

27–29 November 2020

# IGG weekend away



# Church

English speaking track



St Helen's  
Bishopsgate

# Table of contents

Talk 1: What is the church?	3
Talk 2: What is the mission of the church?	6
Seminar: Choosing and partnering with a home church	9
Talk 3: What are the means of the church's mission?	12
Talk 4: What are the marks of the church on mission?	14

# Talk 1: What is the church?

## Introduction

“A building used for public worship by Christians; or the church is a Christian organisation with its own doctrines and forms of liturgy.” — The Oxford English Dictionary

“A congregation of faithful men where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments be duly administered” — The 39 Articles of the Church of England

“Preaching, biblical theology, the gospel, conversion, evangelism, membership, discipline, discipleship, and leadership” — 9Marks

An important question for us:

- As Christians
- As evangelicals
- During COVID
- As internationals

## 1. The church is a gathering

“Church” = ἐκκλησία → “a gathering”

“The assembly (ἐκκλησία) was in confusion...he dismissed the assembly” — Acts 19:32, 41 ESVUK

Therefore, the church is not:

- A building
- A denomination

## 2. The church is the universal gathering of Christ

### God's purpose in creation

- To fill the earth with the glory of his rule

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” — Genesis 1:28 ESVUK

- To call people into relationship with him

## God's promise to Abraham

“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” —Genesis 12:2–3 ESVUK

### a. The prototype gathering – Israel around Mount Sinai

- i. Through the blood of the Passover lamb
- ii. Around God's word
- iii. For God's glory

### b. The true gathering – the church around Jesus Christ

The true offspring of Abraham = Jesus Christ

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings”, referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring”, who is Christ.” —Galatians 3:16 ESVUK

**Therefore, the true church is the gathering of Christ's people:**

- i. Through the blood of Christ
- ii. Around the word of Christ
- iii. For the glory of Christ

**But unlike Israel, this gathering is:**

- Eternal
- Global
- Heavenly

**The church is:**

“The universal, eternal, heavenly gathering of Christ's people through his blood, around his word, for his glory”

## Implications:

- The church is essential
- The church is exciting

“The church lies at the very centre of the eternal purposes of God. It is not a divine afterthought, nor is it an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God's new community, for his purpose, conceived in a past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity, is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness, but rather to build his church and to call out of the world a people for his own glory.”

## 3. The church is the local gathering of Christ

ἐκκλησία = the local gathering (in Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Colossae, Ephesus, Galatia etc)

### Unlike the universal gathering:

- Local
- Earthly
- Temporary

### Like the universal gathering:

- Through Jesus's blood
- Around his word
- For his glory

**Discussion:** How would you have defined “church” before this talk? How has this talk changed your definition? How does that affect a) the way you feel about church? b) how important you think church is?

# Talk 2: What is the mission of the church?

## Introduction

### A very relevant question:

- In the church

“To inspire and release every Christian student to pursue the biblical call to social justice.” —Just Love vision

“As a hub of creativity, courage, and compassion, we want to bring people together to build a community where all can flourish, giving the best of our time, energy, and creativity to see God's kingdom transform the spiritual, social, and physical landscape of King's Cross.” —KXC vision

“Evangelism, discipleship, service, social justice, creation care” —The 5 Marks of Mission in the Church of England

“To foster programs for better housing, schools, and community facilities, to encourage new job opportunities, to campaign and cajole and work with local government and councils, and, in short, to foster hope at any and every level...to foster and sustain lives of beauty and aesthetic meaning at every level, from music making in the village pub to drama in the local primary school, from artists' and photographers' workshops to still-life painting classes, from symphony concerts to driftwood sculptures.” —NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope*

- In society

“Silence is violence” → Extinction Rebellion, BLM

### A very consequential question:

- Women's worker or community liaison officer?
- Evangelistic course or homeless shelter?
- Governmental reform or word ministry?

### Two clarifications:

- Not a question about **what** God is doing, but **how** he is doing it
- A question about how God is doing it **through** Jesus

## 1. Jesus's mission was to preach the kingdom

“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” —Mark 1:15 ESVUK

### The kingdom of God is:

- The final establishment of God's rule on earth
- Which has now arrived in King Jesus
- Pictured in his miracles in Mark 1–2

## Two implications for our thinking about his mission:

- Jesus cares about human suffering
- Jesus cares about ending human suffering

The real problem = our rebellion against our Maker

## Therefore:

- Social justice = a surface-level solution → like a pain killer or a plaster
- The gospel = a sufficient solution
  - Calls us to turn from our rebellion
  - Offers forgiveness for our rebellion
  - Guarantees judgement on those who continue in rebellion

Hence, the kingdom grows through the word → kingdom growth in Mark 4

## Jesus's first two mission statements:

“Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” —Mark 1:38 ESVUK

“Those who are well have no need of a doctor, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” —Mark 2:17 ESVUK

Preaching in the synagogue (1:21), at home (2:2), by the seaside (2:13)

## Notice:

- The diversity of Jesus's preaching
- The priority of Jesus's preaching

## 2. Jesus's mission was to die for sin

“The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” —Mark 10:45 ESVUK

John 10 → calling his sheep and laying down his life

Luke 4 → proclaiming salvation won through his death

### 3. The church's mission is to preach the gospel

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:18–20 ESVUK

#### Four “all’s”:

- All authority
- Making disciples of all nations
- Teaching all Jesus taught
- I am with you always

#### The church's mission is:

“To make disciples of Christ by preaching the gospel of Christ concerning the rule of Christ until the return of Christ”

#### The story of the early church in Acts:

- Declaring the mighty works of God at Pentecost (2:11)
- The word of God increasing and multiplying (6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20)
- Paul in Rome (28:31)

#### Again, notice:

- The diversity of the early church's preaching
- The priority of the early church's preaching

#### Implications:

- i. The church exists to preach the gospel
- ii. Every church should prioritise gospel preaching
- iii. Every church member should prioritise gospel preaching

**Discussion:** Why is it important to see gospel preaching as the church's mission and not social justice? What difference might it make to us a) in our corporate life as a church? b) in our individual lives as Christians?



# Seminar: Choosing and partnering with a home church

## Introduction

### Why this seminar?

1. How do I choose a local church with Jesus' priorities as its priorities?
2. How do I get on board with what Jesus is doing through his church?

### What will we cover in this seminar?

1. Choose a church that you can partner with
2. Partner with the church you have chosen

### Who is this seminar for?

Workers **and** students.  
First-generation Christians **and** those with Christian families.

**Discussion (10 minutes):** What is your past experience of getting involved with your church? How do you currently feel about choosing a church to partner with? What thoughts or questions do you have about choosing a church?

## 1. Choose a church you can partner with

### What kind of church can I partner with?

#### How can Jesus' kingdom grow in the face of so much opposition?

Mark 1-4 review talks by George: [cutt.ly/JhelupA](http://cutt.ly/JhelupA)

1. The kingdom grows as Jesus' word bears astonishing fruit in a few

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. — Mark 4:20 ESVUK

2. The kingdom grows as Jesus' word bears astonishing fruit in those who listen

And when [Jesus] was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that 'they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.'" — Mark 4:10-12 ESVUK

## Choose a church that prayerfully listens to Jesus' word:

- On a Sunday – let God's word set the agenda (expository preaching)
- Throughout the week – daily treasuring God's word
- As we do evangelism – Jesus's words alone give life

The word looks unimpressive

**Discussion (5 minutes):** How has Mark's gospel changed your priorities of what to value when choosing a local church?

## How do I actually choose?

- A free choice
- A selfless choice  
Philippians 1:25–2:4
- Some implications from Sam Allberry's *'Why bother with church?'*
  - Plan ahead
  - Be discerning
  - Don't take too long
  - Don't be too quick

**Discussion (5 minutes):** Share your experience in choosing a church so far (either St Helen's, or elsewhere), do you tend to take too long or be too quick? Knowing this is a free and selfless choice, how might you approach things differently?

## Why do we need to choose one local church?

- Because we need to be in one **local church**  
1 Corinthians 12:12–26
- Because we need to be in **one** local church
- Some possible implications:
  - Leaving a church to partner with one local church
  - Honouring your parents while leaving their church?

**Discussion (10 minutes):** If you already know where you are moving in the near future, what church do you have in mind to choose? Why choose that church? If you are not sure where you will be in a few years time, how has this seminar so far encouraged or challenged your thoughts on choosing one local church?

## 2. Partner with the church you've chosen

### What does it mean to partner with your home church?

- Partnering = doing ministry together

Philippians 1:27–30

- Ministry together = every-member proclamation

Ephesians 4:1-16

- Proclamation = upward + outward focus

[...] the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. —1 Timothy 3:15-16 ESVUK

### What doesn't it mean?

- Being a consumer instead of a member
- Being an attendee instead of a partner

### How do you partner with your home church?

- Hand – become the slave of all (Mark 10:42–45)
- Heart – prayerfully submit to your leaders (Hebrews 13:17–18)  
Pray for St Helen's: <https://www.st-helens.org.uk/get-involved/pray/>
- Head – decide to commit every day (Hebrews 3:12–14)
- Tongue – encourage each other to keep going (Hebrews 3:13–14)

**Discussion (10 minutes):** How has today's seminar changed the way you think about partnering with your home church by putting it into its biblical context? What might be difficult about putting this into practice? How can you put this into practice now at St Helen's in preparation for partnering with your future home church?

**Pray in groups (5 minutes)**

# Talk 3: What are the means of the church's mission?

## Introduction

- A daunting task
- An increasingly difficult task
- A few competing answers:
  - The liberal answer → change the gospel (prosperity gospel, social gospel, liberal gospel)
  - The traditionalist answer → rely on nostalgia for ritual and religion
  - The charismatic answer → signs and wonders, healings, tongues, prophecies
    - John Wimber, *Power Evangelism*
    - Alpha “Spirit weekend”

### John 16:4–15

- Didactic, not descriptive
- General, not reactionary

Context: what would be the means of the disciples' mission in a world without Jesus?

## 1. The Spirit's witness

### a. His identity

Helper = παράκλητος → “one who calls aside” → an encourager/exhorter/preacher

John 14:16:

- “Another Helper” → continuing Jesus's ministry
- “The Spirit of truth” → focussed on Jesus's word

### b. His work

To convict = “to bring a person to the point of recognising wrong-doing”

- Concerning sin
- Concerning righteousness
- Concerning judgement

The Spirit's work = filling the world with the glory of God's rule, in order to call the world into relationship with him

## Implications:

- i. The Spirit is essential to our mission
- ii. The Spirit is sufficient for our mission
- iii. The Spirit is focussed on our mission

How does the Spirit bear witness?

## 2. The apostles' word

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”—John 16:13 ESVUK

### The apostles' words will be:

- True → “he will guide you into all the **truth**”
- Sufficient → “he will guide you into **all** the truth”
- Authoritative → “he will take what is **mine** and declare it to you”
- Glorious → “he will **glorify** me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you”

The means of our mission = the Spirit's witness through the apostles' words (in the Bible)

### Four ways to put the ministry of the Spirit through the word at centre of our life as a church:

- i. Expository Bible teaching
- ii. Every-member ministry
- iii. The Lord's supper and baptism

The Lord's supper = a picture of Jesus's death

Baptism = a picture of our death and resurrection in him

“The ministry of the Word and sacrament is a single ministry, the Word proclaiming, and the sacrament dramatising, God's promises. Yet the Word is primary, since without it the sign becomes dark in meaning.”

- iv. Spiritual gifts

“Let all things be done for building up” —1 Corinthians 14:26 ESVUK

**Discussion:** How has this talk changed the way you think about a) the work of the Spirit? b) the importance of the Bible? What difference might it make a) when we meet as a church? b) when you choose a home church?

# Talk 4: What are the marks of the church on mission?

## Introduction

“Marks” = distinctive features, family traits, give-away characteristics

- Churches often look unattractive to outsiders
- Churches often look different to one another
- Churches have changed dramatically since COVID

### The church in Thessalonica

- A young church (3:1, 3:6, cf. Acts 17:2)
- An exemplary church (1:7)

“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of **faith** and labour of **love** and steadfastness of **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.” —1 Thessalonians 1:2–3 ESVUK

## 1. The church is marked by steadfast faith

### a. Faith means receiving the gospel

First half of the letter = 1:1–3:13 → divided by two thanksgivings (1:2–3, 2:13)

- The gospel came with power, the Holy Spirit, and full conviction (1:4–5)  
Acts 17:2-3 → the gospel = “This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.”
- The gospel was received as the word of God (2:13)

### b. Faith means being steadfast through suffering

- Receiving the word in much affliction (1:6, 2:14)
- In imitation of Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles (1:6, 2:14, 2:15)
- Resisting the temptation to fall away (3:5, 3:8)

### c. Faith means depending on God in prayer

- Two prayers of thanksgiving (1:2–3, 2:13)
- Two prayers of supplication (3:11–13, 5:23–24)

## 2. The church is marked by brotherly love

The defining mark of God's people in the OT (Leviticus 19:18) and in the NT (John 13:35, Galatians 5:14)

Therefore:

### a. Love does not look like the world

- Holiness = set apart (3:13, 4:3, 4, 7)
- Not worldly lust (4:2–8), but brotherly love (4:9–12)

### b. Love does look like Paul

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you” — 1 Thessalonians 3:12 ESVUK

- Concerned for one another's faith (2:17–20, 3:6–13)
- Sharing one another's lives (2:8)
- Working hard for one another's good (2:9, 4:11–12)
- Encouraging one another with the truth (4:18, 5:11)

## 3. The church is marked by patient hope

Hope = waiting for God's Son to come from heaven (1:10)

### a. Hope means watchful waiting for wrath

- Not ignorant, so that God's judgement should surprise us (5:2–3)
- But rather walking in the light, awake, sober, fully armed (5:4–8)

### b. Hope means certain confidence of resurrection

- Delivered from the coming wrath (1:10)
- Destined to obtain salvation (5:9–10)
- Going to be with him forever (4:17)

What better place to finish the church weekend...

**Discussion:** Which 'mark' do you think you most need to grow in? What might it look like to do so a) during Covid? b) in the way you treat your IGG group this year? Spend a few minutes sharing and praying in your group.