

S.O.F.T.

Sharing Our Faith Together Team

Supporting the East Solent and Downs Methodist Circuit

Were you there?!

If you weren't at the 'Sharing Jesus' event at Portchester on Saturday 2nd June then you definitely missed a treat!

48 people from around the circuit gathered together to hear Andy Frost from 'Share Jesus International' share his wisdom on the subject of evangelism. Andy was an encouraging and powerful speaker who held the attention of the group and his immense enthusiasm for the subject was infectious. I know many of us left Portchester that day with a bounce in our step and minds full of where we might go from here!

Planning Prepare Party Present Plug-in

These 'Five Ps' were absolutely key to Andy's talk

Planning

Have you ever sat down as a church community and made a list of all the activities that go on and all the events that you are involved in? Chances are there are more than you think. Perhaps you could invest in a wall chart and create a 'rhythm of mission' for the year.

Prepare

Everything that we do needs to be saturated in prayer. Try to encourage the congregation to pray for friends and family and create a culture where conversations about faith are a normal part of church life. This is great preparation for talking about Jesus at other times.

Party

Most of our churches are very good at these! Host an event (*not necessarily in the church building*) which demonstrates Christian values. Anything from a film night to a festival!

Present

What next? The 'party' will have sparked some people's interest in learning more about God. Organise a special service or other event where the gospel can be presented in a friendly and non-threatening way.

Plug-in

Some of the people who came to the 'Present Event' will want to learn more about how God is working in their own lives and perhaps become part of the church community. How about running a Discipleship Course to help them 'Plug in to church life'?

These 'Five Ps' offer us a format for our evangelism and outreach. We are often great at organising 'parties' but struggle to figure out what to do next. Andy showed us that building the 'what next' into our planning, and inviting people to 'present event' organised for a couple of weeks after the 'party' helps keep up the momentum and show people how important they are to us and to God.

We all want to see the events that we organise succeed. That's human nature; and we all want to share the love of God with others. However, Andy encouraged us to be realistic about what might be achieved and to rejoice in what happens rather than wishing we'd 'got more people'.

If 50 people come to the 'party'



and 10 people come to the 'present event'



and 2 people attend the discipleship course

Then it's worked! Andy reminded us that it is not up to us to bring people to Christ. All we have to do is sow the seeds and allow the Holy Spirit to work within them.

Thank you to all those who came along on 2nd June and made it such a memorable occasion

REMEMBER:

There is **FUNDING AVAILABLE** in the Circuit budget to assist with Outreach/Evangelism projects. **Why not use the 'Five Ps' as a guide when you make your application?**

1. Grants are available to churches within the East Solent and Downs Methodist Circuit for initiatives/projects based in that circuit.
2. The project should be clearly identifiable under one or more elements of 'Our Calling' and have a 'Sharing our Faith' objective
3. The project should have a clearly identifiable outcome.
4. Other than in exceptional circumstances the local church will be expected to contribute towards the cost of the project from their own funds.
5. If the project includes the employment of personnel all the Methodist requirements with regard to lay employment must be adhered to.
6. Grants can be paid for up to a maximum of 3 years.
7. If the project is ongoing beyond 3 years the application should show how funding to replace the grant is to be secured.
8. The grant application must be approved by the relevant local Church Council.

For further information, or to request an application form, please contact a member of the team.

What now?

So, where do we go from here?

We're really aware that the idea of meeting with the SOFT Team may seem a bit intimidating.

Please be assured that we're not here to tell you 'you're doing it wrong', or ask you to plan things that are beyond your capabilities. We are not 'The SOFT Police'! We simply provide an opportunity for you to talk to someone from outside your context about what you're doing or plan to do. We may be able to offer suggestions, provide funding or equip you in some other way. We're here to encourage and enable – not check up on you!

Perhaps your church was represented at the 'Share Jesus' event; perhaps it wasn't. If people from your church did attend then members of the SOFT Team would love to meet with you to discuss how what you heard relates to your context.

If your church wasn't represented then **it isn't too late**. The event on 2nd June was just part of an on-going conversation. The SOFT Team would be delighted to come and visit you to look through the material and discuss how it can be applied in your context.

Coming Soon... Café Workshop

Café-style services are growing in popularity up and down the country – including in our own circuit. They are hugely diverse in terms of style and content, but usually informal and friendly services that are ideal for inviting those who are interested in learning more about the Christian faith but are unfamiliar with traditional church.

Perhaps you are part of a team that regularly runs Café worship (or something similar) at your local church; perhaps this is something you've thought of starting up but don't know where to start.

Either way, we are in the process of organising a day to gather together those people who are involved (or would like to be involved) in Café worship in their local church.

The aims of such a day would be to:

- Network, share ideas and learn from one another
- Talk about what works (and doesn't work!) in our own context
- Support one another through prayer and in practical ways
- Encourage and resource those who are considering starting a new, café-style service
- Rejoice in the diversity of our worship

This event would be a chance to meet together, share ideas, and go away inspired.

We don't yet have a date yet but it will probably be **towards the end of September**. More information will follow soon!

Spotlight on... Lindford Donkey Day

Lindford Donkey Day was an outreach mission idea to engage with the wider community and share the Easter message of hope in Jesus.

Our plan was to make people feel welcome at their local church and give them an opportunity to walk through the doors in a relaxed and informal setting.

This event was completely free for the community to attend and we engaged with over 100 children and their families. This event offered donkey rides, displayed Easter story, Easter crafts, Easter egg hunt and endless hot cross buns and tea!

Every activity was free of charge which was very important for us to have the community come freely, however many people donated during the afternoon raising £60 for Compassion UK. Plans are under way to ensure this remains an annual event for the community, we received amazing feedback and featured in the local newspaper. All this work was for the glory of God.

Note from the editor: *All three of the fantastic events featured in the 'Spotlight On...' article since this news letter began have involved donkeys! Please note that donkeys are not compulsory when Sharing Our Faith Together (although they are very cute...!)*



Could you provide the next 'Spotlight on...' article?

It might be about a one-off event that's already happened or is about to happen. It might be about something your church does on a regular basis. Whatever the topic it would be great to hear from you so that we can share ideas and good news stories as widely as possible.