

Things that churches do

Healing on the streets

AIM

This is part of a series of documents giving concrete examples of evangelistic activities which other churches have been involved in. It aims to offer inspiration for others who may wish to look at similar activities.

INTRODUCTION

It is Saturday morning in the Diamond, in Coleraine, Northern Ireland.

PREPARATIONS:

It is 10.20 a.m. on Saturday 17th April 2010. It is a cold but dry and cloudy day with the sun breaking through from time to time. The Diamond is a large paved area in the centre of the town with the Town Hall set in the middle of it. This provides two quite large areas surrounded by shops where people walk and sit and go about their business. To the front of the Town Hall one of the political groups is selling its wares in preparation for the election. On the other side of the Town Hall a small group of people come from below the square pushing a high sided trolley containing six chairs, a large banner and its support and a music system. There are four men and two women.

By 10.35 a.m. the equipment is all in place. The banner is large and clear and placed where passers-by can clearly see it. It simply says HEALING on it. The music system and coffee equipment is against the back wall of the Town Hall and the six chairs are spaced out across the pavement a few feet away from the building.

The group now numbering 14 of us are kneeling in the centre of the square praying because the ministry that is about to start. Five years of experience has taught the church to provide kneelers for its ministry team. They are needed both at this point and during the next two and a half hours when people will sit on the seats and those praying crouch, kneel or sit around them. The prayers are about God's love for the people of Coleraine and about his grace available to them. The prayers make it clear that the ministry is about God's love, about Jesus' continuing work on earth and about the Holy Spirit's presence and power to work today. The people pray that God will make his presence known and his power to help the needy people of their community.

There are 25 members of the team and they don't have rotas. A few are present nearly every week. Others come whenever they can. They believe that the right people will be present to meet with and relate to those whom God will send on any particular Saturday. The team leader who made me very welcome was only there because his flight to Germany where he should have been speaking had been cancelled.

Some members of the team are there nearly every week - others less frequently. There is a good mixture of men and women and on this occasion more men than women. The general rule is that men pray for men and women pray for women but it certainly wasn't strictly adhered to on this occasion. Every member of the team has been trained. They know what to do/say and what not to do/say. Members of the team are committed to the work in both the best of weather and in the worst of weather. They are there come rain or shine 52 weeks of the year.

PRESENTATION:

It is 10.45 a.m. and the ministry has started. There is one person sitting on a seat and being prayed for by 3 people. There are a number of others wandering around the edge of the square with simple leaflets explaining what is on offer and who is doing the praying. Over

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the next two hours about 12 people take a seat and at least 2 of the team members ask their need and offer prayers for them. Some weeks there are less who ask for prayer, sometimes there are more. Some people come back over a number of weeks, some are never seen again. Some join the church, at least one man who spoke to me eventually joined the team.

(Wilson told me his story and it was quite dramatic. He turned up one Saturday about 4 years ago as "a heckler" – his term not mine. For a couple of weeks, he argued with members of the team and asked lots of questions. On the third week he allowed them to pray for him. His story was one of colossal lack of self worth, of drugs and alcohol and failed attempts at suicide. The prayer made a difference in itself and a few weeks later he felt the urge to go to the church. (Anyone new receiving prayer is given an envelope with some details about the church and a welcome to know more if they want it.) His life was beginning to turn round. Some time after this he made a commitment to Christ and began a discipleship journey that eventually led to his acceptance as part of the team where he is now able to give back some of the blessings he has received.)

It is 1 p.m. and the team is beginning to pack up. The last person had been prayed for and it is time to go home and get warm.

PURPOSE

The church wants to bless the community in which it is set. It wants to pray for people in need of prayer and to offer this ministry in the public square to anyone who will come and receive it. In the process the church prays the love and power of God into the lives of a few people within their community who want to receive that prayer in the name of Jesus. The church believes that God wants to meet people wherever they may be and whether they are people of faith or not – and that he both desires and is able to do them good.

- IT IS HEALING ON THE STREETS

[Note: Over the five years in which this church has been offering this ministry they have seen some dramatic healings but most go away encouraged in their faith and blessed by the experience without being healed of their symptoms.]

Each Saturday morning there are about 100 venues across Europe where churches are conducting this ministry. Some of the teams – as in Coleraine – belong to a particular church. Others are teams drawn from a number of churches.]

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more material for evangelism year please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

This material has been provided by John Hall who chairs the Vision4Life Evangelism team.

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HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group and the coordinator about general issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

Website issues can be dealt with through web@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:
Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk