

MAY IS CHRISTIANITY MONTH

Chris Briggs

CHRIS BRIGGS SHARES AN EXCITING VISION AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ENGAGEMENT THIS SPRING/SUMMER.

I want to invite you to grasp a vision and to discover missional and evangelistic opportunities through it!

During a holiday in 2022, as I lay on a sunbed minding my own business, I felt God laid on my heart Christianity Month, a little like other months which are designated as special times of observance or celebration (e.g. Black History Month).

I sensed this was an idea to share and try within Littleover Methodist Church in Derby where I have pastoral charge, but that if others affirmed the vision it should be offered to the wider Christian Church. The church agreed to go ahead and in May 2023 'Christianity Month' took place. It was a month of celebration and intentional mission sharing the good news of Jesus with others in word and action. It bore visible fruit in so many ways.

Although the idea is very flexible here are some of the things we did in my local context:

- a launch event entitled 'What on earth has Christianity done for this country?'
- a comedy night with a Christian comedian
- using the opportunity of the coronation of King Charles III to make a link with a community celebration for people to find out more about 'the King', and a pizza party for young people with testimony from the youth leader

- a family treasure hunt around the neighbourhood (with a focus on Christian heritage)
- weaving workshops, which also made links with Jesus the Shepherd
- offering a lesson for schools
- organising courses for those wanting to find out more about the Christian faith.

The four Sunday services in May were Guest Services, with testimony and opportunities for response to the gospel. The regular weekly programme was pivoted to be invitational and missional and we asked every group of the church to try to adjust their programme accordingly. We had displays of art by church members, musicians sharing in music and song in our café, home groups thinking up evangelistic activities, and a whole lot more!

Planning is well on its way for May 2024, including a Christian theatre group; scientists with Christian faith attending schools to talk about God and the Big Bang; Messy Church in May (part of our regular programme); a Holiday Club; and a whole lot more. There will be a launch event in April with a Christian MP speaking on what Christianity has done for Politics, Community and Society.

The vision of 'Christianity Month' works for churches, Churches Together groups, para-church organisations, schools, colleges, universities, Christian Charities, individuals, business, civic groups, denominations, independent churches, multi faith groups and chaplaincies ... in fact, the list is endless!

Part of the vision of Christianity Month is 'the sum of the parts is greater than the whole'. As more churches, para-church organisations, Christian charities and so forth get on board, the momentum builds and becomes so much more than individual churches doing their own thing. Just imagine how some special months and weeks have been so successful. This could happen with Christianity Month!

It is not designed to replace ongoing mission during the year, but rather an opportunity to focus our mission and to remind society that the Christian faith does have so much that is positive to offer. The idea is to dream, imagine, try things and to enjoy it as much as possible. It is likely that 'Christianity Month' will draw your church or organisation together in unity of purpose, encourage visionary creativity, help people to move past their usual comfort zones, enable Christians to grow, and encourage people to become disciples of Jesus. How exciting is that?!

I invite you to take up the vision of 'Christianity Month' and to spread it. Start planning now! Feel free to contact me and to check out the links in this article.

LINKS

See Littleover Methodist Church's 2023 Launch for Christianity Month with Michael Harvey, Visiting Fellow, St John's College, Durham University in part 1 of the evening and the Q&A with the Expert Panel in Part 2:

- youtube.com/watch?v=IP85Drdh5Bw&t=249s
- youtube.com/watch?v=1b3CLU_mgZo&t=1495s

Information Sheet available on the MET website

facebook.com/groups/975020040393375
or search on Facebook for the Christianity Month Group

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The Revd Chris Briggs is Chair-elect of Methodist Evangelicals Together and District Mission Enabler of The Methodist Church Nottingham and Derby District. He also has pastoral charge for Littleover Church and St Martin's Church in Derby.

