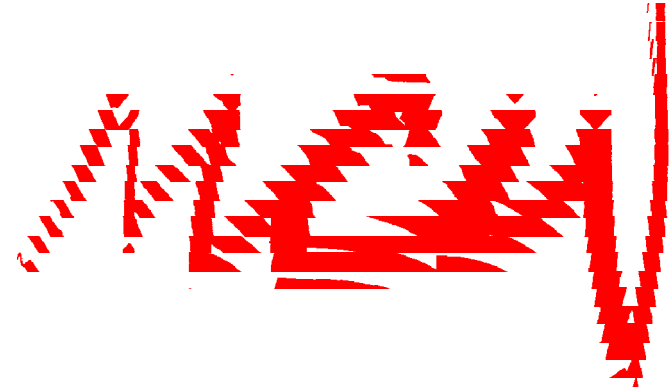


Movement of Christian Workers



Movement of Christian Workers

**Community
and
Leadership**

Remember to take notes so meetings can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. This will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquires.

It is now worth re-visiting the minutes and notes gathered during these enquiries to see what are the common issues and themes which have emerged so that they could be used for the basis of the next meetings using the See, Judge & Act Method that we are now familiar with and practiced at using. As part of the preparation for the next meeting as one person will be leading the enquiry can someone else agree to look at the bible or other church documents to see if there is a suitable or relevant one for the theme or focus chosen.

Don't forget to keep in contact with MCW Headquarters so as to receive information about the Movement and any conferences or other events that may be of interest. We look forward to hearing from you and how the group is progressing.

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Community and Leadership

This short booklet of enquiries had been produced to assist local leaders to establish groups within their areas in order to have an impact on the collective life of their community.

Introduction

This material is based on years of experience of using a tried and tested working method which helps people to reflect on their lives, and the lives of others with whom they are in contact. This method is not some abstract intellectual exercise but one that is deeply rooted in day-to-day situations. It seeks to confront our daily experience with the experience and practice of the life of Jesus Christ. Through this confrontation, people can be inspired and empowered to engage in life to bring about positive change in society, and thus reveal God's Kingdom here on earth.

Each meeting is structured, using the See Judge & Act method. They are merely guidelines which you can adapt to your situation. It is not necessary to complete all the work in one short meeting. In fact experience shows that it can take several meetings to arrive at action points.

Guide to Enquiries

During its meetings the Movement of Christian Workers (MCW) uses the Review of Life approach. This means we always start from the everyday experiences of members of the group or the people with whom we have contact.

Members of the group then analyse these experiences. We ask why events happen and attempt to examine the causes. When we do this we are always aware of the divisions present in society. As a Christian Movement we reflect upon our daily experiences in the light of the life of Jesus Christ as seen in the Gospels. This process of reflection and analysis helps us to arrive at possibilities for action. Action is an essential element of the Review of Life Method. It is only through action that the world can be changed.

Jesus they paid up to two thirds of their produce in taxes to Rome and its tax collectors, in rent to landowners and in tithes to the temple. Many fell behind on their payments and fell into debt. Debt is therefore an ever-present spectre behind the gospel stories. In Matthew's version of the Our Father we pray to be forgiven our debts as we forgive those indebted to us, which the unforgiving servant could not do. Debt was a terrible, ever-threatening reality, which was recognised in the parables.

Why does God appear to have a special relationship with the poor and powerless?

What does it tell us about His values?

Who is the stranger, the orphan and the widow in our communities today?

Why is forgiving indebtedness important?

Act

How can we find out more about the local debt situation?

What can we do about our discoveries?

Could we investigate alternative financial organisations like Credit Unions?

Should something be done to increase knowledge about interest rates, for example, in schools or through trade unions?

How could we inform others about our actions? The local council, MP, Church, trade union?

Plans for next meeting

When?

Where?

Who will lead the next meeting?

Biblical Reflection

Matthew 18: 23-35 The unmerciful servant

A king decided to settle the accounts of his servants. Among the first ones brought was one who owed him ten thousand pieces of gold. As the man had nothing to repay him, the king commanded that he be sold as a slave with his wife, children and all his goods as payment. The official threw himself at the feet of the king and said, "If you give me time, I will pay back everything to you." The king took pity on him and not only set him free but even cancelled his debt.

This official then left the king's presence and he met one of his companions who owed him a hundred pieces of money. He grabbed him by the neck and almost strangled him, shouting, "Pay me what you owe!" His companion threw himself at his feet and asked him, "If you give me time, I will pay back everything to you." The other did not agree, but instead sent him to prison until he had paid back all his debt.

The others saw what happened. They were indignant and so they went and reported everything to their lord. Then the lord summoned his official and said, "Wicked servant, I forgave you all that you owed when you begged me to do so. Should you not have had pity on your companion as I had pity on you?" The Lord was angry, so he handed his servant over to the court until he had paid all his debt. Jesus added, "So will my heavenly Father do with you unless each of you sincerely forgives his brothers."

In the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy lays out a vision that gives the stranger, the orphan and the widow the same right to a secure life as a Levite, an honoured person in Israel. It seems as though the legislator is trying to create new structures to help all those who cannot live off their own land so as to create a world where they do not have to be poor. Looking at the situation at the time of Jesus, who came from Galilee, the majority of the people were peasant farmers. Originally they had been independent farmers with their own small plots of land passed on in the family for hundreds of years. They brought their produce to the cities and were always heavily taxed. Over the years, with successive invasions, they had lost their land and become tenants. At the time of

The Review of Life has three parts:

See Judge Act

See

The objective of the See stage is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the reality lived by members of the group and the people they meet in their everyday lives.

It is not a general discussion of a hypothetical subject but an enquiry into everyday reality. At the 'See' part of the enquiry experiences are shared, usually focusing on one particular aspect of life from the perspective of one member of the group - "My experience of this situation is ..."

The following questions may be useful to help prepare for this stage of the enquiry.

- ◆ Is this something unique to us?
- ◆ Are there other people we know who have the same or similar experiences?
- ◆ What are the experiences of the other members of the group?
- ◆ What are the consequences of these experiences for the people involved?

Judge

The objective of the Judge stage is to analyse the causes of the situation. It is not an occasion to make moral judgements but rather an opportunity to begin to make sense of what is happening in the world around us.

During this stage we try to help the group to link what is happening today with the challenges of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When making analysis MCW groups are sensitive to Christ's commitment to the poor, disadvantaged and those on the margins of

society who are excluded from sharing in the fruits and wealth of the world.

The following questions may be useful to help prepare for this stage of the enquiry.

- ◆ Why does this situation exist?
- ◆ Who is affected by it?
- ◆ Who gains from it?
- ◆ From the facts presented in the 'See' stage what strikes you most about the situation?
- ◆ How does the situation compare or conflict with our own values?
- ◆ What does the practice and values of Christ's life say to us about the situation?

Act

The objective of the Act stage is to help the group share with each other the various steps of action that spring from the enquiry. Often we can be frightened off by the prospect of taking action. This can be due to a misunderstanding of the term. Our actions can be very small, or they can involve a more complicated but achievable set of tasks. It will depend on what comes out of the enquiries. The thing to remember is that even small actions can have big consequences.

The following questions may be useful to help prepare for this stage of the enquiry.

- ◆ What have we discovered about the subject?
- ◆ What do we want to see changed?
- ◆ What are we going to do?
- ◆ How can we involve other people in our actions?
- ◆ What action can we take to raise the awareness of other people?

property, cars, etc which they could never afford if a lump sum was needed. However, what happens to people who borrow and cannot afford to repay? Is that when credit becomes debt and is regarded as bad?

The purpose of the following enquiry is to help the group to think about personal experiences of borrowing money. In addition, the group is encouraged to think about what the Bible has to say on the subject of debt and what action may be possible as a result.

Remember for each part of the process See, Judge & Act to look back at the beginning of the booklet for a number of questions to help develop and deepen the enquiry.

See

Have we ever borrowed money? From which organisations?

How much interest was charged?

Do we know about the experiences of other people?

What is the debt situation of the people who live in our area?

Do we know anyone who has had problems paying back a loan?

Do we know anyone in trouble with rent or mortgage repayments?

What are the circumstances?

Do we know of anyone who has been refused credit either through their own circumstances or because of where they live? What did they do?

What effect does owing money have on us?

Do we understand the implications of interest rates?

What are the consequences when owing money becomes a debt problem?

What happens to those people who cannot repay their debts? How are they treated?

Judge

Why do people find themselves in debt? What are the causes?

Have lenders any responsibilities to borrowers? If so, what and why?

Who benefits from the situations we have described?

Should there be a ceiling on interest rate charges so that everyone has some basic protection in law?

If the landowner in the story is a symbol of God what does it tell us about Jesus' understanding of God's will for workers?

Act

What have we discovered about our situations? What would we like to see changed? Is there any action we can take through our trades union or staff association or work colleagues?

Plans for next meeting

When?

Where?

Who will lead the enquiries?

Remember to take notes so meetings can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. This will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquiries.

Fifth Meeting: Local Debt

Minutes/Notes from the last meeting

Are there are actions of points to be reported on? Has hearing the notes and remembering the shared experiences from the last meeting prompted any other thoughts, issues, themes that could be added to this record of our enquiry?

Introduction

Just about everyone borrows money at some time. In fact, most of us are in debt for a large proportion of our lives. Credit is increasingly more freely available than ever before; pick up any newspaper and count the number of adverts offering "the loan deal of a lifetime"

Some of this may be seen as positive because it enables people to own

Record of group meetings

What levels of action need addressing?

- ◆ Personally
- ◆ Locally with others
- ◆ Structurally
- ◆ Politically or Policy wise
- ◆ Nationally or Internationally

How could it be taken forward

- ◆ Through the MCW .
- ◆ Church & Faith Communities. Unions .
- ◆ Political Parties. Local Committees.
- ◆ Local Council
- ◆ Anywhere or anybody else?

Remember to minute your discoveries, reflections and actions with others and to review the findings and actions from previous meetings every time you meet together as a group. We would be very interested to receive a report from your group so please send minutes from your meetings to MCW Headquarters

First Meeting: Getting Together

Introduction

Someone has to be responsible for gathering people together for a first meeting. This person will inevitably take the lead in making sure the group gets off the ground. Once the group gets off the ground this role should be shared more and all members of the group should be responsible for keeping the group going. It should not be left to one individual; after all you are trying to bring together people who have the potential to be leaders in your community.

- ◆ The best way to get people to come to a meeting is by using the personal approach – simply see them and ask them.
- ◆ The size of the group should be between 3 to 8 people. If more people wish to join then perhaps you should be thinking about more than one group.
- ◆ The key to success is preparation and planning.
- ◆ The pattern of the first meeting depends very much on how well the group know each other already.
- ◆ What are you trying to achieve?

The answer to this question must be clear from the start.

- ◆ You want the meeting to be a success.
- ◆ People should be keen to come back to the next meeting.
- ◆ The people who turn up to the first meeting should find it enjoyable and interesting.
- ◆ It must be meaningful to them.
- ◆ They must be involved in what is going on at the meeting.
- ◆ Most people lead busy lives so if you are expecting them to give up an evening on a regular basis, you have to give them a good reason for doing so.

The Meeting

The main focus should be getting everyone to talk about themselves. Who are we? Where do we live? Where do we work? What do we like doing? What problems, challenges do we face in our daily lives? What problems in wider society are of concern to us?

In depth introductions can take a long time and in this case it may take up the whole meeting. Prepare discussion points or questions which will allow everyone to give a brief introduction first, then follow up with questions which will bring out more.

More often than not the same issue is raised by more than one person which could be important enough to focus attention on at the next

on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the last-cornet as much as. I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first last.'

This is a typical situation in 1st Century Palestine. Having lost their own land through debt, brought on by heavy and new taxes, workers had to find casual work on a daily basis. A denarius was enough to keep a small family for one day. Without it or a neighbour's generosity they would go hungry.

The story of the labourers in the vineyard is well known. At first sight there may be a feeling of agreement with the workers who complained to the vineyard owner. It does seem unfair to work all day for the same money as those who only worked one hour!

If we think about it, there are several messages in this passage, but one point is often missed. The workers were able and felt confident enough to speak to the owner about their grievance.

Many people, unemployed and employed, part-time or casual, do not have this opportunity. There is an absence of even consultation, let alone participation in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Many working people do not see a democratic or participatory process as part of their working lives. They say, "That's not for people like us." But should it be?

This reading also highlights the absence of any solidarity between the workers dependent on the vineyard for their income. Everyone at that time knew that one denarius per day was essential to feed the family and that without it they would go hungry. Yet this knowledge of the need for all workers to have an income that day was not sufficient for some workers to look or act beyond their own individual self interest.

What does the parable tell us about employer relations at this time?

What does it tell us about the relationship between workers in such circumstances?

See

Do we have waged work? If so what is it, and who do we work for? How many other people work there? What do we enjoy most about it? What do we enjoy least? What are the problems there? Is there a trade union or staff association? Are we a member? How do different levels of job satisfaction affect us and our attitude to: work, the people we know, leisure time, participation in a trade union or staff association etc?

Many people, unemployed and employed, part-time or casual, do not have this opportunity. There is an absence of even consultation, let alone participation in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Many working people do not see a democratic or participatory process as part of their working lives. They say, "That's not for people like us." But should it be?

Biblical Reflection

Matthew 20: 1-16

Parable of the vineyard labourers

Now the Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day, and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage". So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing around and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day? "Because no one has hired us", they answered. He said to them. "You go into my vineyard too". In the evening the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wage, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first". So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each. When the first came, they expected to get more, but they too received one denarius each. They took it, but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last" they said "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat". He answered one of them and said. "My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree

meeting. Asking questions of each other should be encouraged as this provokes discussion and is stimulating.

Possible Agenda for the First Meeting:

- ◆ Arrival and welcome possibly with tea/coffee (15minutes).
- ◆ Brief introductions (15 minutes).
- ◆ More detailed introductions (1hour).
- ◆ Recap on common issues that perhaps can be revisited or form the basis of future meetings after following the enquiries in this booklet next time (10 minutes)
- ◆ Arrangements for the next meeting, who will prepare the meeting, what will be the issues themes, agree date time and place (5 minutes)

Remember to take notes so meetings can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. this will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquiries.

Second Meeting: Friends and Neighbours

Minutes/Notes from the last meeting.

Are there any actions or points to be reported on? Has hearing the notes and remembering the shared experiences from the last meeting prompted any other thoughts, issues, themes that could be added to our enquiry record?

Introduction

This meeting is nothing to do with Australian or American soaps, but rather about the people we know as friends and neighbours, and the impact they can have on a person's sense of well being or happiness.

If you type in the word 'Happiness' into the Google Search Engine, you will find almost 6 million different web sites. It is not as strange as it seems. Dr Tin Anstis of Thames Valley University who has done some work in this area has discovered that studies into happiness and well

being indicate that regular contact with friends has a significant impact on a persons sense of individual well being.

Remember to take notes so meetings can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. This will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquiries.

See

Can we each say how long we have lived in our particular neighbourhood? How many people do we know- and how many would we consider as friends or good neighbours?

Was it easy to get to know people or did we have to make a big effort? Any examples? What things, if any, stop people from being neighbourly? What things help?

Judge

Do we feel it is important for people to be neighbourly? Have we any examples to support our views? Have we as Christians a special reason to be good neighbours?

Biblical Reflection

Luke 1: 39-56

The visitation

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled". And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour because he has looked upon his lowly

Act

How can we get to know our local community better. e.g:

Do we read our local paper?

Do we ever pop into the library to look at the notice-board and see what is going on?

Why not ask a local councillor, community worker or social worker to discuss aspects of local community life with us?

Plans for next meeting

When?

Who will lead the enquiries?

Where?

Remember to take notes so the meeting can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. This will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquiries.

Fourth Meeting: Working Life

Minutes/Notes from the last meeting.

Are there any actions or points to be reported on? Has hearing the notes and remembering the shared experiences from the last meeting prompted any other thoughts, issues, themes that could be added to our enquiry?

Introduction

For many people work means paid employment, but there are people who do all sorts of work. Whatever our situation, work or the lack of it, work plays a dominate role in our lives. Paid work with decent wages enables us to lead a full and interesting life. Equally an inadequate income can be the cause of hardships and enormous problems which can deform our lives.

Remember for each part of the process See, Judge & Act to look back at the beginning of the booklet for a number of questions to help develop and deepen the enquiry.

left over, so that nothing gets wasted". So they picked them up, and filled twelve hampers with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. The people, seeing this sign that he had given, said, "This really is the prophet who is to come into the world". Jesus, who could see they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself.

The time that Jesus lived was marked by a radical shift. It changed from local communities where the land was often farmed collectively and where there was a basic system of barter and broad distribution of the fruits of the earth and of human labour, to an increasingly centralised economy. This was run from Jerusalem and controlled by a small number of interest groups e.g. the aristocratic high priestly families, the Sadducee Party and tax collectors and traders under the protection of the Roman Empire. The mass of people had little idea of how it all worked but felt the consequences in increasingly straightened circumstances.

One effect of all this was an increasing tendency to look to your own or your family's or group's interests. In the story of the feeding of the crowd the disciples do not want to take any responsibility for those who have come with them to hear Jesus. They do not want to share their resources. Jesus takes the offering of a young boy, blesses it and begins to distribute it. The rest (as they say) is history. Somehow that one act reversed the crowd's tendency to hold on to their own, to refuse to be involved, and the new result was enough was made available for everyone. Unfortunately the crowd did not get the message. They wanted to make Jesus a King, put him in place of the rulers of the time so that he could continue to provide bread for them. Jesus escapes. He will try again and again to enable men and women to share responsibly and participate in their own salvation, to realise what they can achieve together sharing the goods of the earth and the fruits of their labour. His disciples seem to find it difficult to learn from his practice.

What does the parable tell us about self-interest?
Why is individualism often promoted above or instead of community?

handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him.

He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy - according to the promise he made to our ancestors of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever." Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

Mary visits Elizabeth. In the midst of her own difficulties she goes out in solidarity to another, Elizabeth, her older cousin. In the process, Mary discovers her own worth and value. Elizabeth tells her who she is. So, engaging with others can be rewarding in unexpected ways and should be a provocation to us.

What does this reading tell us about relationships? How can we enhance the quality of our relationships with those nearest to us and others we know less well? In what ways can we work with others so as to make a difference by promoting wholeness in place of limitation and exclusion?

Act

Any conclusions to be drawn from our discussion? Is there any way in which we can be better neighbours or make new friends? Is there any action we need to take as a group?

Plans for next meeting

When?
Where?
Leader of enquiry?

Remember to take notes so meetings can be reviewed and revisited at the next meeting. This will also act as a record of the issues and themes to be followed as your next set of enquiries.

Third Meeting: Our Local Community

Minutes/Notes from the last meeting

Are there any actions or points to be reported on? Has hearing the notes and remembering the shared experiences from the last meeting promoted any other thoughts, issues, themes that could be added to this record of our enquiry?

Introduction

'Community' can mean a lot of different things to different people. For some the community is where we live whilst for others it can be the parish which is of paramount importance. The work place can also hold significance for many people. Therefore we might be aware of being part of several communities or none at all if feeling isolated from and by others.

If we are to have an impact as leaders in any of the communities to which we are part we need to know and understand its 'true' make-up. What are the issues and experiences that are binding some and excluding others, and how might the people involved be brought together so as to develop a more wholesome 'community'.

Remember for each part of the process See, Judge & Act to look back at the beginning of the booklet for a number of questions to help develop and deepen the enquiry.

See

How well do we know our local community? How would we describe it? Are the people ordinary or well off, professional workers or manual workers?

Is it a new area or fairly old? Do most people own their houses or are they mainly rented dwellings?

Are most people locals or have they moved in from other areas and countries? If it is a mixed community, how well do people get on with each other?

Are the local facilities good, e.g., are there schools, hospitals, libraries, nurseries and play groups, parks, leisure amenities, youth facilities, provisions for older people?

Judge

How would we describe a real community? From our discussions would we say ours is a genuine community? Do people feel they belong?

Is community life important or can individuals and families manage on their own?

Does a Christian have a particular responsibility to "create" community? Give reasons.

Biblical Reflection

John 6: 1-15

The Miracle of the Loaves

Some time after this, Jesus went off to the other side of the Sea of Galilee or of Tiberias and a large crowd followed him, impressed by the signs he gave by curing the sick. Jesus climbed the hillside, and sat down there with his disciples. It was shortly before the Jewish feast of Passover. Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, "Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?". He only said this to test Philip; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Two hundred denarii would only buy enough to give them a small piece each". One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, "There is a small boy here with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that between so many?" Jesus said to them, "Make the people sit down". There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and gave them out to all who were sitting ready; he then did the same with the fish, giving out as much as was wanted. When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, "Pick up the pieces