

- Are there ways in which we might “hold everything in common” in clusters or in the wider circuit?
- What support would your fellowship value **from** the circuit?
- What support can your fellowship offer **to** the circuit?
- What natural relationships exist within your church with other local Methodist Churches and Ecumenical Partners? How can those be developed?

### Our responses

A common theme in “Casting the net” responses was a lack of enthusiasm for circuit wide services and events, and also a need for better communication to make the circuit more cohesive.

- What could we do as a Circuit that would help us build the kind of relationships modelled in these two passages across the circuit?
- How can we communicate effectively with each other? What works for your church?
- What can you / your church offer in the spirit of “holding everything in common” to help these happen?
- What challenges you the most in the lessons on fellowship from both these passages?

### 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.**

God of margins, edges, and thresholds,  
Open our minds to listen and learn from people on the margins.

God of justice,  
Open our ears to the voices of people trapped in cycles of debt and hardship.  
God of unbounded love,

Open our hearts to nurture new relationships with new people.  
God of life,

Give us courage, to step into your imagination and vision for new Christian communities amongst people on the economic margins.

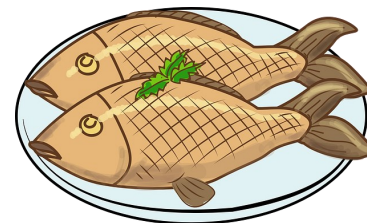
**Amen.**

*(Final prayers taken from the Methodist Prayer Handbook)*

*This weeks study was written by Melissa Quinn, a member of MVT*

# What do I do with all these fish?

## Session 3: Sharing with, and supporting each other



### 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. <sup>2</sup>Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin,<sup>[a]</sup> Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup>Simon 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.

<sup>4</sup>Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” <sup>6</sup>He 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

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds<sup>[1]</sup> to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home<sup>[2]</sup> and ate their food with glad and generous<sup>[3]</sup> hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising 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 of togetherness and fellowship,  
you called your first followers to share together and commit themselves  
to the new community of believers.

Some gave everything they had,  
and others found it hard.

As we try to live as your community of believers in today's world,  
help us to be inspired by the first church  
and to find ways to live out their commitment to each other in our own contexts. Amen

### Starting question

Who is your oldest friend? What shared experiences and moments do you have?  
How do you keep in touch with each other and maintain that relationship?

Moving around for work as I have means that I have friends scattered around the country—those from the town I grew up in, those from my university days, those from the four different circuits I have worked in. My best friend and I don't talk to each other as much as we would like, but when we do, it's like we've never been apart!

### Mutual Support

Read John 21: 1-6

In this passage we find seven of the disciples hanging out together—finding solace and support in being together and in undertaking a shared activity. They have shared the devastating and puzzling events of Holy Week and Easter together and are bound together not just by their shared following of Jesus during the "good days" but also through their trauma following the bad ones. No one else quite knows or understands what the past few weeks (and years) have been like for them, and so undertaking a shared activity where they have to work together to catch fish gives them a chance to reflect and to be with those who "get it" just as they do.

- How might the disciples have felt, returning to "normality" after everything they have seen and done?
- What good models of fellowship do we see the disciples model?
- Where are your source of solidarity and support?
- How does your church provide this sense of togetherness and fellowship?
- In the Acts reading we hear about how the new Christian community held everything in common and even shared food together. What examples of this can you think of across your church and the circuit?

### Together in Fellowship

In the "Casting the Net" document we asked about potential clusters in the circuit and how they might work. Responses to this question were varied, but themes emerged such as a general feeling that the circuit as it is currently is too big; that clusters need to not be too big; that people missed the sense of "knowing each other" that they felt was present before the creation of the Sheffield Circuit, and that clusters should be formed geographically and missionally. That's a lot to try to accomplish!

- How can we use some of the lessons from Acts 2 to inform our decision making and approach to clusters?