

Practical input

Workshop session - Getting justice into the heart of your church

Are you passionate about seeing the poor, broken and the nations at the centre of your church's life? This is a useful guided discussion session to run with a few like minded people.

Time of session: 70 mins (though may be longer if a large group)

Equipment needed: various stimuli gathered or photocopied before the session (see the Variety, creativity and learning styles section of this session and the sample list of stimuli provided at the end of this document); flip chart and pens.

(If you are exploring these ideas on your own you can still use this session as a more contemplative exercise - work through Catching the vision, and the first part of Sharing stories, and then jot down your responses to the different stimuli and any thoughts you have on people you know and their learning styles and interests. Finally, think about what you want to do next to help your church move forward.)

Catching the vision (15 mins)

Open in prayer

What do you want to see change in your church's heart for the poor, the broken and the nations? Bring your church and your hearts to God.

Forming the vision

Draw a big church shape with a heart inside of it, with the word 'justice' written on it... ask people to imagine what a church that has caught God's heart of love for the poor would look like... be specific and jot down all the areas of church life and ministry you can think of (e.g. sung worship, prayer meetings, youth work, children's work, preaching, giving etc) – what would be happening? What would people be talking about, or spending their time on?

Planning the first steps towards seeing it become reality

This exercise should stimulate a picture of a church where every aspect is committing to making justice issues a key part of what it is about... use the following questions to stimulate discussion and gather responses:

What areas most inspired you? What area could you concentrate on first? What area feels most important, or would have the most impact on the people in your congregation? Where do you feel God is leading you to start?

For the areas of ministry you decide to start with, think about who you need to talk to in each case, what might help them catch God's heart for the poor, or reawaken this as a priority in them, and what resources or other people might be available to help with putting this into action.

Sharing stories... how did your heart get caught up with these issues? (10 mins)

(If you and your group are newer to the issues, you might find it more helpful to do the next section – *Variety, creativity and learning styles* – first, but if at least some of you have been engaged with poverty and justice issues for some time, it is better to start with this exercise).

Ask each person...

...to share the thing that first got them thinking about these issues/determined to get involved and do something or thinking that it was vital for them to be reflected in our worship... and get people to share these stories... if people are very involved with justice issues, you might also want to ask them about the thing that keeps them going, especially when they get discouraged.

Comparing notes on stories...

...is helpful for two things. You get to hear, in a very short time, a number of things that help you further connect with the issues, and the people behind them. But also it illustrates how different we all are – some of us are captured by a radical scripture that has come alive, others by a person they've met or a shocking statistic or situation they've heard about. Some people are moved by a film, or image, and others have a song that has brought them to this point... ask the group what they think that might tell us about helping others not yet so familiar with the connection between our faith and justice issues, to get inspired?

Variety, creativity and learning styles (30 mins)

Gather together a range of striking and/or thought-provoking stimuli...

...in relation to poverty and justice – e.g. statistics, images, quotes from respected people, films, songs, a skit or drama, bible passages, kinaesthetic ideas (i.e. things that people can touch, hold etc) – and present them one after the other to the rest of the group. (*A possible list of stimuli is provided at the end of this document.*)

Wow, feeling inspired and challenged?

Hopefully people will have been really inspired by this array of stuff...

What's most inspiring?

Ask others if you're doing it in a group, and then share your reaction... you will find that different people found different stimuli more striking...how does that compare with what you found most interesting?

What does this tell us about the variety of stimuli and creative approaches we will need if we want to really inspire, and capture the heart of, everyone in our church?

Does this inspire you to think differently about the ways in which we facilitate individual and corporate worship?

Would you believe... that only around 2% of people are auditory processors... i.e. people who learn best by listening (and yet church services are generally very focussed on this form of activity). Over two thirds of people process visually first and foremost, and the rest do it by feelings, touch and sensation (also known as kinaesthetic).

Is anyone feeling inspired to try something, or create something?

Discuss these ideas and possible contexts for them to be used. Jot them down so that you're ready and prepared for the next section which is about coming up with an action plan to take forward.

Taking action (10 mins)

Firm up the action points

Make these as SMART as you can – i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound.

Assign tasks

Close in prayer (5 mins)

Ask God to help you act with sensitivity and love in anything you are seeking to change, and for his help, guidance and inspiration as you seek to love him and others more.

Sample list of stimuli

1. Show or project an image

This should show someone in poverty, or capture injustice. Find images from recent news stories that resonate, or provoking images used by aid agencies.

2. Show a reflective film

You will find plenty of up to date examples at www.youtube.com – have a look through what Christian Aid or Hillsong United have posted recently if you are stuck for ideas. We particularly recommend the climate change reflection, currently available at www.caweek.org/praywithus

3. Give out some statistics

e.g. Half the world – more than 3 billion people – live on less than \$2 a day.

And 8 million will go to bed tonight – hungry.

4. Share a quote from someone respected

e.g. *"I went up to a man and said 'Jesus loves you' ...but I realised that it didn't mean anything unless I did it."* Jackie Pullinger

5. Read scripture

e.g.

"I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music. When was the last time you sang to me?
Do you know what I want?
I want justice – oceans of it."

I want fairness – rivers of it.

That's what I want. That's all I want."

(Amos 5:21-24 *The Message*)

6. Put the message in their hands

Hand round a starfish for people to hold and tell this story – <http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~fulmer/starfish.htm> - then ask them to imagine what a difference it would make if everyone present in the room were the people stranded on the beach, or everyone in the church in the UK (etc)...

7. Hearing from the voiceless

Project, or pass round copies of this poem, and ask people to read it in silence:

Unheard song

I am my brother's keeper,
I am my sister's mother,
I am my daughter's fading hope.
I was my father's treasure,
I share my mother's smile,
It's all that's left us now of her.

**Does anyone hear my prayer for life?
Does anyone hear my song of praise?
Will anyone mourn my lost youth now?
Or comfort my daughter when it's her turn to cry?**

I said goodbye to childhood,
It left me in the night,

I play at houses now for real.
The burdens that I carry,
Heavier than my womb –
The life inside me, will she live?

I am an inconvenience,
Distraction on your iPod –
Don't worry, I will be gone soon.
Cos I am forgotten stories,
I am injustice you won't see,
There are a million more of me.
Disposable.

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8. The power of story

Visit an organisation working with people living in poverty, such as www.christianaid.org.uk or www.tearfund.org

Find a personal story that really grabs you – tell this in your own words and explain why it has had such an impact on you...

9. Prayer changes us

Prayer of confession

Almighty God - creator, shaper and sustainer of all life

And loving Father.

We confess that we have not loved you with our whole hearts;

We have been careless with the creation you so lovingly crafted,

And deaf to its song of praise.

We have taken to satisfy our selfish desires, rather than our need

And been indifferent to the consequences

As your world's song of praise has been silenced.

Our world is hurting, and many of your most vulnerable children are suffering as a result.

Please forgive our indifference

Prayer of absolution

Almighty God - creator, shaper and sustainer of all life

And loving Father.

Thank you for the forgiveness won for us by your Son – the redeemer of all creation.

We receive your grace to us, and your love for us as we are.

Change us now into what you would have us be –

Move us to love and care for your world

And make us ready to work for the good of all creation

Through the love and power of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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10. Play a song

Play an mp3 of a worship song which considers issues of poverty and injustice.

(See www.thesanctuarycentre.org/whereworldandworshipmeet-songs if you are stuck for ideas... maybe give people a copy of the words too in case they can't follow them all.)