

During the week cont.: Continue the story of the early church in Acts. Read the story below. *Which aspects of the Christian community in Acts does the Houses of Sharing reflect?*

"The Houses of Sharing" began in Seoul under the leadership of Rev'd Kyong Yong Song who preached "Jesus Christ is the eternal friend of the poor" It has now spread through the Anglican Church of Korea, making a network of houses established in places where they are most needed.

The ministry grew as Christians wanted to respond to the needs of those left behind by the economic miracle which transformed S. Korea in recent years. The initial response was to open homes to those in need. This has now expanded and those who live on the margins of society - the homeless, abused, addicted, poor, unemployed, vulnerable, sick and disabled are offered practical help and friendship. The different houses are managed by a team of paid and volunteer staff who work together with a strong sense of purpose, love and compassion. In Pusan, one expression of "Sharing" is the office room which doubles up as both an after school club in the afternoons and a worship space on Sundays. The Christians are providing a welcoming place to children from families who live in local factories where there is nowhere for them to play after the school day.

The Spirit of sharing modelled by such projects demonstrates something which seems to have been at the heart of the earliest church community - An openness to those in need and a desire to share the goodness of God with others in a variety of practical ways.

Creating Community cont: Sharing our Lives - Week beginning 24th April

Welcome: In a house there are many kinds of bricks: The foundation stone is not always obvious but is sturdy and reliable and an essential support to others. The firebrick is able to withstand considerable strain and protects others. The ventilator brick brings "a breath of fresh air". Wall bricks are team players, playing their part relying on some and supported by others. What kind of brick are you?

Worship: *"that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1Pet2.9) Share two causes for praising God in your own life. Sing a worship song or pray thanking him for all his goodness to us*

Word: Read 1 Peter 2. 2-10

- ◆ How does Peter describe the Christian community?
- ◆ What do you think he means by "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (v.5)?
- ◆ Peter says we are chosen to declare the praises of God (v.9) What does this mean and how can we do it ? - individually and together, in what we say and what we do.

Witness: Pray for friend/family to experience God's light (v.9) Plan your next cell social occasion with the people you have prayed for in mind.

Cell Members Notes for April: CREATING COMMUNITY

Special Dates for Cells

10th April- "4All" at Swainsthorpe Church at 4.30pm

12th April - Cell Leaders' Meeting 7.30pm

14th April - Make Poverty History Event, Chapelfield Methodist Church Norwich 7 for 7.30pm - Ring 01603 620051 for details/free tickets

17th April - Joint Cell Service - Evening Praise at Tasburgh Church at 6.30pm

8th May - "4All" at Swainsthorpe Church at 4.30pm

15th May - Pentecost Praise - 11am Tasburgh Village Hall

15-22 May = Christian Aid Week

16th May - Presentation about Mission Shaped Church to Norwich Ordained Local Ministry Course - 7.30-9.30pm - If you would be willing to come and talk about your experience of cell, please contact Sally

22nd May - New Wine Celebration Service in Norwich 7pm

Power to Forgive - Week beginning 3rd April

Aim: To receive God's forgiveness & to learn to forgive others.

Welcome - If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

Worship - In a time of silence, each ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind anything you need to confess - thinking especially of anything we have done that has been unloving eg. gossip, using people, lusting, not helping etc.

At the end use the response

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Read Psalm 103.1-12. Thank God that he forgives us.

Word

- ◆ What do you do when you've been hurt? Broken relationships need attention.
- ◆ **Read Matthew 6.14-15 and Colossians 3.12-14**
- ◆ From these verses, what is the key to mending broken relationships?
- ◆ Can anyone give an account of how they forgave someone and what happened as a result?
- ◆ Is there anyone in the cell who needs to ask forgiveness from another cell member, or who needs to forgive someone?
- ◆ Is anyone struggling to forgive someone right now?
- ◆ Pray for each other

Witness -

- ◆ Think of those family and friends whom you would love to come to faith. Do you have any difficulties in your relationships with them? Is there anyone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from? How can you put the relationship right? What is the next step? Pray for each other as we seek to mend relationships this week - and next week don't forget to ask how it went.

During the Week -

- ◆ *"In as far as it depends on you, seek to live at peace with everyone."* Romans 12.18 Do what is within your power to restore any broken relationships.
- ◆ Here are some more readings about God's promise to forgive us: Jeremiah 31.34, Matthew 26.28, Ephesians 1.7, 1 John 1.5-10
- ◆ Ask everyone to bring a sample of their favourite food from another culture for others to try next week. Think of some ideas as to how your group might use food in future mission activities
- ◆ Make sure you have agreed who is leading next week. They will need to Read Luke 14.15-24, listen to "Pit-Stop Story" on your CD and prepare to lead the discussion.

The Great Banquet Week beginning 10th April

Aim: To build fun and belonging by sharing food together. To recognise the importance of food in God's mission

Welcome - Share your food together and encourage each person to say something about what they have brought

Worship - a simple act of breaking bread together. Remember how Jesus often met with people over a meal, a symbol of acceptance and friendship. Read Luke 24.13-35. Play some quiet music and share a loaf of bread and cup of wine. Pray for each other

Word - Read Luke 14.15-24. What banquet, meal or party have you been invited to recently? What was your response to the invitation? What was the party like?

Consider

1. When we are sharing the gospel, there are times to "go out" to meet people where they are and times to "invite people in" to join us. Can you give examples of each.
2. What do you think of the excuses the people who refuse the invitation? What sort of excuses do we make to God?
3. "Who you eat with is one of the most important questions of your life" Not only does it reflect God's great banquet in heaven. It shows who you value on earth and who your true family is." Do you agree? In the end of the parable, it is "the poor and lame" who come to the banquet. Who does this equate to in our application of the parable? How can we invite these people?

Listen to Pit-Stop Story on the CD. What do you think of this example of Mission.

Witness -

- ◆ Think of ways you could do something practical both as individuals or together to live out this parable in a small way. eg. Hold a Alpha "taster" banquet, bake a cake for a neighbour, Pampered chef party for Christian Aid, Get in a take away and invite friends, ask Phil if you can join in a home communion held by the new visiting team at someone's home. NB. Keep things simple and easy - low risk - high grace!

- ◆ Begin to plan your next social event to which you could invite one or two people
- ◆ Close in prayer.

During the week/Notices -

Don't forget the praise service at Tasburgh at 7.30pm next Sunday Food and celebration go together. Here are some more readings about the importance of celebration in the Christian life Isaiah 25.6-9 (A picture of God putting all things right), Acts 2.43-47 (The early church)

Resurrection Community Week beginning 17th April

Aim: To be inspired by the example of the church community in Acts. To deepen relationships and prayer in the cell

Welcome - *"The believers had everything in common" Acts 2.44*

Tell the group about a time when someone shared something precious with you or you have shared something with someone else. What was hard about it? What was good about it?

Worship - *"The believers devoted themselves to prayer" Acts 2.42*

Pray for each other - Take time to share prayer needs in 2s or 3s. Include thanksgiving in the prayer.

Word - *"The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" Read Acts 2.42-47*

- ◆ What aspects of the early Christian community inspire you?
- ◆ To begin to follow the example of the believers in Acts, try to write down one thing which you could do or share with another member of the group - eg. a CD, a car, some babysitting (NB This does not have to be a new thing, it could be something you are already sharing) - Devise a way of allocating these resources between the group.
- ◆ What other aspects of this story from Acts could God be challenging you about as a cell group? How can you respond?

Witness - *"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" Acts 2.47*

Each pray for someone whom you long that they come to know the love of Jesus.

Pray about opportunities to share God's love with others in word and deed, including any ideas which came out of the earlier discussion, plans for your next social event.

During the week/ Notices: The reading for next week is quite complicated and needs the leader to have a look at it in advance. Ask Sally if you need some background notes.

Cell Members Notes for May: CREATING COMMUNITY

Special Dates for Cells

8th May - "4All" at Swainsthorpe Church at 4.30pm

15th May - Pentecost Praise - 11am Tasburgh Church

15-22 May = Christian Aid Week

16th May - Presentation about Mission Shaped Church to Norwich Ordained Local Ministry Course - 7.30-9.30pm - If you would be willing to come and talk about your experience of cell, please contact Sally

18th - Holiday Club Planning Meeting - 7.30pm at Newton Flotman Rectory

22nd May - New Wine Celebration Service in Norwich 7pm

8th June - Cell Leaders' Meeting

25th June - One Day Alpha Conference, The Well, Ashill, Norfolk.

Honesty - Week beginning 1st May

Aim: To place a high value upon honesty, openness and vulnerability in our community

Welcome What would stop you from being honest?

Worship. Each share one or two things which have made you grateful to God. Spend some time thanking God for these specific things that he has done for you.

Word - Have the following verses printed on slips of paper or look them up.

1 Thessalonians 3.12, Ephesians 4.15-16, Hebrews 10.24-25, James 5.16, Galatians 6.1-2

- What can we learn from these verses about how we should relate to one another?
- "Confess your sins to one another" (James 5.16) "Bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6.2). A high value placed on privacy and the "stiff upper lip" in our British culture, can tempt us to water down this sort of teaching. Were you brought up to share your difficulties or to suffer in silence? Has your Christian experience changed your view?
- Discuss what helps the development of honesty and trust.
- What rules of confidentiality do you have within your cell when people share their needs or experience?
- Are there things in our experiences, which have made us wary of trusting others?
- Name specific ways in which we need to work harder at being open with one another. Are there any ways in which you can be more accountable to each other in the cell in this?

Witness - Pray for your cell that it will become a place where everyone will feel able to be open with one another. Talk about the needs for prayer in the group and each pray for someone else's needs.

DURING THE WEEK -

- **Read about Jesus' Promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1.1-14, and John 7.37-39** What does the Holy Spirit mean to you? Do you have any questions that you want to ask next week.
- The leader of the witness section next week needs to be prepared to facilitate the group to lay hands on each other in prayer asking for a fresh filling with the Spirit. If this is new to you, why not ask someone to come and help for the week.

Holy Spirit - Source of Community - Week beginning 8th May

Aim: To be filled with the Holy Spirit. To experience how to minister in prayer to each other

Welcome "If I ruled the world..." Each person tells the group in 30 seconds what they'd do if they ruled the world.

Worship Play a song such as "Veni Sancte Spiritus" (Come Holy Spirit) and/or use the prayer "Come Holy Spirit" to focus your thoughts on inviting the Holy Spirit to come into the life of your cell in a fresh and deeper way. Each light a candle as a symbol of the refining and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Then have a time of silence to listen to God.

*Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
and lighten with celestial fire;
thou the anointing Spirit art
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart*

*Thy blessed unction from above
is comfort, life and fire of love;
enable with perpetual light
the dullness of our blinded sight.*

*Anoint and cheer our soiled face
with the abundance of thy grace
Keep far our foes, give peace at home;
where thou art guide no ill can come.*

*Teach us to know the Father, Son, ..
and Thee of both to be but one;
that through the ages all along,
this may be our endless song*

*Praise to Thine eternal merit,
Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Word - Read Acts 1.8 - Receiving Power and Being Witnesses

This verse is key to understanding the purpose of the early church

- 1) Their lives were to be empowered by the Spirit. They were not called to good works and human effort, but to Spirit-empowered living
- 2) They were called to be witnesses - to be witnesses, rather than to do - The presence of lives filled with God is witness enough in itself - expertise or specific skills are not needed.
- 3) They were called to sharing the good news locally (Jerusalem), nationally (Judea), and globally (Samaria, to the ends of the earth...).

Over to you: -

- 1) Would you describe your Christian experience more as "good works and human effort" or "Spirit-empowered living"? Why? Do you have any questions about the Holy Spirit?
- 2) What experience have you had of someone being a witness?
- 3) How do you participate in sharing God's good news a) locally b) globally

Witness -

- Read Ram's story. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned - but it is the Holy Spirit who has empowered Ram in many different ways. What signs can you see of the Holy Spirit's empowering work in Ram's life?
- In what ways would you like to be empowered by the Spirit?
- Pray for one another by laying on hands. Use this time to ask for empowering by the Holy Spirit. Share with each other any insights or words of encouragement that come from the prayer times in this meeting. (If you are short of time you might decide to do this next week)

DURING THE WEEK:

- Read the story of Pentecost Acts 2.1-21
- Don't forget the Benefice Service Pentecost Praise at Tasburgh Church 11am on 15th May. (No other church services on this day) We will also be learning about Christian Aid and the Make Poverty History Campaign

Ram's Story

Ram Prasad lives in Nepal. He particularly experienced God's power when his family rejected him. Today, Ram is a co-mission partner with CMS and is involved in church leadership and mission training. He writes:

"My family are Hindu. My parents used to perform all kinds of rituals and sacrifices to please the gods. I started to reject those things because it seemed that they were only trying to keep their tradition alive.

When I went to High School, I became an atheist and got involved in communism. I even began to get involved in violence to bring justice for the poor. My life was in danger because of the things I was involved with and I felt afraid for the future. I began to question my beliefs and to look for a real god. I wondered why Hindus sacrificed animals and asked the question, "Can the blood of an animal cleanse the sins of men?"

I moved to Katmandu to study. At college, my friend told me about Jesus. He explained that Jesus Christ is the real god who gave his life to cleanse the sins of all human beings. This message caught my attention and in 1986 I accepted Jesus as my saviour. I was so pleased that I would never need to perform any rituals or sacrifice animals.

Unfortunately, my family were not so pleased. I was insulted and rejected. They told me I had sold my father's religion and accepted white man's religion. They called me untouchable. A few years after my conversion, my Father died and I went home. My relatives were trying to force me to observe the Hindu rituals that take place at the time of death. I told them that I was not going to do such meaningless rituals that I did not believe. They threatened to hand me over to the police. They said I would not receive my father's inheritance. All the village came to watch me being mocked and insulted. I cried loudly to God, asking him to help me. Eventually, my mother told me to leave the village or I would be badly persecuted.

In 1989, I was very sick and had a complicated operation on my lung. I was unconscious for almost 24 hours. Praise God my operation was successful. After the operation, the doctor told me that I would not be able to have children. I believed in God that he would answer my prayer. By faith, I got married and God has given us two beautiful children.

"My God is living and really listens to prayer and answers us."

We believe in Life Before Death - Week beginning 15th May

Aim: The significance of the gift of the Holy Spirit is not mainly about personal blessing but it is about service for Christ in the world.

Welcome - Describe one of the happiest days of your life

Worship - Light candles for each person in your group and listen quietly as Acts 2.1-4 is read. In your imagination, place yourself within the scene. How do you react - are you excited, pleased, scared, overcome?

Share your reactions within the group. Then pray thanking God for his gift of the Holy Spirit and asking Him to make us more open to his good gifts.

Word - Read Acts 2.5-13. What started as a private experience, ends up as a public event. Who are the different groups of people involved and how are they affected?

Read Acts 2.14-41.

- Have you any questions about this passage?
- Choose a favourite verse or something that strikes you and share it with the group.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was the major turning point for the group of Jesus disciples. It is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit in Acts 1.8 which we studied last week. From this time they became a church community - empowered by God's Spirit rather than doing it all themselves. They were able to be witnesses naturally and to spread the good news of God's love locally and globally. (You may wish to recap on the three points in the box under Word last week.)

- Share any times when you have been aware of God's Holy Spirit helping you this week
- Where do you/your cell/your church actively need the Holy Spirit's power at the moment?
- What true stories do you know of God's Holy Spirit being active round the world - You may wish to think of some of the stories from Christian Aid.
- What world situations can you see that have a desperate need for the power of the Holy Spirit to be active?

Witness -

- If you didn't do so last week, pray for one another by laying on hands. Use this time to ask for empowering by the Holy Spirit. Share with each other any insights or words of encouragement that come from the prayer times in this meeting. (Do not miss this out!)
- Pray for the people and situations you have talked about which need the Holy Spirit to be actively at work

DURING THE WEEK -

- **Read John 13.35.** Jesus says that our especially loving community will enable others to recognise Jesus. If God is asking us to be marked by our love for one another, how can we achieve this in the cell?
- 18th - Holiday Club Planning Meeting - 7.30pm at Newton Flotman Rectory
- 22nd May - New Wine Celebration Service in Norwich 7pm

Sacrificial Love - Week Beginning 22nd May

Aim: To understand that cells are communities where there is sacrificial love within open and honest relationships.

Welcome Name one thing that makes you feel loved. Name one thing that makes you feel unloved

Worship - Remember the things God has done which show that He loves you - share these with the group. Either thank him for these things or worship him by singing or playing a chorus with the theme of thanking God for his love for us.

Witness - Read John 13.35. Jesus says that our especially loving community will enable others to recognise Jesus. If God is asking us to be marked by our love for one another, how can we achieve this in the cell?

Word - Read 1 John 3.16-24

- Make a list of the things these verses tell us to do.
- As a group, list instances when you can remember these things being done in a cell/congregation of which you were a member.
- What does it mean to "lay down our lives for our brothers"?
- Spend some time in silence, seeing if "our hearts condemn us" (verses 20)?
- As a group, or in pairs confess aloud the things that come to your mind, ask God for forgiveness if necessary and be accountable to each other to change. Pray for each other asking God to help you to do these things.

DURING THE WEEK -

- Is there anything you can do to show "sacrificial love" this week?
- Read Psalm 61 and Luke 4.14-30
- You will need the following objects next week - oil, flowers, newspaper, bandage, a key, some simple jigsaw puzzles.
- The leader of the worship session next week, will need to prepare carefully. Make sure you read the sheet early in the week and ask Sally if you have any questions.

Jesus' Mission Statement - Week beginning 29th May

Aim: To build a sense of teamwork and identity. To learn from Jesus' own mission statement.

Welcome - Discovering the Big Picture - In advance of the meeting, 3 simple jigsaw puzzles have been mixed up and the pieces divided into envelopes for each person in the group. Work together to make the pictures as quickly as possible.

Worship: Place some symbols on the table which connect with today's readings - oil, flowers, newspaper, bandage, a key. Read Psalm 61 and use the symbols to meditate on the character and work of God. Then write some group psalms in the same way you would play a game of consequences. Each have a piece of paper write one sentence on it and then fold the paper over so the next person can't see and pass the paper on. They write their sentence beneath yours. The sentences should be on the following themes

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1. PRAISE | 2. CONFESSION. | 3. WORSHIP. |
| 4. REQUEST. | 5. STATEMENT OF TRUST | 6. PRAISE |

Word - Read Jesus' announcement of his Mission Statement - Luke 4.14-21.

What do you think of verses 18 and 19 as Jesus' own mission statement/ job description? Did he achieve this? How?

Has Jesus done any of the things he lists here in the lives of people in your cell? Listen to "*Prison Report*" on your CD.

What from Luke 4.18-19, would you include in a mission statement for your cell? How does this statement compare with the values of cells:

All involved
Becoming disciples
Creating community
Doing Evangelism
Encountering God

Is there anything else you would add?

Witness -

- Pray for each other and your own needs. Especially be accountable to each other for anything you identified last week in your life that needed to change and keep praying for God's help for each other.
- Then, in twos or threes, pray and talk about the future of the cell and what you God has got planned for the cell. Is there something you would like to do over the next few weeks as a mission project (eg. preparation for Alpha, getting involved in the Make Poverty History Campaign) Write down any thoughts, ideas or insights that come as a result of your prayers. Bring them to next week's meeting.

DURING THE WEEK

- Read Mark 4.26-29. Think of people or events that God has used to sow seeds into your life.
- Ask 2 or 3 group members to come next week prepared to tell the group their own story of becoming a Christian.
- Continue to pray about your cell and its "mission". Write down any thoughts, ideas or insights that come as a result of your prayers. Bring them to next week's meeting.
- If you haven't already done so, consider if you want to go to the one day Alpha Conference, The Well, Ashill, Norfolk 9.30am-8pm on Saturday 25th June. Your cell leader has application forms.