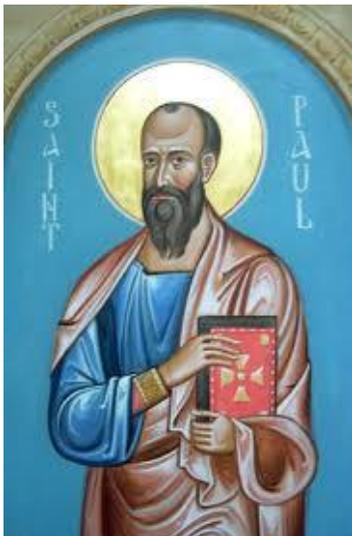


**July 21<sup>st</sup> Sat 7.** Visiting Speakers sharing about mission using the media in the Arab World.

**July 28<sup>th</sup> Character and Spirituality for Mission.**

**Acts 28: 17-31. Luke 22:24-38**

In many ways this should have been the first session in this series of Acts ending today. We see the passion and zeal of Paul in the ending of what Bishop Steven calls the Passion Narrative of Paul. Paul knows he will be put to death for his faith in Rome but he has followed the course anyway. What characteristics do we need to remain faithful to the mission of God? How do we cultivate these characteristics? How do we remain full of the Presence and Spirit of God? How can we develop our characters in perseverance, trust, encouragement, thankfulness, passion, zealous, boldness, faithfulness, expectancy...?



**CCP Spring/Summer Series:**  
**Mission in the book of Acts**

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses....” Acts 1:8*



At the beginning of the Book of Acts Jesus tells the disciples to wait for the promised Holy Spirit who would give them power to be witnesses both in their home city but also to the ends of the earth. During the Summer months we are going to follow in the footsteps of those early Christians who go from a very frightened minority to being bold witnesses who criss-crossed the known world with the message of Jesus, the Saviour, both crucified and risen. Within a few years they were accused of having turned the world upside down as they went everywhere to make Jesus known. Today to be a Christian is to put yourself in a small minority in a country which has mostly forgotten who Jesus is. I know that God is still the same and His promise of the Holy Spirit is still there for you and I to be bold witnesses to family and friends, to our neighbourhoods and in our workplaces and who knows maybe for some of us to the ends of the earth. There is no more exciting work for us to do. Philip

**Week one: April 21<sup>st</sup> The Conversion of Cities. Acts 9:32-**

**43. John 10:22-30.**



Acts 9:35 *“All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord.”* And 9v42 *“This (miracle) became known all over Joppa and many people believed in the Lord.”* We see in this story Peter travelling about visiting believers all over to encourage, teach and in this case raise one of the disciples from the dead! The activity of the Christians is noticed by those living in the vicinity and many turn to Christ as a result of the lifestyle of the believers and the miracles and answered

prayers they see. The atmosphere of faith and expectancy for miracles is challenging to us today. What would it look like for Pitsmoor and Burngreave to turn to the Lord? How can we grow in our expectancy of seeing more people turn to the Lord? What was it about the disciples and Peter that meant they saw the kind of large scale turning to Christ that they saw? Throughout history there have been such occurrences so it was not just an Early Church Phenomenon; study the Welsh revival and the revival in the Hebrides in Scotland or Bishop Steven often talks about Charles Finney and the ministry he saw. In China today thousands of people “turn to the Lord everyday”, why not in Sheffield? How can we overcome the obstacles we might see are stopping people exploring faith? Are they spiritual, mental or intellectual?



**July 14<sup>th</sup> Pioneers and Settlers. What is your role?**

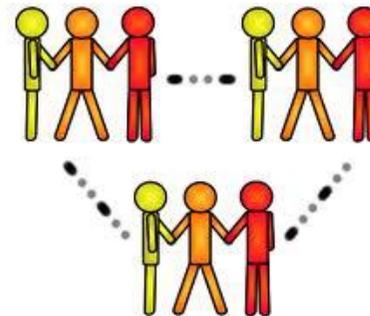
**Acts 20:13-36. Luke 19:11-27.**

Bishop Steven says that Acts 20 is a key chapter for thinking about the life of the church. What is this chapter saying to you and about your role in



CCP? Where do we need to take up a new role? Where do we see someone who is doing a role that they need to be released from in order to do the thing they are really good at? God has made all of us to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and

pastors our Ephesians series last year taught us – which is your particular role or gift? Where are there evangelists and apostles who need to be relieved of some pastoral duties in order to focus on the mission of God?



**July 7<sup>th</sup> Mission and Culture. Acts 17:1-4, 16-34. Luke 5:27-39.**

The gospel is for everybody! And in Acts we see the Apostles using different approaches with different people; being a missionary means to speak the gospel into the context in an inspired and meaningful way. It is not one size fits all; God is creative and wants us to be creative in making his message speak deeply into every part of our society; how can we see an unlocking of God's message bringing liberation, salvation and healing to every culture in our area and city? God loves everyone and wants expressions of church amongst every people group; poor, rich, old, young, cool, not so cool, Goths, golfers, girl guides and gig goers. Who is Jesus to the people you know? The Luke passage included the metaphor of new wine and new wineskins – what might this mean for our mission?



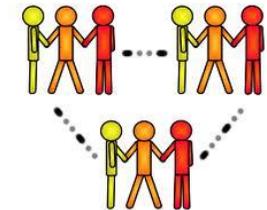
**April 28<sup>th</sup> The Conversion of Peter. Acts 11:1-18. John 13:31-35**



One scholar calls Acts 10 the Conversion of Peter rather than the conversion of Cornelius because this story is **more** about the church and Peter changing its rules and ecclesiology [the way they “do church”] for the benefit of its mission and God’s initiative.

God’s initiative through the Holy Spirit is more at work than Peter and breaking the rules in spreading the message in new ways and Peter has to catch up. Where do we as a church need to catch up with what God is doing? Where are we putting our structures and rules above the mission of God and as a result in need of repentance? Where do we need converting?

**May 5<sup>th</sup> The Conversion of Lydia. Acts 16:9-15 John 5:1-9**



Lydia was a person open and ready to receive the message about Jesus – so ready that Paul planted a church in her house and left after less than a week. The Holy Spirit had called Paul by a vision to go over to Macedonia as the Spirit had prepared this new work. Where might the Spirit be calling you and us as a whole church to engage more deeply in mission with our own friends, networks and connections as well as with the people within our parish, and the needy?

## May 12<sup>th</sup> The Conversion of the Philippian Jailor.

### Acts 16:16-34. John 17:20-26.

Liberation is a metaphor for salvation for Luke [the writer of Acts] and it is a priority for the Holy Spirit. Liberation for captives was a part of the ministry of Jesus cf. Lk 4:18. The real captive prisoner in this story is the one holding others physically in prison but whom is the one in need of liberation by hearing the message of Jesus Christ for the first time. Miraculous signs, angels and whole families coming to know the Lord were normative for Christians in the Early Church – such a challenge to us to expect more as it is the same Holy Spirit that can work through us.

### May 19<sup>th</sup> Pentecost. Acts 2:1-21. John 14:4-15.

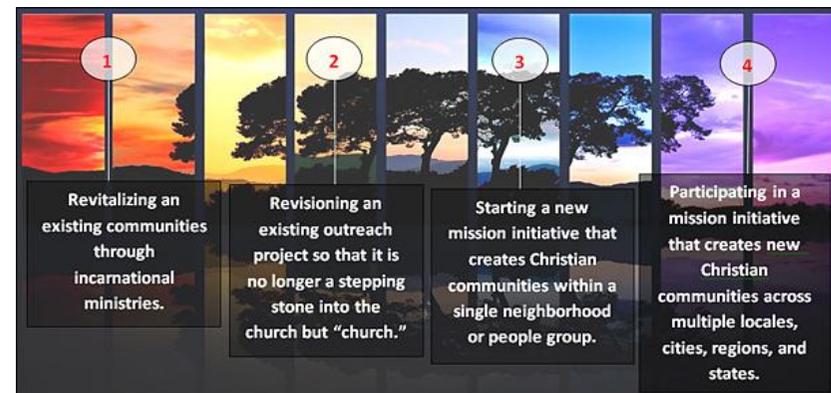


We have studied conversion; this week we go back to where it all started – the outpouring and equipping of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit at work in us is what will enable us to see the kind of things the early church saw. The Holy Spirit is not a force or a ghost – it is the very nature of God himself who lives inside of us. We see on the day of Pentecost some rather peculiar sights that

were just signs of the power of God coming to people and filling them up with the very presence of an Almighty God; fire, the gift of tongues, confidence and boldness to preach and the people acting like they were drunk. Many mindsets, boxes for God and comfort zones were shattered that day; what about ours?

### June 30<sup>th</sup> Church & Mission in Tension. Acts 15:1-21. Luke 4:14-30

We often don't realise how close Christianity came to becoming another faction within Judaism; another "great idea to get God to accept us" the same as the Pharisees, Essenes or Sadducees. The Early Church very nearly didn't get the gospel that Jesus had made a way to God for us; they had to work some things out together! For a time converts to Christ had to first become a Jew and follow some of the rituals like circumcision – this is not the gospel! The conversion of Cornelius and Peter, the work of Paul amongst the Gentiles and of course the conviction of the Holy Spirit caused a policy change over this. The recounting of how this new practice was worked out is found in Acts and chapter 15 is the conclusion of the church deciding *that "we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."* What stops the people you know believing in God? What stops them coming to church if they do believe in God? What could we do about these things? Do we make it "harder" for non-churched people to turn to God because we like things to be done "our way"? The Early Church did for a time! Thankfully the Holy Spirit showed them that they needed to change for the sake of mission. The Antioch church did preserve some rules and advice for the Gentiles to follow however - what truths or practices are we right to preserve regardless of other people's opinions and persecution? *[the picture below is four strategies for mission in new ministries & transitioning existing ones]*



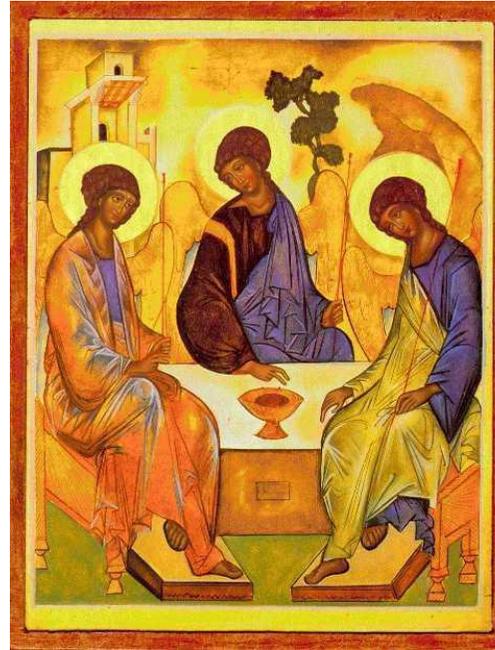
**June 16<sup>th</sup> A Reluctant Missionary: Ananias. Acts 9:1-19a. Luke 12:22-34.**

We might not all be Paul the Apostle or Billy Graham but we can all do what Ananias did and be such a significant cog in God's work. Obedience and stepping out in faith in small ways can leave huge impacts beyond what we expect. How do we deal with intimidation in sharing our faith? We see in the believers in Acts boldness and courage to speak out. How much place does fear have in our life in general? The command "Do not fear" is in the Bible 365 times – it's a bit of a cliché but there is one for everyday of the year. Let's ask God today to help us overcome fear and consider how we might be an increasingly fearless people.

**June 23<sup>rd</sup> Mission Comradeship: Paul and Barnabas. Acts 13:42-14:7. Luke 5:1-11.**

There is so much to reflect on here about how different personalities, gifts, temperaments and callings can work together in mission. However it is not always easy and even this great partnership went on to end in an altercation. The fruit of working together is obvious; how can we do this more at CCP and more widely? Like Barnabas who included Paul and John Mark, how can we encourage and include more people in our mission and all that we do at CCP? Who is God calling you to work with and maybe invite to an Alpha@home with? Who is God calling you to share life with more closely at CCP and perhaps begin a work for those in need? Which relationships at CCP are most significant for you and how are you investing in them and building depth in relationship? What steps could you make this Summer to make this vision a reality?

**May 26<sup>th</sup> Trinity Sunday: The Mission of God. Acts 1:1-11. John 1:1-18**



The gospel at its very heart is all about mission because it is the outworking of God's mission to save us. We get our word mission from the Latin word *Missio* meaning sent. God as Trinity sent the Son on a mission. God loved the world so much that he left heaven and moved into our neighbourhood [John 1 in the Message]. The Trinity is a relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we are invited into that relationship when we turn to God and receive the Holy Spirit.

The next part of the mission of God [or *Missio Dei* as the Doctrine is formally called] was the Holy Spirit was sent and He now sends us. Our identity as a

sent people comes from the identity of the Trinity. The word *missio* corresponds to the Greek *apostoloi* which means *people sent* or apostles. We are called to be apostles like the early church had apostles ; to be sent out to new frontiers in mission. Reaching out to more and more people; it is the heart of the Trinity as we see from the whole Narrative of the Old and New Testaments.

In the incarnation and as Jesus was on the cross the Trinity was stretched to its limits; it is hard to comprehend and in many ways incomprehensible to imagine how Jesus was still God on the cross etc etc. But we can still reflect and ask where do we need to be open to stretching as we are sent out and as we welcome people into our church? Being witnesses is Greek *Marturio* – where we get the word martyr. Mission is sacrificial as it was for Christ and the martyrs.

June 2<sup>nd</sup> Transforming Communities. Acts 2:42-47&Acts 4:23-36. Luke 14:16-23.



Many church planters maintain that the basic components for church are in Acts 2:42. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, prayer and breaking bread.” A friend I know when working with new believers has simplified this to “Share life, share food, share stories, share prayer.” Do you agree? These two chapters give a hugely challenging account of believers sharing life, prayer and being on mission together; mission is so implicit it is not even mentioned specifically! How could CCP look more like the Acts community? What are we doing well at and where could we develop?



June 9<sup>th</sup> New Frontiers: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Acts 8:4-7, 26-40. Luke 10:1-12.

After the persecution, as was predicted, the disciples are spread out from Jerusalem and next to Samaria [cf. Acts 1:8]. Philip is sent out as an Apostle with the message and we see God’s heart for nations and many different people as Philip reaches out to many new frontiers of people and ethnic groups. Interestingly it is God who keeps opening the doors; all Philip did was say yes to the Holy Spirit’s instruction [v27] and he gets on with it immediately [v28]. He goes! He doesn’t stay put. The role of teaching and Scripture in mission is interesting here. Who are you discipling and teaching the word to? Where is God opening doors for you?

