each other, not 'lone rangers.' Notice what was said at one point: 'Not everyone in the group feels comfortable going out and that's ok but they pray for us as we go out'. Jesus sent out the first missionaries 'two by two'. Paul and the other apostles travelled mostly in teams. We need each other for fellowship, encouragement and support, especially when we engage in mission. We all have different gifts and they are all needed for effective mission. Even when we find ourselves out and about and on our own sharing our testimony or praying for someone, having a small group to report back to makes a huge difference.

Let's remind ourselves of those 3 points again:

- 1. Mission is vital to the health of the church.**
- 2. Mission is grounded in prayer.**
- 3. Mission is best done in community.**

Finish in prayer, mentioning those in the videos and encouraging us all to listen to God's call and respond with a season of prayer, asking God to reveal the small steps that he wants us to take.

RESPONSIVE PRAYERS

Responsive Prayers based on the 8 Commitments.
(Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**)

Father, we thank you for the challenge to 'Commit to Prayer'. We believe in prayer, we know that prayer makes a difference, we know we can pray to you anywhere at any time, and yet prayer can often be the hardest thing to get started at. And so we ask you to place a heartfelt desire in us to put prayer at the centre of our own lives and at the centre of our church.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father, we dare to believe that we will see hundreds of people bear witness that their faith came alive this year. We remember when our own faith came alive and the joy and blessing that was to us, and so we pray for a spiritual awakening in our homes, in our churches and in our communities.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father, we think of Jesus' Great Commission to 'go and make disciples of all nations'. We thank you that the early church responded to this challenge to 'think big, start small and go deep'. Guide us as we start and renew small groups within our churches that will help people to go deeper in their faith and to step out as followers of Jesus in everyday life.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father, we thank you for our regular Sunday worship gatherings. We thank you for the opportunity this gives us to be together, to share together and to worship together. We invite your Holy Spirit to be present, not only during worship, but during our preparation for worship, so that our time together will both honour you and inspire us to go out into our communities as your witnesses.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

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Father, we thank you for our children and young people. We thank you that so many people come to faith at an early age, and we are mindful of how few come to faith later in life. Help us to see the imperative and grasp the opportunities that we have to make you known to the younger generation. Give us courage and resolve to make the hard choices that are necessary for this to happen.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father, we thank you for the new communities of faith that have sprung up across Ireland in the last 30 years or so outside the main denominations. We long to see that same vision and energy within the Methodist Church, and so we pray that you will raise up leaders to start or renew new communities of faith across our land.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father, we thank you for the community in which you have placed us and the communities that many of us have the opportunity to connect with overseas. We thank you that you love each and every person and that everyone matters to you. Help us to go beyond our church walls and involve ourselves in organisations and activities so we will get to know and love people, just as you do.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**

Father we thank you for our church community, where we learn more about you and your Word. Help us to be equipped for service in your kingdom, learning from what you are doing across Ireland and around the world, so that we will be inspired to live out our own adventures in faith.

Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done.**
