



Newsletter #4

Build relationships with the people you are trying to reach

Welcome to the fourth Hope25 monthly newsletter. This email is written in the hope that you will find others in your Anglican community to discuss together prayerfully.

I have never forgotten the time when I was suddenly invited to a Christian play. I was on holiday, away from home, and I did not know the people who invited me or who was putting the play on. The play, however, was worth seeing.

The play was about a couple doing a course at their church on how to share Jesus with others. I know it sounds like an impossible 'plot' for an interesting play – but it was well done and even had some very funny scenes. In the play the couple, having done the course, decided that they should share Jesus with their neighbour, however, they had never spoken to their neighbour before! The neighbour accepted their invitation to come in for 'coffee', but was very confused by their attempts to tell him about Jesus. He was a nice guy, but the couple had no relationship with him, and so sharing Jesus with him fell flat. As the play unfolded though, it became clear that one of the couple's parents, who lived with them, had been talking to the neighbour for many years. This 'grandfather' had a great relationship with the neighbour. So, when it was appropriate, the grandfather was able to share Jesus with the neighbour.

The play helpfully encouraged Christians to attend courses on sharing Jesus but made the point that **such a course would only be valuable when we have good relationships with the people we are sharing with.**

So, as we prepare for Hope25, one area where each of us needs to be working is developing relationships where we can speak of the hope we have in Jesus. To my mind, this involves us doing four things:

1. Consciously consider our relationships with people outside the church. These relationships could be with members of your family, work colleagues, hobby colleagues or long-term friends.
2. Choose some of those outside church you have a relationship with and start praying that God's Holy Spirit would guide your relationship with that person. I find that when I pray in this way, it is amazing how often God then opens up opportunities that I never would have expected.

3. Then, deliberately set up additional occasions to spend time with the people you are praying for. Usually, these are people you enjoy being with, and they enjoy being with you, but in the business of life we don't see them as often as we would have liked. So, set up more times to be with them.

4. Ensure that you are 'hospitable' to those you are praying for when spending time with them. Three times in the New Testament, we are encouraged as followers of Jesus to practice '**hospitality**' (Romans 12.13, Hebrews 13.2, 1 Peter 4.9). This involves others knowing that you are going out of your way to do things for their benefit when spending time with them.

None of the points above involves directly talking to people about Jesus. All of them, however, involve us deepening our relationships with others so that we are '*prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have*' (1 Peter 3.15). For as you spend time with people, as you do life with them, occasions will come where they will want to know about your faith.

So, the best preparation for Hope25 involves prayer and parties! Invite your friends around more in the next six months, praying that after Easter, they might ask you to explain your hope in Jesus.

Hope25 Contact Details:

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Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Make a list of people to pray for regularly:

What hospitality options could you offer to the people you are praying for?

How else could you invest in their life and felt needs?