

May is Christianity Month

Background:

During a holiday in 2022 Chris Briggs felt God was putting on his heart the idea of "Christianity Month", a little like other months are designated as special times of observance or celebration (e.g., Black History Month). He had a sense that this was an idea to share and try within his local church, Littleover Methodist Church in Derby where he is Minister, but that if others affirmed the vision it should be offered to the wider Christian Church. The vision was shared with the local church which agreed to go ahead locally and in 2023 "May is Christianity Month" took place. It bore visible fruit in a number of ways and reflection and reviews following the month were extremely positive. 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!

Christianity Month

Principles:



This is a month of Celebration and intentional Mission sharing the good news of Jesus with others in word and action focused on May. It is a flexible time which can be celebrated and delivered by small churches and larger churches.

It can be:

- one event, a developed programme during the month, or anything in between;
- evangelistic, focusing on social action and justice, a celebration of the contribution of Christianity to society, or all of these;
- ecumenical, focused on one Chapel, or a group of churches within a denomination;
- an opportunity to work with other partners, e.g., local Councils and Councillors, educational establishments, civic dignitaries, businesses, charities, and so the list goes on;
- no financial cost or have a budget;
- a simple idea which does not need lots of people;
- a time to link with other important dates in the Christian calendar, e.g., "Thy Kingdom Come" and Pentecost;
- something Christians and the Church can unite behind.



Part of the vision of Christianity Month is that **"the sum of the parts is greater than the whole"**. As more churches, para-church organisations, Christian charities etc get on board the momentum builds and becomes so much more than just some individual churches doing their own thing. Just imagine how some of the special months and weeks that are observed have been so successful that society makes a point of acknowledging them each year. This could happen with Christianity Month!

A key principle is that this is **not designed to replace ongoing mission during the year**. It is an opportunity to focus our mission and to remind society that the Christian Faith does have so much that is positive to offer.

Ideas:

Because this is so flexible the suggestions here should not be seen as limiting in any way. They simply arise out of experience in a particular context. Your context will be different, your opportunities will vary, the energy levels of your people will not be the same, your budget may be great or small, you may have peculiar connections and relationships which enable something special that no-one else can do, you may already have partnerships with others and can invite them to share their good offices. You may have an organisation or charity rather than a church so the emphasis might be different.

The idea is to dream, imagine, and 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 in people becoming disciples of Jesus, and help to transform society. How exciting is that!!!!?

Anyway, some ideas!



- Have a Launch event with a Guest Keynote Speaker. This can set the scene and generate interest. It is an opportunity to invite dignitaries and senior people in your community in addition to throwing open the doors generally.
- Re-orientate Sunday Services to be missional, invitational, and celebratory. You may like to have guest preachers for these occasions.
- Have some special one off events. These may be particularly relevant to your context or they may be of general interest. In my situation we have tried a Comedy Night with a Christian Comedian, used the opportunity of the coronation of King Charles III to make a link with a community celebration sharing something of King Jesus, had a Pizza Party for young people, organised



a Family Treasure Hunt around the neighbourhood (with a focus on Christian heritage included) with a Celebration and Results Tea, had weaving workshops which also made links with Jesus the Shepherd, offered a lesson for schools, organised courses for those wanting to find out more about the Christian Faith. The opportunities for ideas are endless. Pray and consider what might be right for you.

- Let your ordinary week to week programme and activities continue but ask groups and activities wherever possible to try to make their meetings in "Christianity Month" intentionally missional or celebratory of the Christian faith. Then invite people along. It might be home groups, a Toddler's group, a coffee morning (we had a Christian Artist exhibit in our Café with Christian musicians playing and singing), a Bible study, an environmental group, the meetings of the Children and Youth Programme and so forth. It could be that an outside hirer will partner with you to "celebrate" Christianity since you make space for their activities.



- Look outwards!!!! Can you do some outside work of mission? Perhaps you could sing outside a supermarket, visit a local Prison or residential Home, help with a Community Litter Pick, do a free car wash, bless people with food out on the street, hand out an information sheet about your church or organisation, or arrange publicity about "Christianity Month".
- Try to connect with schools, colleges or universities. Offer to take a lesson on "Christianity Month", support listening to readers, or help with a playground litter pick out of school hours.
- Ensure that any children and young people in your church or organisation are invited into the planning and organisation and remember that for all ages we can mission into the church as well as outside.



For Christianity Month to be effective and to bear fruit first and foremost it needs God in the midst and the Holy Spirit's guidance as we seek to reach out in the name of Jesus to share the goodness that Christianity has offered and can offer. It also needs enthusiastic envisioning of the church for many weeks / months before so that people see the possibilities and potential behind it.

An Invitation

You are invited to make "Christianity Month" something you will be involved with in May and to start planning now. This exciting opportunity is likely to bear great fruit.

Please contact Chris Briggs (see below) for more information about how you might take part in Christianity Month.



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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP85Drdh5Bw&t=249s>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b3CLU_mgZo&t=1495s



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/975020040393375>
or search on Facebook for the Christianity Month Group

Chris Briggs

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Biographical Information

Rev Chris Briggs is a Presbyterian in the Methodist Church of Great Britain. His responsibilities include a role as Mission Enabler of the Nottingham and Derby Methodist District which has some 7000+ members, in addition to serving in Littleover and St Martin's Methodist Churches in Derby. Chris has served in a variety of places in the Methodist Church included the Luton area and Portland in Dorset where he was part of a Core Team that put together a major programme to welcome the 2012 Sailing Olympics to Weymouth and Portland in 2012.



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