

need to consider our identity as Methodists (or members of LEP's that include Methodist Churches) and the heritage, tradition and learning that goes alongside that.

- What can we learn from Acts 2 about being people called Methodists?
- Why are you a Methodist (or Member of an LEP)? What draws you to methodism, and what keeps you there?
- What do you think is unique about Methodism, or that methodists specifically bring to the areas in which we worship and live?

Our responses

One of the things that has always been distinct to Methodism is how we express a lot of our theology through song—particularly in the Hymns of Charles Wesley. This has informed how we worship. We all have preferences for specific elements in worship, and most people enjoy the comfortable and familiar; but that doesn't mean we shouldn't challenge ourselves to try new things—after all, everything in church was new once!

- What forms of worship do you find most helpful? What different types / styles of worship does your church offer?
- How do you feel when worship is different to what you might usually experience at your church?
- How do you celebrate and appreciate elements of worship that might not be to your preference, but which feed other congregation members? How do we find acceptance and joy in knowing that not everything might feed us,?
- Are there particular elements or styles of worship that you perceive attract people from outside the church or are more accessible to visitors?
- Do you access alternative worship in addition to what you experience at your church? What attracts you to that worship?

Final Prayers:

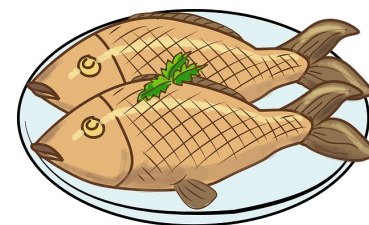
Father God, help us to use our gifts and strengths to do your work. Let us be like the people of the early church by sharing what we have with everyone. May we reach up to You with one hand and reach out to those in need with the other. **Amen.**

(Final prayers taken from the Methodist Prayer Handbook)

This weeks study and opening prayer was written by Joyce Wiles, a member of MVT

What do I do with all these fish?

Session 1: Identity—Who are we?



Casting the Net: John 21: 1-6

21 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ²Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,^[a] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” ⁶He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

Holy Habits: Acts 2: 42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds^[b] to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home^[c] and ate their food with glad and generous^[d] hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

What do I do with all these fish?

I've never been fishing, but I have cooked some very large salmon for a lot of people, so I know that after you have caught your fish, you need to do many things before you can share the fish in a meal. You inspect the net and throw back anything you did not mean to catch. You wash the fish, you remove the scales, and you prepare it for cooking. In this Bible Study we will be looking at the key readings from the "Casting the Net" document through the lens of the responses (fish?) we received from the "Casting the Net Process", along with our circuit Mission Priorities. We hope you will join us on this journey.

The study can be used as part of your individual devotions, as a group in your housegroup or church, or by joining in the sessions online.

During this study you might like to have available:

- a candle for prayer and reflection
- Paper and pens to record any thoughts, if you'd like to.

Before you start this study, take time to pause and reflect.

When we meet together for bible study we always start with a hot drink, maybe some cake or biscuits, and a chat as we catch up with people after another week. Pause for a while to catch up with those around you or yourself.

Opening Prayer

God our Father and our Mother,
Help us to remember that we are not here to decide what is best for us;
nor even what the circuit and churches might like;
but to discover the mind of Christ and to seek the kingdom.
Work through us all so that what we do is not our work but yours.
Lord lead us into the future. Help us hear you through each other.
Enliven our imagination to catch your vision for us.
Give us love in our relationships
and help us to become the people you want us to be.
Lord we are not here to maintain the status quo,
nor to change for the sake of it. We are here to do your will;
To defend good tradition, to respond to changing situations,
and to discover the difference between the two,
by discussion, debate and argument if necessary;
but certainly by love,. Help us to do the job well. **Amen**

Starting question

How do you introduce yourself? As well your name, what other descriptors do you use? Are you defined by your status as parent / child / sibling / partner? Do you talk about yourself in terms of your job or role. Or maybe your faith?

When we meet new people we often share something about ourselves to get to know each other - depending on the circumstances our faith in God might not be the first thing that we share, but it should be integral to our identity.

Who are you?

Read John 21: 1-6

I suspect that if you had asked Peter, Andrew, James or John to tell us about themselves they may have started with their occupation—fishermen. A trade they would have learned from their fathers and which they now worked together with their respective brothers to provide for their own families. As well as fishermen they were brothers and probably husbands, fathers and colleagues as well. After they met Jesus they were able to add a new descriptor to their identities—fishers of Men. After the crucifixion, unsure how to continue with their "People fishing", at least at first, they returned to fishing for a time. But they were inherently changed and shaped through all they had learned and experienced as disciples.

- In their roles as fishermen did they need to be told what to do? How did they learn their trade?
- These disciples are confident in their knowledge and abilities as fishermen—it was their livelihood. They are less confident as "fishers of people"! We are often similar—how can we improve our knowledge and abilities as "fishers of people" to fulfil this role?
- When Jesus tells them to cast their nets to the other side of the boat they comply, even though, at that point they didn't know who he was. Why do you think that was?
- In following Jesus' instructions, the disciples obey—how can we be more obedient to Jesus and what we are being called by him to do in our lives and churches?

What is a Methodist?

A few years ago the Methodist Church released several reports for conference that had titles such as "What is a Presbyterian?" and "What is a Deacon?". As we consider our Identity as the Sheffield Circuit (and people and churches within it), we also