

# Session 5

## Sharing the gospel



### Opening prayer

Take a moment to be still as you open your heart to God.

God of love, you are here with us,  
Guiding us and calling us to be your people.  
God of justice you offer life to all people.  
Open our hearts and our minds.  
Open our ears and our eyes.  
Help us to listen and learn together.  
**Amen.**

### Recap

Recall your expectations of working together, including any you added as a group.

We will listen to each other.  
We will disagree with kindness and respect.  
We will share honestly.  
We will keep confidentiality within the group.  
We will be open to learning from one another.  
We will not make assumptions about the life experience of others (the group may include people with past or current experience of poverty).

Review the practical activity from the last session.

What did you learn from the responses to the questions in the last session?

- What did they say is good about their community?
- How do they think the local community is portrayed by others? For example local news/social media.
- What do they consider to be the greatest example of local injustice?
- Who do they think is responding to the issue?
- Who do they think holds power locally?
- Who do they think could change things?

**Vision:** To nurture new Christian communities amongst economically marginalised people.

**Core belief:** We are not taking God to the margins. We believe God is present with and in all people in all circumstances.



## Exploring the Bible together: Mark 12:28-34

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."<sup>31</sup> The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' <sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; <sup>33</sup> and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbour as oneself",—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Read the text aloud.

Spend a few minutes in silence, while each person underlines the phrase or verse that stands out for them.

- What do you notice and wonder about in these verses?
- What do these verses tell you about God's character?
- What do they tell you about being human?

Share together in pairs and then as a whole group.



## Theological foundation

Read the theological foundation aloud. Take a moment to share what you notice together.

### Interdependence

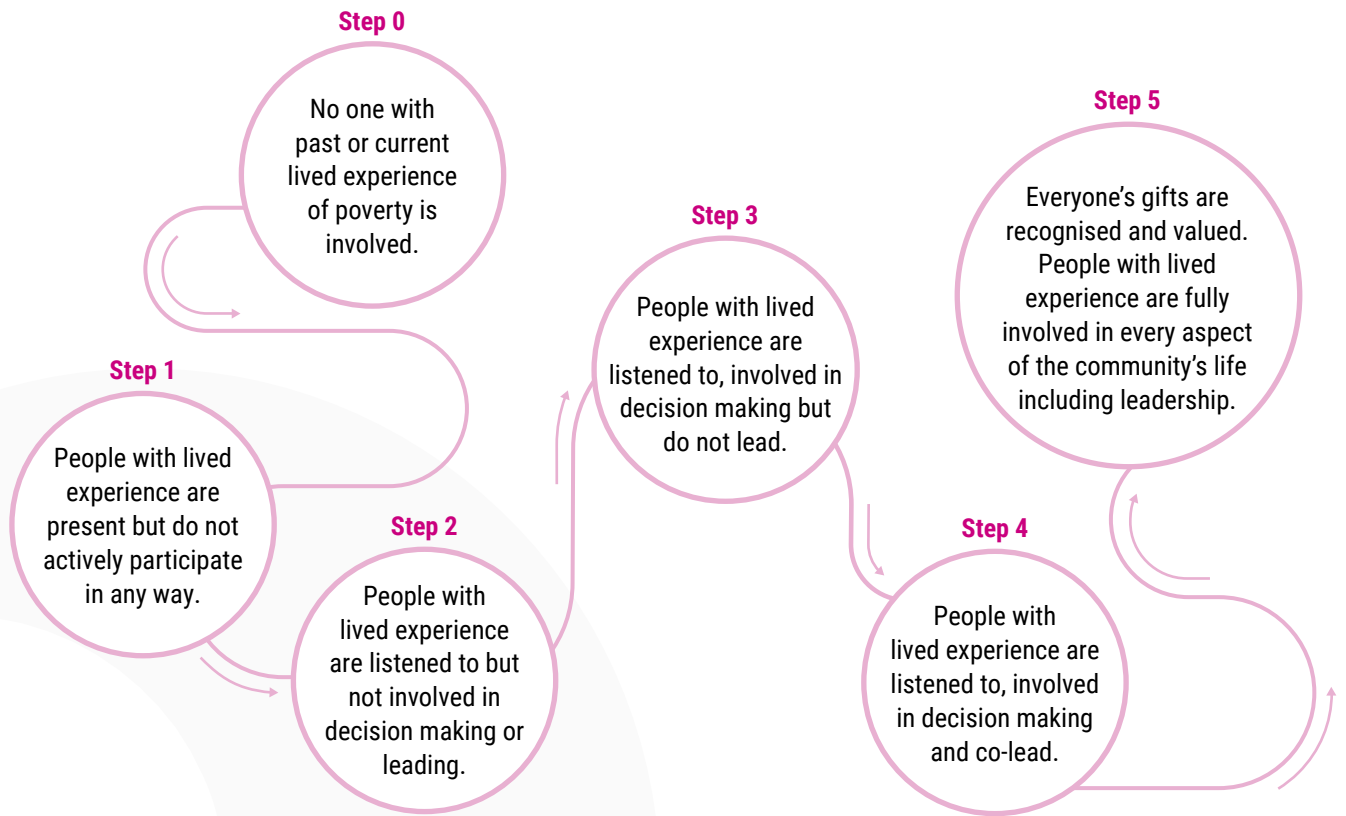
God created us to be interdependent: with God, others, the created (non-human) world, and within ourselves (physical, emotional, and spiritual). We recognise our shared brokenness and our capacity and need to receive from one another – in particular from people who are economically vulnerable or marginalised whose wisdom and gifts we can fail to recognise.

The move towards interdependence with God, ourselves and others will require a commitment to connecting, nurturing and deepening of relationships. Let's take a look at what might need to change and what might need to be done differently by reflecting further on the graphic from session 3.



*The gospel of Jesus Christ restores our relationships with God, ourselves and our neighbours.*





### Nurturing relationships to move from disconnection to interdependence

| Disconnected   | Interdependence  |
|--|--|
| No relationship  | A community where everyone is changed and thriving               |
| No trust or distrust                                       | Shared trust   |
| No listening   | Deep intentional listening                                       |
| No knowledge of people's hopes, dreams and challenges      | A shared awareness of everyone's hopes, dreams, and challenges   |
| No awareness of local gifts, skills, talents and resources | Local gifts, skills, talents, and resources known and shared     |
| Seeing people as deficient, lacking and in need            | Recognising everyone's gifts and resources                       |
| Disempowered   | Power shared and transformed                                     |
| Focusing on what's wrong with a community                  | Focusing on what's strong in a community                         |
| Acting as a host and serving                               | Hospitality is shared  |
| Change happens mainly through external intervention        | Change happens through co-creating, co-delivering and co-leading |

This journey will require prayer, honesty, vulnerability, acceptance of difference and will move at the pace of trust.

There are challenges and gifts in every community. Low-income communities are more likely to be portrayed negatively and this can become part of the internalised story of the individuals who live there. People can develop a sense of hopelessness and, understandably, struggle to believe that anything can ever change. A commitment to sustained and deepening interdependent relationships will be essential so we can hear both the good and the difficulties present in the life of the community where we are nurturing a CaM.

### Reflection

Think about the community where you hope to start a CaM.

- What are the small steps you could take that could move relationships from disconnection on the journey towards interdependence?



### Core value

Read the core value aloud. Take a moment to share what you notice together.

#### **Celebrate inclusion and participation**

We will celebrate and value the inclusion and participation of all. We believe everyone in a community has something to offer. Gifts are waiting to be discovered in all communities. We will resist focusing on service-provider models of community engagement based on the rich doing something for the poor. We recognise our need for the gifts of those at the economic margins, and believe the whole Church needs to receive these gifts in order to be fully transformed by the gospel of Christ.

Whilst recognising there are many challenges which can be seen externally in low-income communities, the gifts, skills, knowledge, talents and resources of local people are often invisible.

Nurturing a new community will include discovering the hidden gifts and making them visible.

The community is likely to go through phases and cycles of feeling organised, disorganised and needing to reorganise. These phases are normal and can be life-giving when recognised and embraced. Knowing when the community needs to adapt, change and stop doing some things in order to embrace new things will be important for community togetherness.

## Reflection

Imagine you are planning an activity within your local community which celebrates the community.

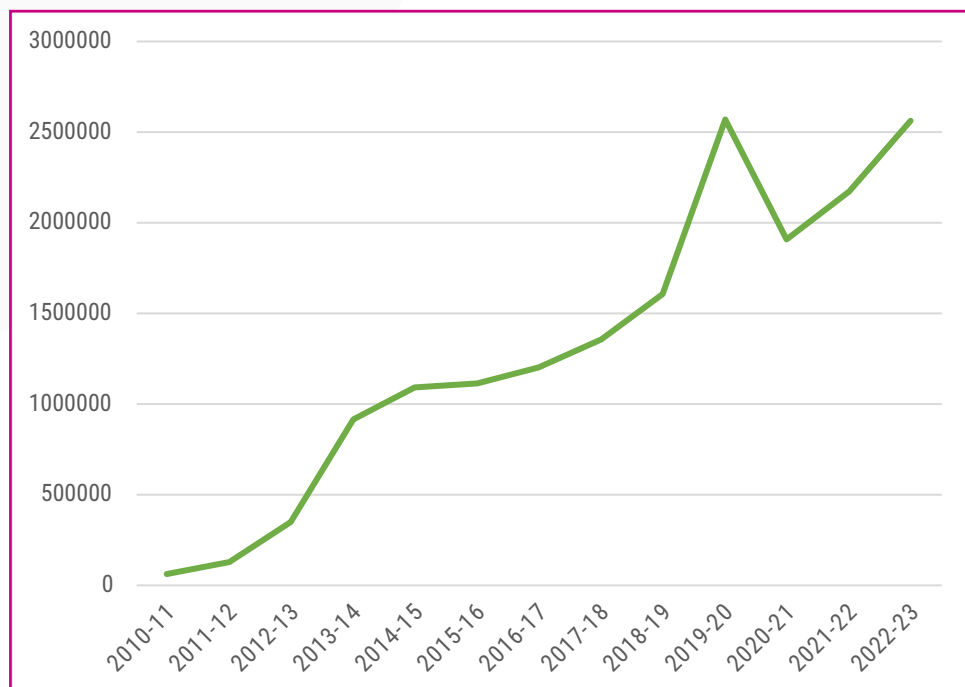
1. How could it encourage the deepening of relationships in as many ways as possible?

2. What would you do?

3. How would you encourage participation and inclusion?

If you feel the time is right, you could even do the activity.

## The nature of UK poverty



The number of Trussell Trust food parcels delivered each year.

Trussell represents around half of foodbanks in the UK, and there are thousands of other emergency food aid providers including soup kitchens and social supermarkets.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Source: [trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats](https://trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats) (accessed 28/2/2023)

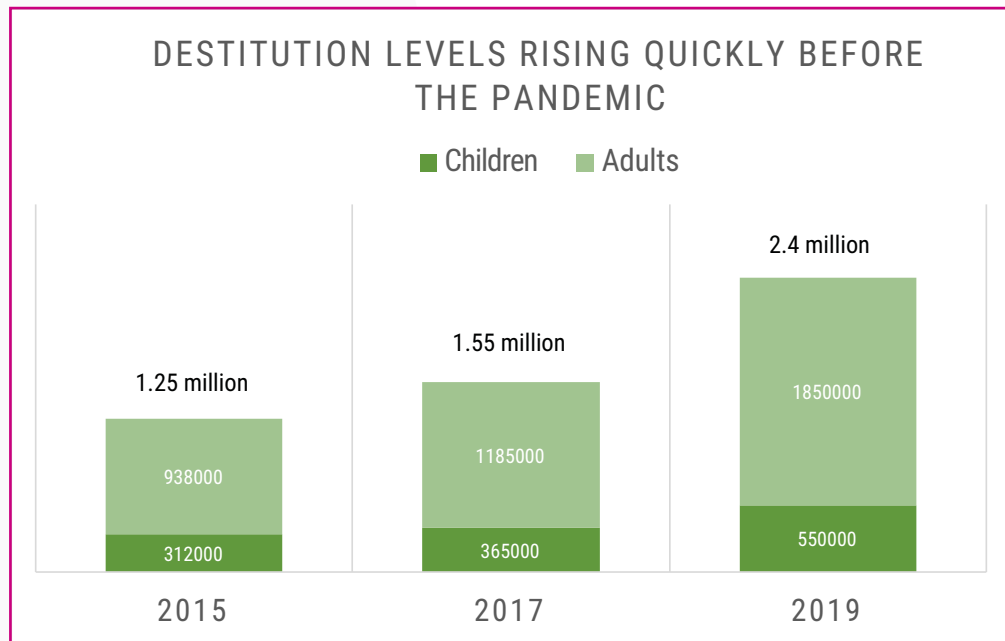
## Destitution

Destitution numbers have risen rapidly. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation defines destitution in the UK when:

a. People, or their children, have lacked two or more of these six essentials over the past month, because they cannot afford them:

- shelter (have slept rough for one or more nights)
- food (have had fewer than two meals a day for two or more days)
- heating their home (have been unable to do this for five or more days)
- lighting their home (have been unable to do this for five or more days)
- clothing and footwear (appropriate for weather)
- basic toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush)

b. People's income is so extremely low they are unable to purchase essentials for themselves or their children.<sup>11</sup>



*A community is where they know your name and where they miss you when you are not there.<sup>14</sup>*



The impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis will increase these numbers further.

### Why does poverty exist?

What are you aware of in terms of local/national history?

- "In developed societies, like the UK, poverty is a political choice. Austerity could easily have spared the poor, if the political will had existed to do so."<sup>13</sup>

11 Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [jrf.org.uk/blog/what-destitution](https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/what-destitution) (accessed 28/2/2023)

12 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk) (accessed 28/2/2023)

13 Professor Phillip Alston, *UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights*, 2018, [thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(18\)30243-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(18)30243-3/fulltext) (accessed 28/2/2023)

- In the UK, we tolerate as much as 30 per cent of the population being in poverty.
- A lack of policy and structural change, eg in the benefit system, is responsible for the rise in destitution.

### Reflection

1. Have you noticed the rise in food insecurity and food poverty?

2. Are you aware of the increasing number of people becoming destitute in your community?

3. Who is responding to these basic needs in your community?



### Core practice

Communicating the good news of God's transforming love for all people through inclusion and participation.

God created us to be in community, to need each other and contribute to one another's lives. Communities need to be built and nurtured, they don't 'just happen.' They will always require hard work, be unpredictable and be sources of great joy as well as deep tensions, arguments and difficulties. This is because all communities are made up of flawed imperfect human beings.

Celebrating inclusion means accepting different perspectives, attitudes, ideas, opinions, values and ways of thinking. Creating a safe space for this to happen is at the heart of becoming a community. Safe spaces will include being attentive to good boundaries and having good safeguarding processes which guard against the misuse of power and engage with conflict in healthy ways.

There is a danger in suggesting that there are 'normal' or 'traditionally correct' ways of doing things. Embracing difference and seeing what emerges is crucial in all new communities.

People who are not local to the community will need to resist trying to fix, correct, advise and rescue without any awareness of local knowledge or experience.

You cannot buy a community; it needs to be built and nurtured by a commitment to one another.

### How do you plan to encourage inclusion and participation?

Encourage sharing, think of ways people can contribute that are free. Sit in small groups – circles to prioritise conversation – with prompts if needed to help people.

Share food and drink in ways that celebrate the local food shops.

**Building a team:** Finding the first six to eight people to join the team is one of the key priorities of the months prior to beginning a new community. You will need to spend time together where you can – know more about each other's stories, discover each other's passions and dislikes, laugh and cry together. Exploring God and faith together will be a vital part of growing together as a team.

**Creating a rhythm of connecting to the wider community:** One-to-ones will be a priority alongside connecting with the wider community through serving, joining, listening, praying, sharing testimony and a digital presence.

**Serving:** Organise a litter pick, clean up a park, a pop-up warm drinks stand outside a local school at pick up time, volunteer with a local project responding to injustice.

**Joining:** Join community groups, eg allotment, sports project, attend community events.

**Listening:** Carry out a 'listening campaign' and discover what people enjoy about their community.

**Praying:** Take time as a team and as individuals to pray in the streets of your community. Ask God to help you notice the signs of beauty, creativity and hope.

**Tell:** As you become known in your community and people encounter your love and service, people will want to know why you are doing it. In a gentle way testimony can be sensitively shared. Always be honest about why you are present.

**Digital:** Join online community Facebook groups. Begin a social media presence that can tell the unfolding story of your community.



## Practical activity

Before the next session begin putting the core practice **Communicating the good news of God's transforming love for all people through inclusion and participation** into action.

As a group choose an activity from the list of six above and plan how you will serve or participate.

*An example of how you might plan a listening campaign*

In the community where you hope to begin a Church at the Margins everyone commits to meeting at least two local people and practices doing a listening exercise.

- Ask positive questions, such as:
- What do you enjoy about living here?
- What are you proud of?
- What would help the well-being of the community?
- What are your hopes for this community?
- If you could find a couple of people to join in what would you start?
- What do you enjoy doing so much that you forget what time it is?



## Closing prayers

Invite everyone to share one thing they would appreciate prayer for as they put the core practice into action over the coming weeks.



