

OFFERING HOPE IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

Rachel Jordan-Wolf

RACHEL JORDAN-WOLF SHARES EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANGELISM IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES TO REACH OUT TO OUR COMMUNITIES WITH HOPE IN 2023 AND 2024.

'Will everything be OK?' was the question that most resonated with the UK population at the beginning of 2022. With the continued twists and turns of events as we begin 2023, it doesn't look like that question is going to go away.

This response was part of the latest 'Talking Jesus' research, helping us to understand more about those outside the church and how people come to faith. The research in 2022 was done in partnership with The Evangelical Alliance, Alpha, The Luis Palau Association, Christian Vision Global and KingsGate Community Church. You can find all the research at www.talkingjesus.org.

One of the discoveries of the research was that the biggest influence in bringing adults to faith (23%) was a life event - either positive or negative. Last year, as a nation, we went through several collective negative life events. The pandemic, the impact of the war in Ukraine, the death of the Queen, the rise in fuel prices and the economic storm: all this means that right now people in the UK are asking questions and seeking reassurance about life. Along with the practical needs that they face, they are also more open to finding spiritual and religious answers to help them in life.

Here at Hope, we have looked at this season and have gathered leaders from across the denominations and organisations to

initiate a united year of mission and evangelism at this crucial time: 'HOPE 23-24'. The goal of the year is to bring churches together to reach out in refreshed, renewed mission and evangelism in towns, villages, and cities; all of us coming together under the umbrella of the word 'HOPE' - our prayer is for everyone, everywhere to know Jesus.

Dr Amy Orr-Ewing, a leading Christian speaker and evangelist who came to the launch and is part of the steering group for Hope 23-24, said: 'Mission has never been more important or urgent than it is today in this season that we find ourselves in. I look forward to joining in and strongly endorse the vision and momentum of 23-24.'

HOPE 23-24 is an invitation to reach out with the love and message of Jesus to our villages, towns, and cities. We can do this through what we say, speaking clearly about the hope we have in Jesus, and what we do, sharing the love of Jesus with practical actions and support. Above all, we need to do this together: to 'hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful' (Hebrews 10:23).



Archbishop Justin Welby, one of the patrons of Hope Together, said at the launch: 'Every moment, every day we are called to speak confidently and humbly about the news of the gospel. These are the conversations that have eternal significance. We must spur each other on to good works, working together with love and honesty as a united church'. He encouraged everyone to unite for HOPE 23-24.

We have some key stages to HOPE 23-24.

Join the united year of mission
www.hope2324.com

SHARING THE VISION

We are sharing the Talking Jesus research everywhere, explaining why now is the time for mission and evangelism and encouraging people to get on board with HOPE 23-24. If you would like someone from the team to come and share the key messages from Talking Jesus to help people catch a vision for Hope 23-24 where you are, get in touch with us at the Hope office.

The simplest thing is to run the Talking Jesus course which is developed with KingsGate Community Church and the Church of England. The course will help everyone get involved as the Talking Jesus research shows that we are the right people in the right place to help our friends and family find out about Jesus. Dave Smith, Senior Pastor from KingsGate Community Church, Peterborough said about the course that 'we wanted a video-based course to prepare each member of our church

to make the most of every opportunity to share their faith. This creative and engaging course fits the bill.'

PRAYER

Pastor Agu, one of the patrons of Hope Together, focussed on prayer at the launch event of HOPE 23-24. He said: 'The two major precursors to the revival we desire are prayer and the unity of the church. As patron of Hope, I believe HOPE 23-24 will be significant in the purposes of God to unite us to serve our communities.'

That's why we're calling Christians to pray and to do it together. We're looking to see every home and street prayed for. It's a big task, but united across the nation we believe it is possible. Would you join us by praying for the streets and homes in your community? We have a simple app, the Oikos app, which you can use to mark the places for which you have prayed. Together we can see that every street in the UK is prayed for by the Church. We've also just released new resources to help us all listen and pray. One of these is '3 in 23' - go to www.hopetogether.org.uk to find out more.

IDEAS

We're creating a portal full of helpful ideas and stories for churches and Christians to get inspiration for mission and evangelism during HOPE 23-24. The dream is that Christians across local churches in villages, towns or cities will unite and dream dreams together.

The portal is super practical with stories to help you imagine what you could do in your community and area. For example, setting up a Hope space either for a day, a week or like the Christians in Bedford who ended up running a Hope space for

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over a year! They worked together to rent a local shop, next to Primark and Costa, with the aim of creating a space where people could come to experience God themselves – and they did! When they were able to open the space to the public, this particular young woman got talking to a church volunteer, who then arranged an online Bible study with her, which led to the woman giving her life to Jesus.

The idea for Hope spaces came out of the Talking Jesus research that told us 20% of practising Christians who came to faith as adults said that a spiritual experience was a key influence in their journey to faith. A Hope space enables people to pray and be prayed for to experience God for themselves; it also helps them go further on their journey by making sure there is plenty of material that they can take with them to read. This is especially important as the Talking Jesus research also showed that 19% of adult converts were influenced by reading the Bible for themselves and 10% by other Christian printed media. However, you don't have to have a shop to set up a HOPE Space. Your church could run one in a gazebo in a garden, a park or on a high street, or in a place of work or a school – anywhere in your village, town or city that is easily accessible to members of the public.

To find out more visit our story page on the Hope website and sign up to e-news so that you don't miss the portal launch in Spring 2023.

PLANNING AND EQUIPPING

Here at Hope, we want to help people pray and plan for turning those dreams into reality. Getting together, gathering resources, training the team, commissioning everyone and making sure everything is ready to GO! Whether it's just a couple of people together or whole areas involved we want everyone to feel ready. Our new website www.hopetogether.org.uk is packed full of great resources to help your church now with mission and evangelism, from the magazines to beautiful gospels that people will want to pick up and take away! Come and visit and see how we could partner together.

MISSION MOMENTS

We will be going out as harvesters into the harvest field together, reaching out with the love and message of Jesus throughout the year of mission. Some churches will just do one thing, and that's brilliant; others might have a whole programme of events, which is excellent. We will be encouraging everyone to make Easter 2024 a special time of mission. This is because the Talking Jesus research shows us that 45% of the UK population believe in the resurrection. This was the biggest stand out statistic; 16% believe it word for word and another 29% believe it, but have some questions. The Talking Jesus research also showed us that the question which resonated most across all age groups was about life after death. Easter is our moment to help people know that there is eternal hope because of Jesus. So don't miss out on the resources for this – make sure that you are signed up to e-news to find out and receive everything you need to join in the ALIVE project for Easter 2024.

CELEBRATION

We want to mark the end of the year of mission with celebration! Thanking God for all that he has done through his Church at this time. We're so excited about celebrating together!

We would love to partner with you next year for this year of united mission, Hope 23-24. Join in as together we offer hope in Jesus Christ. Find out more www.hopetogether.org.uk

Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf is the Executive Director of HOPE Together. She has always been passionate that others meet and come to know Jesus Christ. She has worked with YWAM amongst prostitutes in the red-light district of Amsterdam and has done a PhD at Kings College London. She leads the HOPE together team as they equip and inspire local churches to reach out with the good news of Jesus. Previously she was the Church of England's National Mission and Evangelism Adviser and is still connected to the Anglican church as her husband Darren leads a church plant in East London where she is actively involved.



ROMANS 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.