

Resources

Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church)*, 1965.

Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi (on Evangelisation)*, 1975.

CASE - Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation
(An agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales)
www.caseresources.org

CaFE – Catholic Faith Exploration
(DVD and Video resources for parishes, schools, colleges and prisons)
www.faitchafe.org

Faithworks (A movement which aims to support Christians as they engage in projects in their local communities)
www.faitchworks.info

PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust) www.prisonadvice.org.uk

Street Pastors www.streetpastors.co.uk

Philip Knights, *Changing Evangelisation: themes and stories from Catholics in local mission*, CTBI, 2008.

Presence: a workbook to help promote and sustain an effective Christian presence in villages, Methodist Publishing, 2004.

Seeds in Holy Ground: a workbook for rural churches, ACORA Publishing, 2005.



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TOGETHER IN CHRIST

5 Mission Together



It is obvious that the lack of unity among Christians contradicts the truth which Christians have the mission to spread and, consequently, it gravely damages their witness.

Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint, n. 98

The Church has always stressed the centrality of mission and evangelisation. In a world which is often broken and divided, and in which individuals continue their search for meaning, often outside any form of organised religion, the task of proclaiming the Good News is crucial. Sometimes people look at Christians and dismiss the Gospel message because they see our divisions. Sharing the Good News is often strengthened where there is an ecumenical dimension to it. Mission and unity are inextricably linked. It is together that our witness is more effective because witnessing together often brings us into closer unity.

The Church is missionary by her very nature.

Vatican II, Ad Gentes (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church), n. 2

Ask yourselves

What do we do already?

It can be useful to discover exactly what is going on in the various Christian communities in the area that reaches out beyond church boundaries. It is likely that we will discover that there are various views about how different denominations see mission. Discovering this can help us see what is possible. It will also help us to build on the strengths of each other's activities. As well as co-operating where possible with the activities of other churches, we need to ask if there is anything appropriate in our area which we can do together.

What are the real needs?

A crucial question to ask before planning any ecumenical mission activity is: what are the real needs of the people in the community? It is all too easy to think we know how we can serve others and so share the Good News with them. Sometimes we rush into activities without taking the trouble to discern what is really needed. An ecumenical group could be set up to look at both what is already happening and what potential there is for future activity. Such a group needs to be realistic about what is possible with the resources at its disposal.

What resources do we have that will help us?

Every Christian community has people with gifts that can be shared. Most communities also have resources, such as church buildings. How can these help us in our task to proclaim the Good News? Are there ways in which the wider community can use our resources and thus come into contact with Christians?

How about

Joint pastoral care groups

These could be based area by area within the community and offer both practical support and a listening ear for a range of different needs, for example, visiting the sick or offering transport.

Making use of the local media

Most local radio stations and newspapers are happy to receive news from local Christian communities. This is an effective way of spreading the Gospel. Giving the Christian Gospel a high profile in a positive way is something that could be done ecumenically. The local Churches Together might have a named person who would be responsible for contact with local press, radio and television.

Setting up a local Churches Together website

Using the internet is the way an increasing number of people find the information they need. Does the local Churches Together group have a website? If it does, how attractive is it? If it doesn't, could this be a possibility?

Setting up a drama group

Lots of local ecumenical gatherings organise walks of witness on Good Friday or at other times of the year. How about extending this by dramatising the Passion story around different parts of the town, village or area? The production could involve people on the fringes of the Church as well as telling the story to a wider audience.

Ecumenical chaplaincies

Some schools, hospitals and prisons have ecumenical chaplaincy teams. The local Churches Together group can support the work they do, often amongst those who have little or no belief of any kind. Ask someone to liaise with them to see if there is any way in which the wider Christian community can get involved. Don't forget that in some areas of the country ecumenical industrial missions offer a Christian presence not only in manufacturing, but in retail and service industries as well. Often these rely on lay people from the different churches as both chaplains and volunteers.

Street pastors

Increasingly local Churches Together groups are organising street pastors. These are Christians who make contact with people on the streets, often young people involved in the nightclub scene. They operate in different ways in different circumstances. (See resources).

Ecumenical Missions

Ecumenical week-long parish-style missions create many opportunities but they need to be well planned and resourced. Since different Christian communities see mission in different ways, it is important to come to a common view of what is being done. Those who wish to have further information as result of the mission need to be given reliable contacts within the local Christian communities. The process of the mission should include a review and follow up.