

PART FIVE:

UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITY



PURPOSE OF PART FIVE

- To learn from Nehemiah's pain over the broken walls of Jerusalem, which was a catalyst for action.
- To learn from Nehemiah's connection to, and respect for authority, and how this was the means of releasing crucial resources for the rebuilding of the wall.
- To learn from Nehemiah's inspection of the walls, which highlights the importance of taking time to assess the needs in a community, rather than making assumptions.
- To learn from Nehemiah's example in the way he dealt with opposition to the rebuilding of the walls.



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Market place

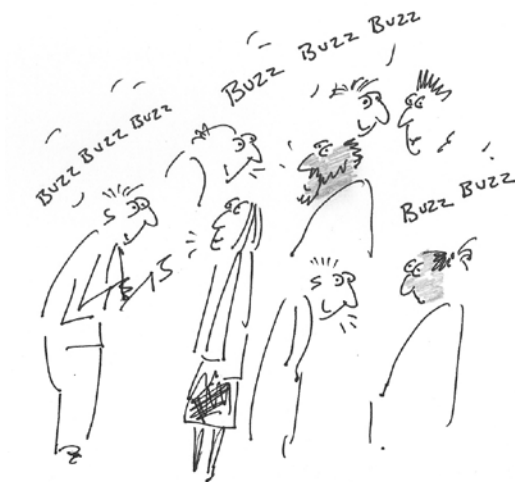
This is a good way of getting people talking about their community.

1. Start by asking your group to walk across the room and talk to someone they have not spoken to yet. Give them the first question to discuss.
2. After a few minutes, take some feedback, and then ask them to move on to talk to someone else. Give them the second question to discuss. After a few minutes ask for some feedback.
3. Repeat this for the third question.

Ask the questions:

- What aspect of community life do you have a passion for?
- Who are the main people of influence in your community?
How easy would it be to talk to them about community improvement?
- What fears do you have about working alongside your community?

This activity creates a good buzz in the room and allows everyone to contribute. It also introduces the group to the themes in the Nehemiah readings.



BIBLICAL REFLECTION

Nehemiah and the walls of Jerusalem

These Bible studies are structured slightly differently from the others in 'Stories on the Street'. There is much to learn from Nehemiah's example in the first five chapters of his book, as he feels the pain for the broken walls of Jerusalem. This pain gives him the heart and energy to work towards rebuilding them, despite facing opposition on the way. So this section includes five short Bible studies from Nehemiah. If you don't have time to do them all, choose the passages that you feel are the most relevant to your church and community.

To introduce your group to the story of Nehemiah, play the film by going to the following link:

<https://youtu.be/KFhH9scCJZY>

Alternatively, ask someone to read or perform the monologue on the following pages.



After the film or the drama, ask your group:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings, and then ask for feedback.

Nehemiah

Listen to that sound! The trumpets sing their song of triumph and shouts of joy fill the air! Jerusalem, my Jerusalem is restored and whole, surrounded by strong thick walls, with her 12 gates, bolted against the enemy. 52 days was all it took! It seems incredible - but nothing is impossible for God, our mighty God and his servant Nehemiah.

It seemed as though God had deserted us because of the sins of the past. The Babylonian army had destroyed the walls many years before and burned down the gates. Jerusalem lay in ruins. The dwelling place of God was a mass of rubble. I'm a builder and carpenter by trade, but this was too big a job. It would take an army of builders to put this right. No wonder our enemies mocked and intimidated us. In recent years the temple was restored and we were provided with materials to build our houses, but still the crumbled walls reminded us of our vulnerability – a target for those who would harm us. Our pride lay in the ashes of the burnt out gates.

So we just existed – in fear of the enemies who surrounded us, and arguing amongst ourselves. Helpless feelings soon turned into indifference in my family, and in others in our community. Laziness and drunkenness was the order of the day. My family was as broken as the community around us – as broken as those walls. My sons acted as if they had nothing to live for, and my wife, Sarah, well, she was just not interested.

And then came Nehemiah. One morning, I was awoken by a banging on the door. My neighbour, Reuben was there.

"Hanun, you must come!" he said, "We have a new governor! We must go and hear him. Bring your sons – come!"

I roused the family. It wasn't easy, but my three sons followed me out of the house. My wife and daughter were not convinced, and they stayed inside.

As we neared the market square there was an air of excitement building. People were gathering in one spot, all focused on one man. There he was, our new governor. His name was Nehemiah, and the way he spoke was compelling – there was real passion there. I could feel my spirits lifting just listening to his voice. He was appealing to us.

"Let us build these walls again!" he said.

It seemed ridiculous, but as he spoke it became less so. Sentence by sentence, he dispelled any fears or doubts in the minds of his listeners. It was obvious that the Lord was with him. In God's strength he had won the favour of the King Artaxerxes. That would not have been easy. The king had given him everything he wanted, an army surrounded

him to guarantee safe passage, and he had been given all the timber he needed from the King's forest. Confidence was growing inside me all the time. What he had achieved already was impressive, but my confidence in him was mainly because of this: Nehemiah loved Jerusalem – that was clear. This was no outsider. His heart was here, his forefathers were buried here. This was Nehemiah's home. He was not going to take no for an answer. We were going to build those walls!

I was so glad my sons were with me. I looked at their faces. They were lit up with expressions I had not seen for so long. Apathy had been replaced by intent. However great the task, we could do it. Nehemiah had already inspected the walls, and he knew what needed doing. He told us we could stay near our homes, but everyone needed to be involved. We live near the Valley Gate to the south west of the city, so that's where we started to build. Sarah and my daughter, Rebekah, were sceptical. I wish they had been there to hear Nehemiah speak. But I think they were glad to get us out of the house, so there was no objection to this new burst of energy. Reuben and I set to work on the Valley Gate, with the timber Nehemiah had provided, and my sons and our other neighbours began the repairs to the surrounding walls.

As the work started, I could feel that the mood of our community was lifting. I thought I was dreaming as I looked around at the people working away. Priests were there – in fact they were some of the first to get started. It was good to see them getting out of their houses and getting their hands dirty with the rest of us. As I looked along the walls, I saw people of all professions – not just builders and carpenters, but jewellers and perfume makers, merchants, goldsmiths and farmers. And so many women too, not just cooking for us but also there on the wall, helping to mix the mortar and move the blocks. I longed for Sarah to join us, and by day three, there she was, armed with fresh bread from the oven. By day four, Rebekah had joined her.

It was happening so fast and some didn't like it. One of the worst of our enemies was Sanballat the Horonite. He hated the Jews. He worshipped some kind of Moon God. Then there was Tobiah the Ammonite, and Gesham the Arab. They called their supporters around them and did everything they could to stop the work.

"You're rebelling against the King, and we're going to report you!" said Sanballat. "You can't rebuild this wall!"

Then Tobiah said, "Are you going to bring these dead stones back to life? Why, if a fox ran over them they would fall down!"

Maybe a week ago, that would have worked; we would have crawled back to our homes in disgrace. But there was something bigger than them at work now. The Lord was on our side, and Nehemiah had the proof in writing that this was the will of the King Artaxerxes. There was no weight behind their threats and insults.

Still Nehemiah knew that the opposition was not going to go away, so he gave the order that some would work and others would keep guard, and those who worked would have a trowel or tool in one hand and a spear or sword in the other. There would be trumpeters on guard who would sound their trumpets at the first sight of danger. So the work went on, and the bonds of friendship deepened once more as we all worked together towards our common vision. As for our enemies, they could only stand and watch.

And Nehemiah – did he stand back and watch? No he worked alongside the rest of us. He drew his own water, and when special food was brought to him, as befitting a governor of Judea, he shared it with his people.

So now the last brick is in place, and we have done what Nehemiah said we could do. We have rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem! He has given us our pride back and showed us how to live – for each other and for our city. And he has shown us once again that our God is the one true God.

There are smiles in our house once again. A dark cloud has lifted. My sons are eager to learn their trade from me again, and the woman I married looks across the table at me with love in her eyes. There is a buzz in the city! People smile and greet each other. There is a sense of fulfilment in the air. We have rebuilt our walls – and now we are rebuilding our lives – together, giving thanks to our merciful God who can do all things!



Nehemiah weeps for the walls of Jerusalem

Read Nehemiah 1: 1-11

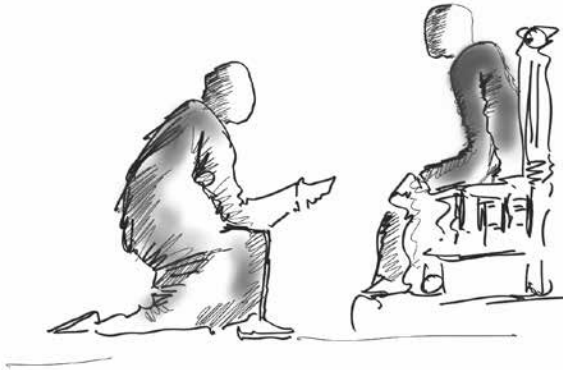


Questions

- What can we learn from the way that Nehemiah received and responded to the news of the broken walls of Jerusalem?
- What aspects of our community life make us sad and cause us concern?

Nehemiah goes to the King

Read Nehemiah 2: 1-10

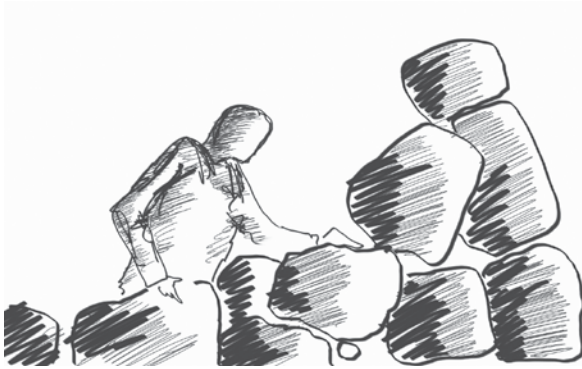


Questions

- What can we learn from the way Nehemiah approached the king to access vital resources for rebuilding the walls?
- What resources do we have in our community that can be used to improve the lives of the most vulnerable?
- How would we go about accessing these resources?

Nehemiah inspects the walls

Read Nehemiah 2: 11-18



Questions

- What can we learn from the way Nehemiah went about inspecting the walls of Jerusalem?
- What guiding principles can we draw from the story of Nehemiah to help us think about how we identify needs in our own community?

Nehemiah deals with opposition

Read Nehemiah 4: 1-23

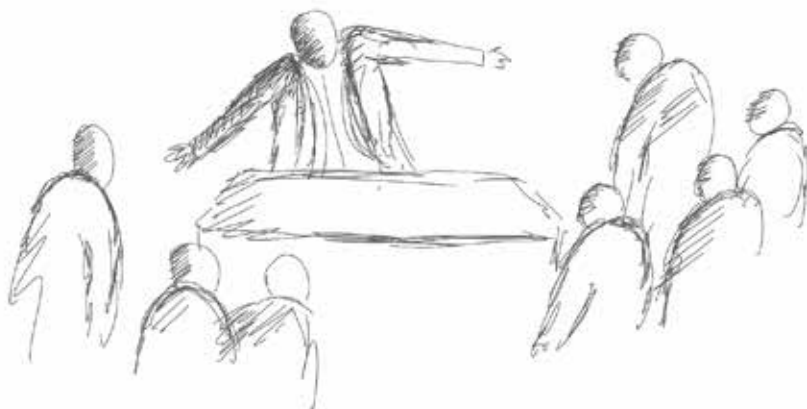


Questions

- What was the nature of the opposition Nehemiah had to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem?
- How did he deal with this opposition?
- What opposition may you come up against doing 'Stories on the Street' with your communities? How might you deal with this?

Nehemiah deals with exploitation

Read Nehemiah 5: 1-19



Questions

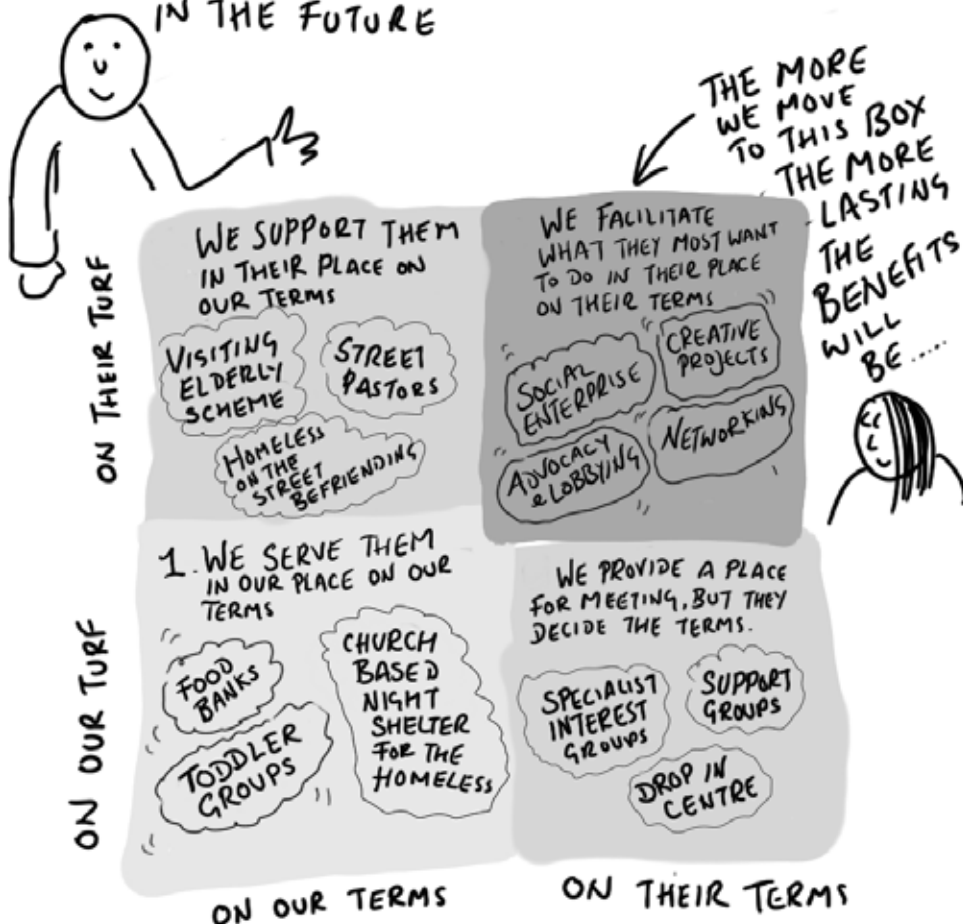
- What was the nature of the exploitation, and how was it addressed?
- What injustices exist in our community today, and what can we learn from Nehemiah's experience in how we can address them?

Question on all five studies

- What qualities did Nehemiah have that enabled him to achieve so much?

QUICK GUIDE TO WORKING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

THIS IS A GUIDE TO HELP US THINK ABOUT HOW WE CURRENTLY WORK IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND HOW WE MIGHT WANT TO WORK DIFFERENTLY IN THE FUTURE



NEXT STEPS

Community needs mapping

In part two, you celebrated the gifts, skills and experiences you have as a church, and also drew a community map and marked on it all the resources you have as a church and community. You also marked on the map some needs and issues that may need addressing.

Now it is time to share your map with members of your community. One way of sharing these maps is to take them to any clubs or groups that your church members are part of. Allow friends and community members to add their own thoughts about needs and issues and mark them on the map.

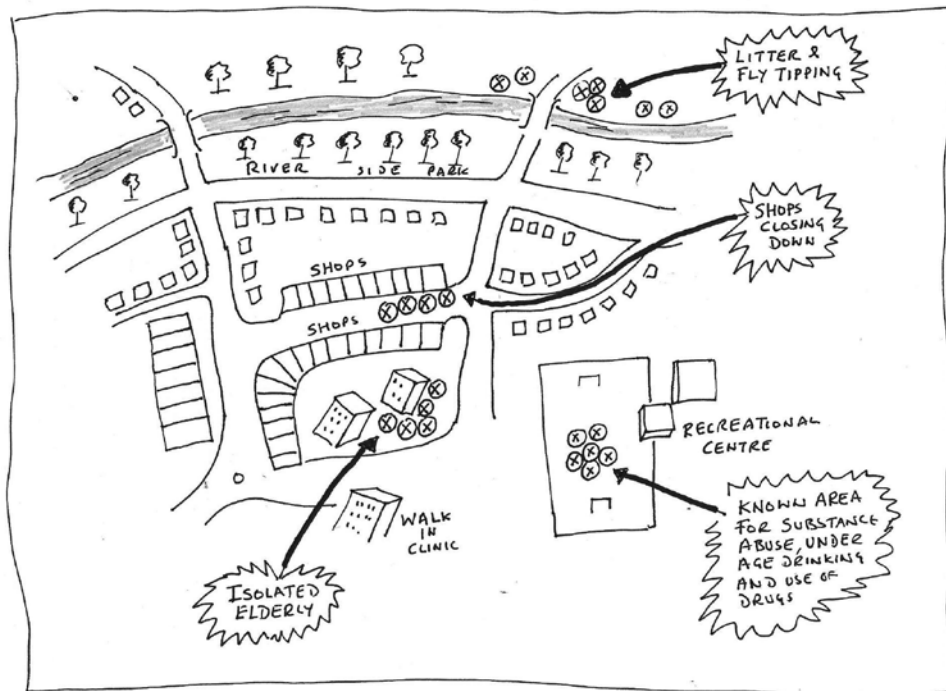
With the community, discuss and add any additional needs and issues that exist in the community, such as housing problems, crime, isolated elderly, vandalism, etc.

Give each person five coloured sticky labels. They can then choose how many labels they would put on a specific issue, according to how important they feel the issue is.

Count up the sticky labels, and see which are the top 3 - 5 priorities (depending on how many you have), and list them on a flipchart or a large piece of paper.



Have a discussion about the main issues in the community, and in what ways the church and community could be involved in helping to address them together.



The problem tree

The problem tree is a useful tool for helping us to understand a problem or issue more fully, by identifying the causes and effects of the problem. It is a good idea to do a problem tree for each of the main issues you have identified on your community maps. In doing this, we not only raise awareness of the nature of the problem, but we can also find some clues to how we might address it.

How to construct a problem tree

Agree on a main problem and write it on the tree trunk. First, identify the effects of the main problem, and write those on the leaves and branches of the tree. You could use cards or post-it notes.

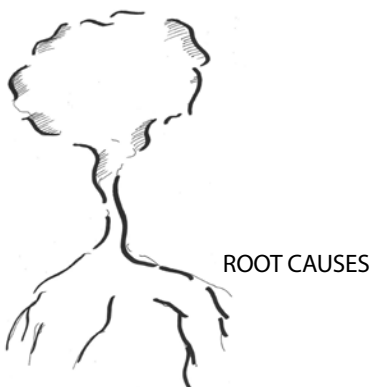
Then identify the causes of the problem, and write those on the roots of the tree – again using cards or post-it notes. By thinking of a cause, and then asking the question, "But why?" to each response, you can find the deepest root cause of a particular problem. When thinking of symptoms, ask the question, "Then what?" to each response, which will show you where a symptom could lead in a worst case scenario.



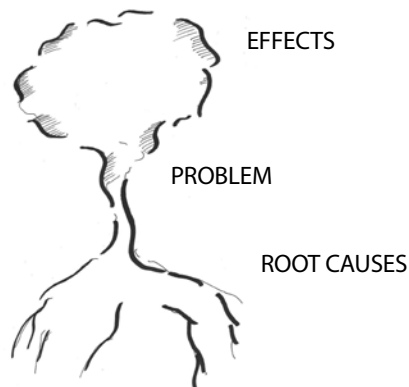
1. Define the problem



2. Describe the effects

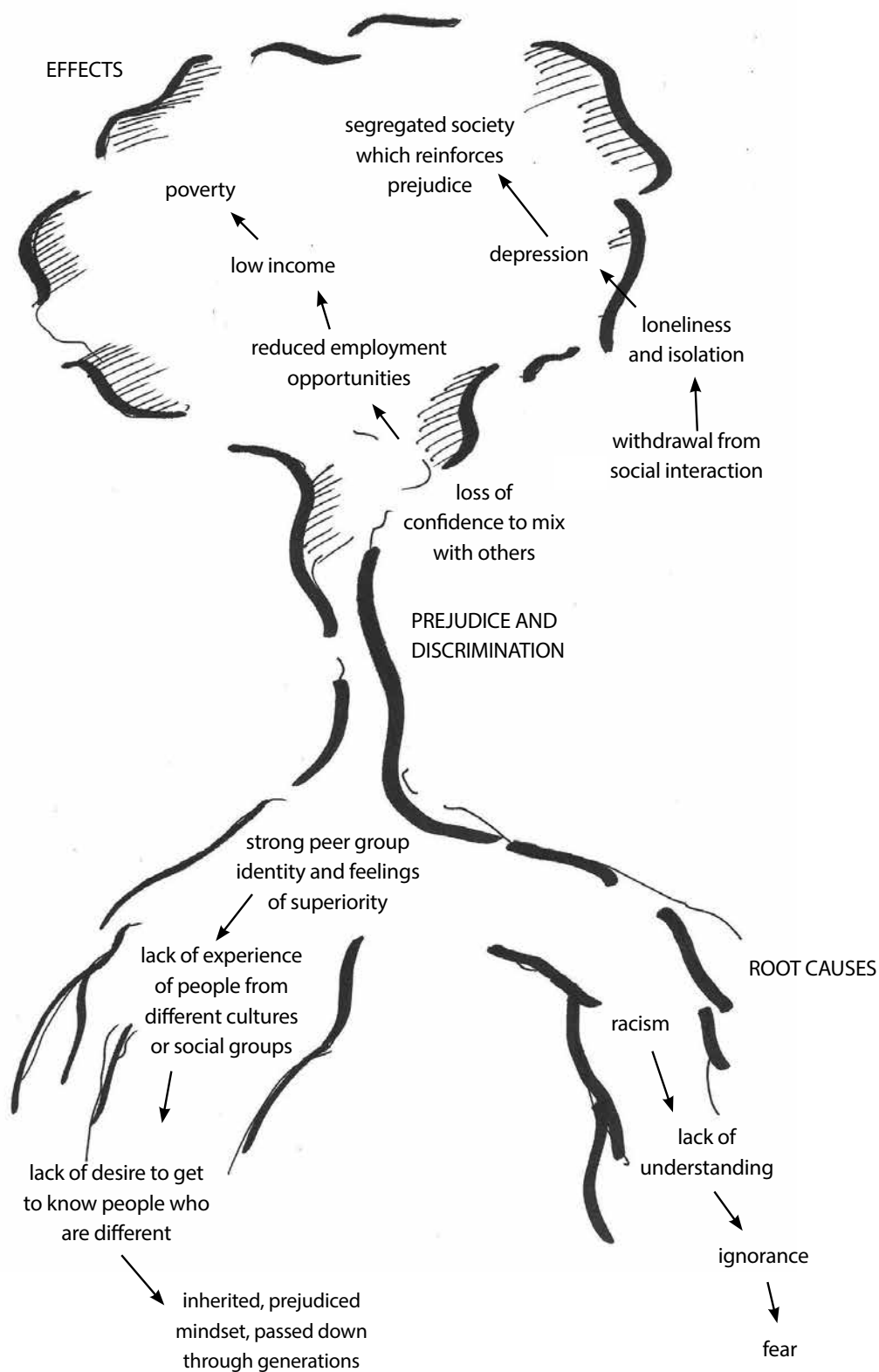


3. Describe the root causes



4. The completed problem tree

Worked example of a problem tree



How to use the problem tree

The problem tree is good for seeing whether the church and community should be addressing an effect of the problem or a root cause. In general, addressing an effect is much easier, but is often only a short term solution. Addressing a root cause is often more challenging, but may bring about lasting change.

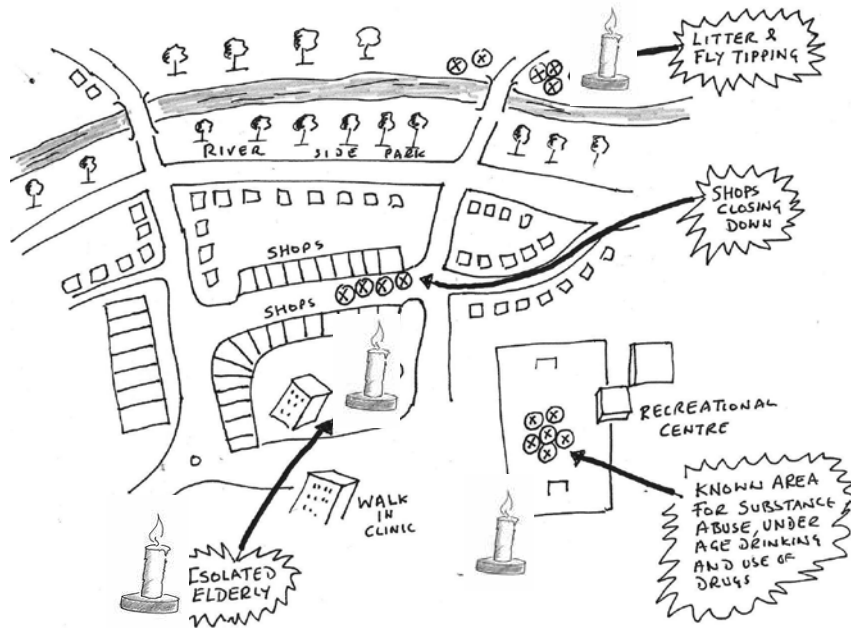
Using the example on the previous page, a church might want to consider a befriending programme for visiting isolated and lonely asylum seekers or migrant workers, or people who have just come out of prison. This would be addressing the effects of prejudice and discrimination.



Alternatively the church might feel it is better equipped to address a root cause, in particular, the lack of awareness and understanding of different cultures and traditions. It might decide to educate church members on the cultural traditions and histories of different ethnic groups in their area, and look to jointly host cultural events with the ethnic groups. In this way different cultures can be shared, in order for people to better understand each other.

Worship response

Candles on the map



As a worship response, you could place a candle on the areas of need on your community map, and pray over them. You could use the following prayer to close the session.

Lord,

We thank you for our church and community. Bless the work of the church that it may give a sense of identity where there is none, create a place of belonging where people know they are welcomed, remembered by name, and valued as individuals, so that the sense of community that binds us together is increased.

We pray for those in authority in our community, for councillors and council employees. Bless their work and may their dealings with the public be marked by helpfulness, courtesy and tact. May the most vulnerable members of the community be supported and encouraged in their quest for a full and useful life.

We ask this in Jesus' name, who taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves,

Amen.

“Let us start
rebuilding...”

The God of heaven
will give us success”

Nehemiah 2:18 & 20



PART SIX: STEPPING OUT IN FAITH



PURPOSE OF PART SIX

- To explore the benefits of stepping out in faith, and to see failure as a means of growth.
- To gain insights from Peter's walk of faith as he stepped out of the boat to walk on the water to Jesus.
- To use the hot air balloon to plan a project that will benefit the church and community.
- To look at the qualities of a good facilitator by studying verses from Isaiah 58, and be encouraged by the promises contained in these verses for those who spend themselves for the poor.



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Thinking about taking a risk

Ask your group to talk in pairs, and answer the questions below.

- What is the most courageous thing you have done this year?
Did it involve taking a risk?
- What motivated you to take the risk?
- What did it cost you? What did you gain from it?

If you can't think of anything, or are reluctant to share, you could answer the following questions instead:

- Think of someone you know, or someone in the news, who has done something courageous.
- What did it cost them?
- What did they gain?

Once everyone has fed back, as a group try to draw some conclusions about the nature of risk and its significance for us.

Many of us would like a comfortable life, and risk avoidance is natural. Indeed, God loves you in your boat, but what could be out there for you if you trusted him more?



BIBLICAL REFLECTION

Peter walks on water

Matthew 14: 22-33



Read the passage and then play the film of Peter walking on the water,
Use the following link:

<https://youtu.be/TmUs2ZmcNpc>

Alternatively, ask someone to perform or read the monologue on the
following pages.

After the film or monologue, ask the group the questions:

- What did you see?
- What did you hear?
- How do you feel?

Give them a few minutes to reflect on their feelings, and then ask for
some feedback.

Peter walks on water

As we pushed the boat down to the water's edge my head was racing, trying to take in what had just happened. First we get the news that John the Baptist is dead – murdered by Herod. Then on top of that there are crowds of people, all wanting Jesus, and somehow he finds the energy to heal them and teach them and feed them all with some bread and fish provided by a small boy. I wanted so much to share it all with Jesus, but he needed to be alone – to pray – to grieve. So he sent us off over the lake ahead of him.

It was a lovely evening when we set off - warm balmy breezes – perfect weather really. It was a noisy boat too. So much to talk about. We were talking so much that at first we didn't notice the clouds were gathering. Darker and darker it became. And then that first rumble from the sky. The talking stopped.

I've been a fisherman all my working life. I can normally predict the weather, but I didn't see this one coming. The wind seemed to come from nowhere. Then all of a sudden the waves were breaking over the front of the boat. We tried to bail out, but the boat was becoming swamped.

The other side of the lake seemed so far away. Just trying to control the boat was taking all our energy. Time passed. It was now the early hours of the morning and we just weren't getting anywhere.

And then, there he was - the Lord! I couldn't believe it. I thought it must have been a ghost, but no, it was Jesus - walking on the water. When I saw him, nothing seemed to matter – the storm, the fact that I couldn't swim - nothing. It was Jesus and I just wanted to be with him. So I said, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you."

"Come," he said.

The others muttered, "Don't be stupid!" I think some of them still thought he was a ghost.

It felt really strange at first. It was water after all, and yet I just thought, 'Jesus has said 'come' so it must be ok.' And I could see him in front of me – waiting. So I just took one step, then two, then three – and I realised my feet weren't going under the water. The water felt somehow firm. It was so strange, but exciting too!

Half way there now, and I was still feeling good. I wished Jesus was closer, but hey, I was doing it - I was walking on water. The others were still telling me to come back. I could hear my brother Andrew, and his words stung me a bit. But he's normally right about me – I

do bite off more than I can chew. Why wasn't Jesus getting any closer? I took my eyes off him for just a second and looked around me.

Look at those waves! Who do I think I am? I'm not Jesus – I'm a fisherman, and sensible fishermen go back to shore when the weather gets like this. Jesus still wasn't getting any nearer – in fact he seemed to be getting further away. The wind was so strong and it seemed to be pushing me back. I'm not going to make it – I'm not!!

I felt my feet go under. Oh no! So far to Jesus. So far to the boat. Should I turn back? What should I do? I could feel the water over my ankles now, then my knees. The cries of the others were getting louder. I was drowning! There was nothing I could do.

"Lord, save me!" I cried. "Save me!!"

I threw my hands up in desperation and suddenly, there it was, his hand on mine – strong, incredibly strong. It sent a pulse of power through my whole body, and I was up out of the water again. Jesus supported me back to the boat. The storm still raged but it didn't matter. He was with me now.

As we got to the boat, he asked me why I had doubted. I was too tired to think about that – and feeling too much of a failure. Maybe later. Of course, as soon as we were back in the boat, the waves died down. Part of me wondered why he couldn't have done that a bit sooner.

We did talk about it later.

"You took your eyes off me," he said. "Never do that. I'm bigger than anything else you have to deal with."

Of course he's right. I've learned that lesson the hard way. But I think I can safely say I'll never let him down again.



Questions

There are several questions below. Choose the ones that you feel are the most appropriate.

Questions on the passage

- Why do you think Peter wanted to get out of the boat?
- Why was Peter initially successful?
- Why did he start to sink?
- How did Jesus respond to Peter's fear?
- Compare Peter's experience to the other disciples.
- What do you think the other disciples felt when Peter got back in the boat?
- What do you notice about Jesus' relationship with Peter, from this story?
- What do we learn about risk and failure?



Questions for us as individuals

- What is your experience of being called by God, whether long term, or a specific moment in time?
- Does / did your calling involve a risk? If so, what was it?
- What is one risk you could take to help your faith grow?
- When have you most vividly experienced God at work through you (walking on water)? Describe what it was like.
- Where might fear of failure be holding you back today?
- Have you experienced God lifting you after a failure? How did he do that?
- In the middle of a crisis, what helps you to keep focused on God?

Church and community response questions

- What issues could lead your church to being involved with the community?
- What fears do you have about stepping out into your community?
- What are the consequences of not stepping out into the community for you, your church and your community?
- Stepping out and failing can challenge our faith. As a church, how will you find God in this situation?



"There can be no vulnerability without risk. There can be no community without vulnerability. There can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community."

M. Scott Peck

NEXT STEPS

Planning for action

In this section we prepare to take some action and plan an initiative or a small project. Before the planning stage, it is important to revisit some pieces of work you have already done, which are:

1. Your community maps
2. Your problem trees
3. Your needs and resources tables
4. Any other information you have gathered



The priority table

This table is to help a group look at their priorities, and assess what capacity they have for addressing them with their own resources. Have a look at this worked example, and then do a priority table for the issues you have identified in your community.

Priority issue	Brief description of the issue	What is our capacity to address the issue	What sorts of things could we do
Isolated elderly	There is a growing number of elderly who no longer have family nearby; they rarely have visitors and find it difficult to access basic services.	We have 10 volunteers who are available to provide support. All have cars. We have the following skills: pastoral, nursing, cooking, bingo caller, gardeners, computer trainer. There is a hall in the community with a warm lounge, kitchen, bowling alley. There is 'meals-on-wheels' in the community.	A visiting scheme. Once a week lunch club with silver surfing. Bingo nights and all age community choir.
Job club	Growing number of young unemployed people who dropped out of school.	We have a local football club with lounge and cafe. We have retired teachers and a social worker who are prepared to mentor young people. We have a few local business leaders.	Start a job club, run from the football club. Provide support to develop CV, and accompaniment to look for work. Provide volunteering opportunities in the community, to build young people's confidence and to improve their CV.

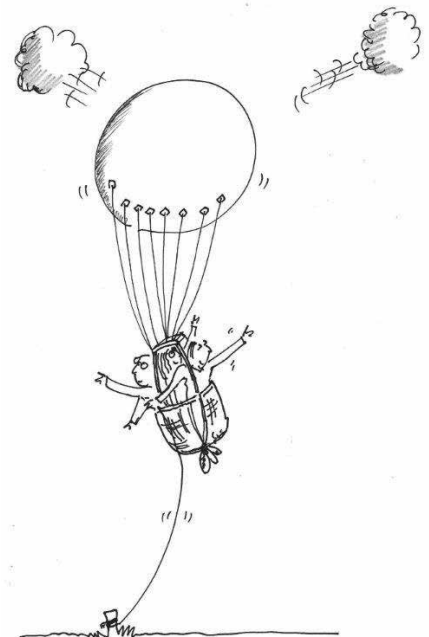
The hot air balloon

Once you have decided what your top priority is, you can use the 'Hot air balloon' planning tool to help you plan a response. Here are the key steps:

- Step 1. Draw a balloon on a large piece of paper, like the one on the following page, and write the questions around the balloon.
- Step 2. The answers to question 1 and 2 are the aim and reason for your project, so write these at the top of the paper above the balloon.
- Step 3. Give everyone some post-it notes and discuss each of the other questions in turn. Make sure everyone has a chance to give their ideas, and to place their post-its around the balloon.
- Step 4. After writing down suggestions for question 6, 'What could hold us back?' and question 7, 'What could blow us off course?' discuss how you would address these threats.
- Step 5. After you have completed your balloon, it may be a good idea to transfer the information into a table or a book for easy reference. You could then hang the balloon on the wall in the church or church hall, as a reminder of the project plan once your project gets underway.

Once you have completed the questions around the balloon, you may want to think about the following things:

- What is our budget?
- Financial resources – what is currently available in the church, and what do we need to raise extra funds for?
- Who does what?
- What needs to be achieved by when?
- How shall we celebrate when we have achieved this project?



1. What do we want to do?

2. Why do we want to do it?

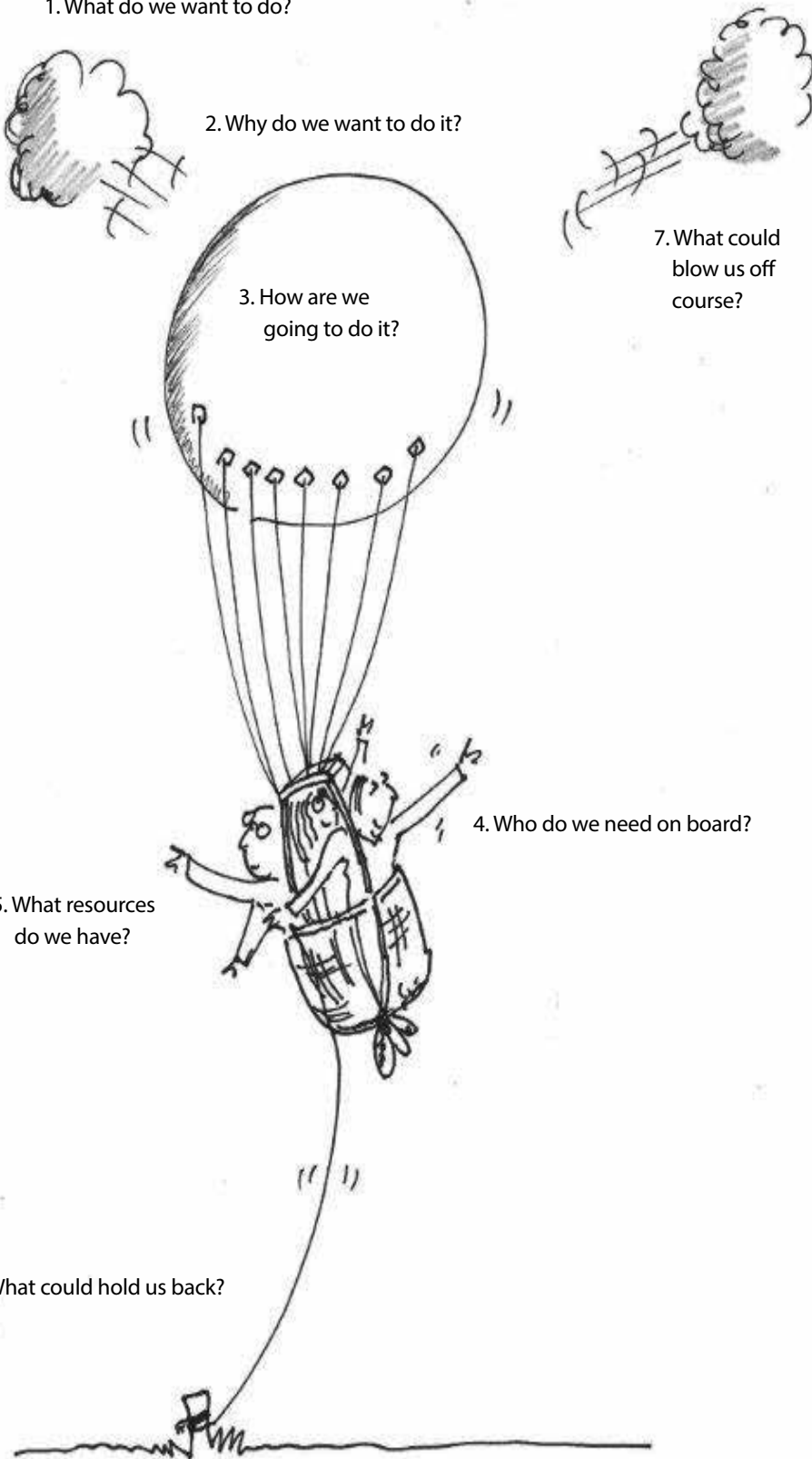
3. How are we going to do it?

7. What could blow us off course?

4. Who do we need on board?

5. What resources do we have?

6. What could hold us back?



Worked example of a hot air balloon table

What do we want to do?	Provide a weekly befriending service at a hostel for homeless young people
Why do we want to do it?	We have a heart for disadvantaged young people, and want to help them to fulfil their potential
How are we going to do it?	Talk to the staff of the hostel about this initiative and get their support Take a small team of volunteers every Tuesday evening for 2-3 hours All volunteers to do a DBS course Develop a programme of activities, indoors and outdoors Look for opportunities to help them with life choices Raise money for bigger events, such as raft racing and rock climbing
Who do we need on board?	The volunteers The church congregation The young people The council steering committee Staff of the hostel
What resources do we have?	Willing volunteers Sports equipment Art equipment and skills Cooking equipment and skills Contacts at the local climbing wall Volunteers' cars Small amount of funds for small events
What could hold us back?	Lack of trust from the staff of the hostel Apathy or hostility from the young people Lack of support from the church leadership
What could blow us off course?	Other competing church commitments Personal boundaries being crossed Volunteers being discouraged by lack of participation Volunteer burnout Seeing very little change in the young people

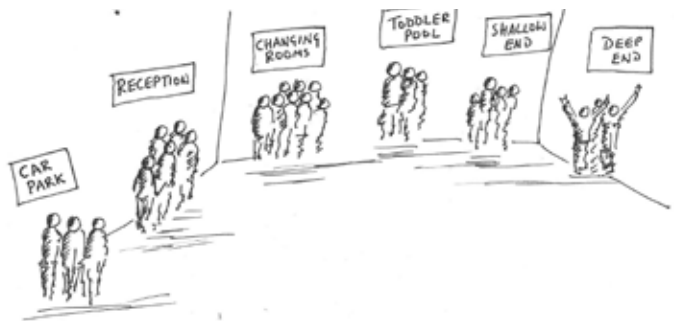
The swimming pool

Purpose

To test the levels of commitment in a group to a new initiative or project.

On A4 cards, make signs for the following areas of a swimming pool. Make them colourful by adding drawings or pictures from the internet.

- Car Park
- Reception
- Changing rooms
- Toddler pool
- Shallow end
- Deep End



Step 1: Lay out the room according to the signs. Feel free to add additional items to add atmosphere – rubber rings, ducks, etc.

Step 2: Explain the different areas of the swimming pool, and the commitment that each area represents. Invite the group to go and stand where they think they are in relation to their commitment to the new initiative.

Step 3: Go round the group and ask them to say briefly why they chose where they are standing.

Step 4: Ask the group if anyone would like to move from where they are currently standing, as a result of what they have heard.

Step 5: Summarise the main conclusions.

This is a good way of ensuring that everyone has a voice when it comes to undertaking a new project or initiative. You will often find that the activists and enthusiasts go straight to the deep end, while the more practical, pragmatic people are nearer reception or the changing rooms, as they are more likely to think about the risks or difficulties involved in undertaking a particular project. It is important to hear everyone's view point, so that the right decisions can be made, and that all are happy with.

Worship response

Worship activity: Reflection cards

The following statements come from the book by John Ortberg, "If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat." (Zondervan 2001)

Write the following statements on cards, lay them out on a table, and ask the group to choose one each and then share why the card means something to them. It would be good to have at least two of each card, as some may want to choose the same as someone else.

Storms have a way of teaching what nothing else can.

When we become more focused on the overwhelming nature of the storm than on the overwhelming presence of God, we are in trouble.

The other disciples treasured safety over growth – they did not want to risk brokenness or failure.

It is in the act of facing the storm that you discover what lies inside you, and decide what lies before you.

When you take on a challenge, it builds the core of who you are, even if you don't perform flawlessly.

Sometimes, when all the props and crutches in your life get stripped away, and you find you have only God, you discover that God is enough.



If you want to walk on water, you have to be willing to get your feet wet first, then you discover it is worth the risk.

It is hard enough to get out of the boat when the wind is calm and the water's smooth. But in life that is rarely the case.

It was Peter's willingness to risk failure that helped him to grow.

Peter knew the glory of being lifted up by Jesus in a moment of desperate need.

When you fail, Jesus will be there to pick you up – you will not fail alone.

Peter knew the joy and freedom of experiencing God's power, after taking an enormous risk.

We have a choice as to how we are going to respond to the storms of life – to endure them or embrace them. Are we going to be open to opportunities that come in the storms, or just hang on?

Our lives are not about self-preservation and fulfilment, but are to be acts of courage and service.

What others have done

In pairs or small groups have a look at the list of possible initiatives your church could do in or with the community. Ask the following questions:

- Which would be easy to do?
- Which are more difficult, and what are the challenges involved?
- Do any of these initiatives excite you?

Acts of kindness and befriending:

- Visiting and befriending individuals
- Visiting and befriending vulnerable or marginalised families
- Visiting and befriending asylum families
- Visiting and befriending a hostel for the homeless
- Asking groups if they would like the church to pray for them



Small initiatives:

- Regular picking up of litter
- Tidying up allotments
- Removing graffiti
- Providing lifts
- Teaching and/or sharing skills
- Helping to paint and decorate homes
- Preparing baby packs for single mothers



Regular initiatives:

- OAP aerobics
- Running a drop-in coffee bar for young people
- After-school club
- After-school kids' club



Bigger one-off initiatives:

- Designing and painting a mural
- Planting trees and improving parks
- A fun day for the community
- Half-term holiday club



Influencing others for a better community:

- Represent the community on key committees
- Develop a community bulletin
- Develop a local radio programme
- Work with other faith-based groups on a common issue
- Lobby a key issue



Major initiatives:

- Home start - support for families with young children
- Allotments and community gardens
- Debt counselling
- A job-club for the unemployed
- Caring for ex-offenders



Good things to do with food

Activities that revolve around food have a great way of helping people relax and socialise. Churches have a natural capacity to provide hospitality, both in people's homes and in churches and community buildings.

Jesus' ministry often involved some kind of meal or food based activity where people came together and encountered Jesus in a unique and special way. Examples of these are the wedding in Cana, the feeding of the 5000, Jesus' visit to the house of Zacchaeus, the last supper, the road to Emmaus, and the breakfast on the beach after Jesus' resurrection, where Jesus restored Peter after his denial.

What is it about food that helps people relax?

First, it's a shared experience. Regardless of your background, age or race, everybody enjoys a meal. Second, it is a gift of hospitality, and a way of welcoming friends and strangers to a home. Third, it creates an informality where stories and experiences can be shared with a sense of fun, but it can also create a space for people to share on a deeper level.

Food-based activities you can try:

1. Freezer project

This involves people using the extra space they have in their freezers to store pre-cooked meals, prepared by willing church and community members, which are then available for members of the community who might appreciate them. This is especially good for situations where people are sick, and the carer has no time to cook or shop, or for families with new-born babies, or for newcomers to the area.



2. Food bank

This is part of a national initiative where churches and community groups can register as a collection point for donations of food. In some situations, it is possible to participate in the distribution of the food, which is a great way of building relationships and rapport with those in need.

3. Sandwiches and soup for homeless people

Some church initiatives have included small teams going out to areas where homeless people often shelter, providing soup and sandwiches. Others have provided minibuses and caravans which serve soup and sandwiches from a static point.

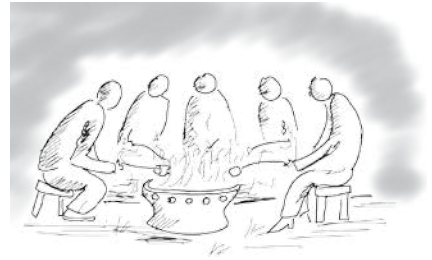


4. Pub happy hour

This involves the local pub providing a time for church and community members to come together and use the space for community discussion on a range of issues which could include current affairs, specialist subjects, story-telling and live music.

5. Firepit and marshmallows, etc.

Open fires provide a focal point and an opportunity for great discussions. This can be used in a variety of contexts, on summer evenings. A nice addition to the firepit is cooking marshmallows or banana splits.



6. Cup-cakes

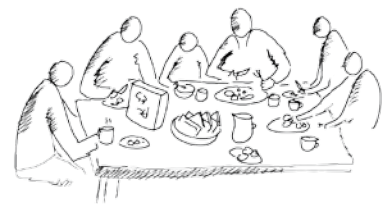
Cup-cakes are easy to make and transport, and are easy for church members to give out to the community, or to specific individuals, whether on special occasions or as a one-off act of hospitality.

7. Easter egg hunt

This is a multi-generational activity which can be done in and outside the church, or in a suitable community venue.

8. Community brunch

Some churches and communities have worked together to provide a Saturday brunch which is often served from a community centre or suitable church venue. This is especially important for single parents, especially dads who often look for a venue to meet up with their children. Additional resources can be used – such as craft activities or computer games – so that families feel able to come, eat and relax at minimal cost.



9. Community barbecue or street party

This is a great idea for marking special occasions, e.g. royal weddings, national celebrations or major sporting events. It can be a bring-and-share event, or the church could provide the food as a gift to the community. A barbecue could be held at the end of a church holiday 'Bible Club' week, as a way of celebrating.

10. Invent a day

It may be that you could invent a day to bring the church and community together to celebrate a certain aspect of your community. For instance, if your area is famous for its apples, you could have an apple day. If your area isn't famous for anything, make up a day – such as scarecrow day or Star Wars day. Whatever day it is, invite people to dress up or wear something that represents that day, and organise some community meals.

QUICK GUIDE TO REVIEWING HOW THINGS ARE GOING



- 1 MARK OUT 4 BOXES WITH MASKING TAPE OR CHALK ON THE FLOOR WITH THE KEY SWOT HEADINGS
- 2 AS A GROUP DISCUSS EACH BOX IN TURN AND PUT THE KEY POINTS DOWN ON A4 SHEETS OF PAPER
- 3 ONCE ALL 4 BOXES ARE COMPLETED DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES AND ADDRESS THE THREATS & WEAKNESSES.

“Take courage!
It is I.
Don’t be afraid”

Matthew 14:27

CLOSING REFLECTION

Repairers of broken walls

Isaiah 58: 9-12

Read the passage or play the film of Isaiah 58: 9-12.

Use the following link: <https://youtu.be/0K7cipCjly4>

Ask the following questions: "What did you see? What did you hear? How do you feel?"

After a time of feedback, ask the group to answer some or all of the following questions in small groups:



1. Who are the hungry in your context?
Who are the oppressed?
2. What does it mean to spend yourselves
on behalf of the hungry and oppressed?



3. What is or has been your
sun-scorched land?
4. How has God satisfied your needs and
strengthened your frame in your sun-
scorched land?



5. What are the qualities of
a well-watered garden?
6. What might these qualities look like
in those who spend themselves for the
poor?



7. What are the broken walls
in your context?
8. What qualities would be needed to be
a repairer of these broken walls and a
restorer of streets with dwellings?

Repairers of broken walls summary

Isaiah says that if we spend ourselves on behalf of the poor, then we will have the qualities of a well-watered garden. The Lord will guide us always and satisfy our needs wherever we are and will strengthen us. We will be called repairers of broken walls, restorers of streets with dwellings.

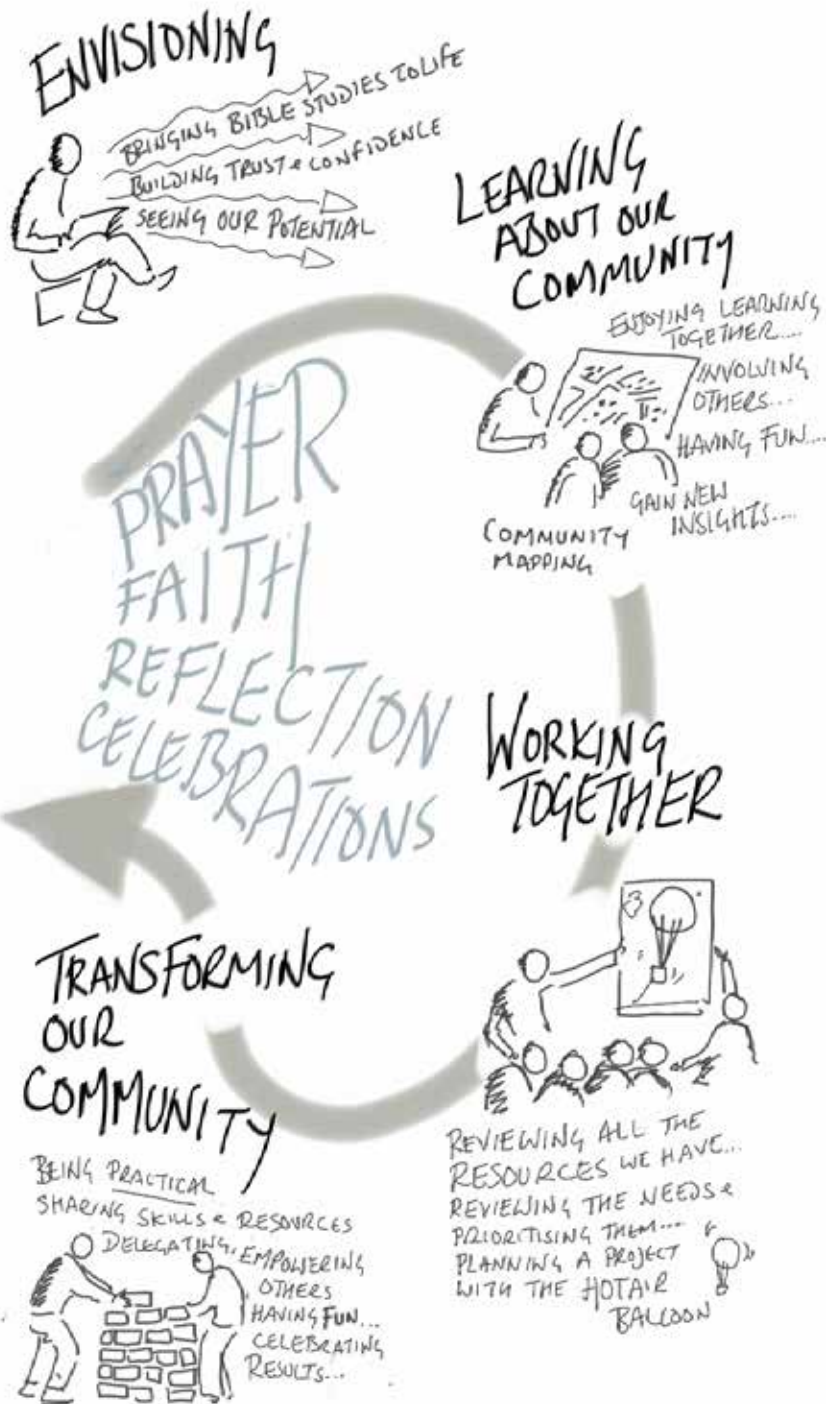
As we pour out ourselves for others, God will fill us with everything we need – a wonderful promise for those who spend themselves to bring the kingdom of God closer.



"He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
But to act justly, and to love kindness and mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

Summary of the 'Stories on the Street' Process





"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,
Plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
Plans to give you hope and a future".
Jeremiah 29: 11

About Mosaic Creative

Mosaic Creative is a small training consultancy specialising in the use of cartoons, illustrations and drama to enhance learning and development. Our approach is about provoking reaction, communicating ideas, exploring meaning and unlocking the creative potential in others.

We work with the voluntary sector in the UK and with various aid agencies in the UK and overseas, providing training courses and workshops on subjects including community development, volunteer management, good governance and creative facilitation. We have also produced a variety of resources, all fully illustrated, on subjects linked to community development.

Bill Crooks

Bill has worked as a facilitator with the not-for-profit sector for over 40 years, both in this country and overseas, running courses on a wide range of development issues. He is an accomplished cartoonist and illustrator, and uses these skills to powerful effect in his training courses and workshops. He is also a writer of community development resources for use in the UK and overseas.

Jackie Mouradian

Jackie is a facilitator, actress and script writer, and has a passion for making resources and training workshops accessible for all. She writes sketches and monologues to bring Bible passages alive and provoke discussion. She also co-writes community development resources for use in the UK and overseas.

Lindsay Noble

Lindsay's graphic design work at Mosaic Creative focuses on developing accessible, user-friendly and exciting designs for resource materials, used in a variety of cross-cultural settings.

For further details, please contact

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