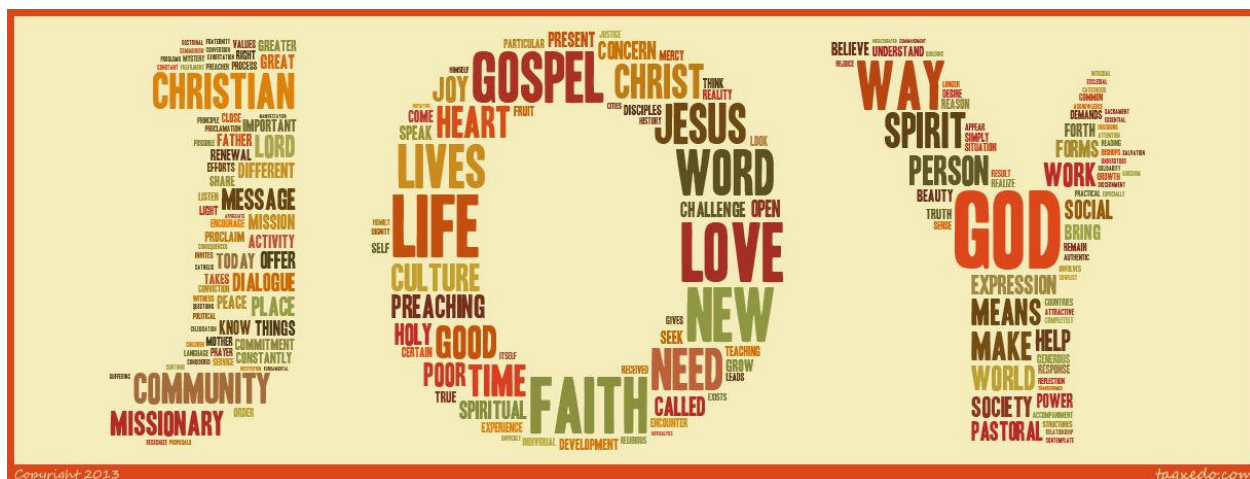


The Joy of the gospel

One of the essential messages of the 'Joy of the Gospel' teaching series in the Summer Term was that we have a wonderful life changing message to share. The series provided us with a chance to reflect together on the nature of the good news, the challenge of living it out and sharing it with those around us, and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Through Sunday teaching and in mid-week small groups we've wrestled with some of the issues raised and shared our stories of the transforming work of Christ.



As we set out on our journey, Steven Croft the Bishop of Sheffield's words in the accompanying resource book set a challenge before us. 'We need to return to the gospel, to recover joy, to see the church again as a company of missionary disciples and to proclaim the faith with compassion, with confidence and with creativity to a new generation.' I wonder how equipped we feel for that task?

If we're to proclaim the faith with compassion we need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us a deeper love for those around us, and a heartfelt desire to see friends and colleagues discover the riches that come with following Christ.

So let's pray for others who don't know Christ specifically, regularly and passionately

If we're to proclaim the faith with confidence we need to know what we believe and why – Our Sunday worship and mid-week Life groups play a key role in this, as do the occasional Alpha and Puzzling Questions Courses we run at Christ Church.

So let's put ourselves in environments that will nurture our own faith

If we're to proclaim the faith with creativity we need to ensure that everyone's contribution is valued and not allow ourselves to get stuck in a rut with our worship, teaching and service. God is always wanting to do a new thing in our midst. Whilst the gospel doesn't change some of the ways in which we communicate it need to reflect the culture in which we live and work.

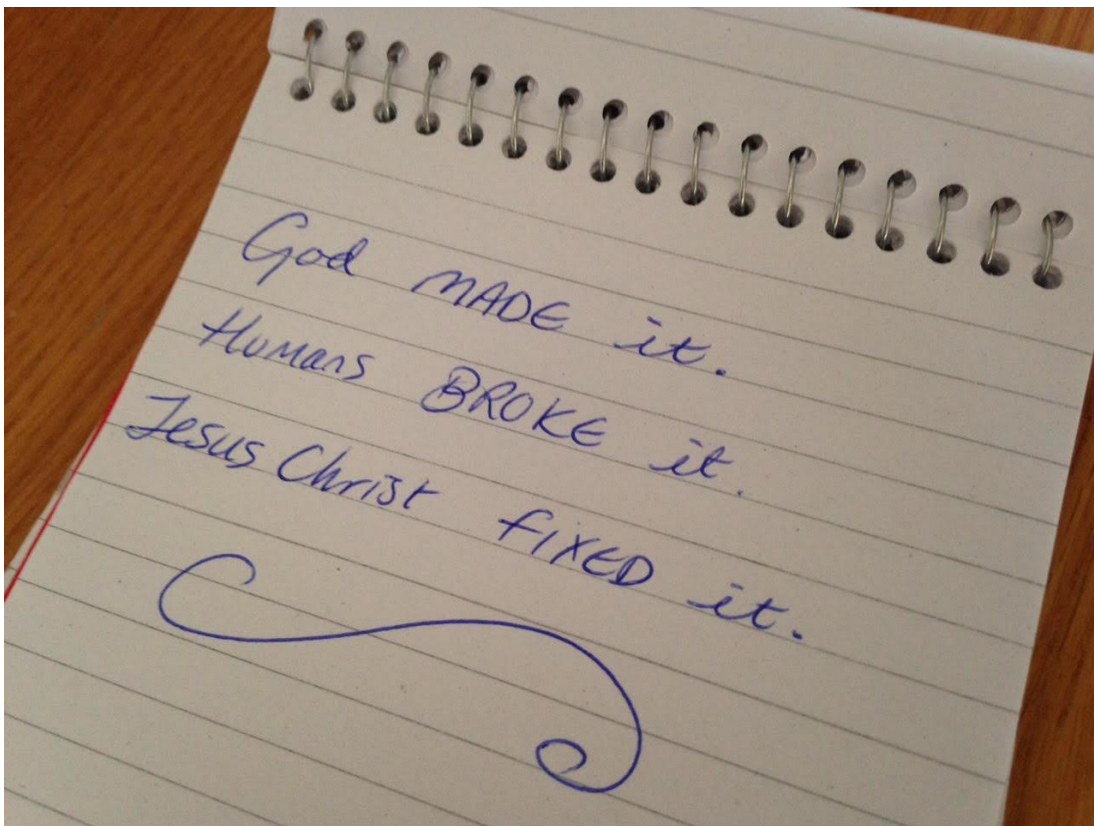
So let's commit ourselves both as individuals and as a Church community to be open to new approaches to expressing our faith

Here are a few simple practical exercises to help you share the good news.

Knowing the gospel

How would you sum up the gospel message in just a few words or sentences.

One blogger set themselves the challenge of summarising the good news in just 10 words – here's what they came up with...



How would you summarise the gospel – why not try the same exercise in your prayer triplet, discipleship triad or life group.

Pointing to scripture

The good news of God's transforming love is laid out for all to see in scripture. Whilst different verses and passages will be important to each of us there are some verses which express the very heart of the Christian message.



'For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' John 3:16

'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Romans 6:23

For if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.' Romans 10:9

The story of the prodigal son – Luke 15:11-32

Saul's conversion – Acts 9

Which verses or passages of scripture best sum up the gospel message for you?

Telling our story

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' 1 Peter 3:15



It's very rare that we get the opportunity to share our whole testimony with a friend or colleague, but God does give us opportunities to share bits of it – examples of God's faithfulness to us in difficult times, the way we've found renewed purpose and hope through Christ, or perhaps a story of God's leading in family life.

To help you reflect on your own journey of faith, it's a really helpful exercise to write your story down.

Scribble some notes under the following 3 headings

What life was like before I became a Christian?

How I became a Christian?

The difference it makes to my life now?

It may help to practice sharing your story with a friend – try to avoid jargon, and be specific about the ways in which you've seen God at work

Living the Life

All of the above counts for nothing if our faith isn't being lived out and actually making a difference. Paul challenged the Christians in Philippi by saying 'Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.' We're not going to get it right all the time, but let's seek to live in such a way that others see Jesus in us.

