



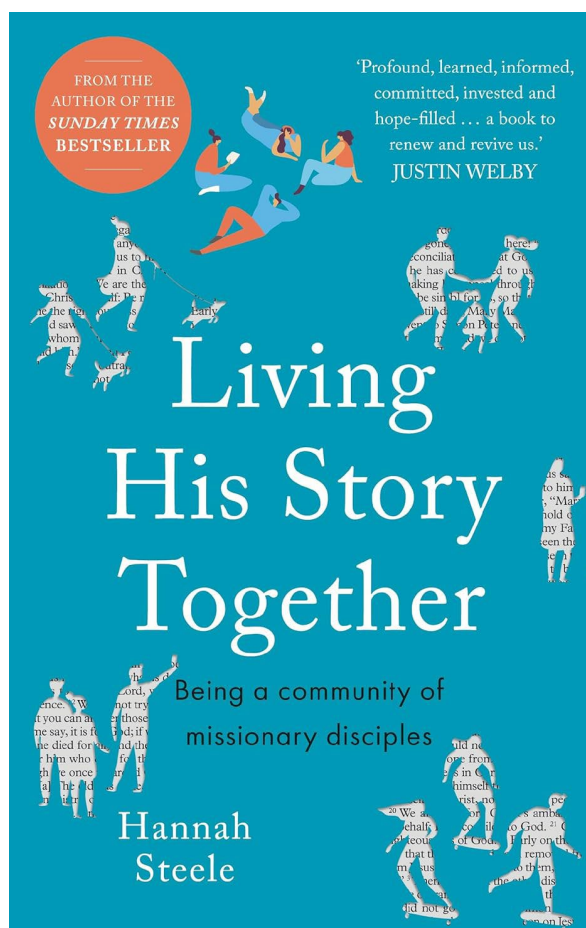
# ‘Living His Story Together: Being A Community of Missionary Disciples’

HANNAH STEELE

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It is often said that the Church in the West is at crisis point. Newspaper headlines tell us that institutional Christianity is in decline in the UK and that in our increasingly secular culture religious faith should be a matter of personal preference, rarely seen and certainly not heard.

However, to borrow from Mark Twain, reports of the death of the Church in the West may be greatly exaggerated. The church I am part of in Peckham has gone from near closure to bursting at the seams in two decades. Through my work at St Mellitus College, I have come to see that this story is not an anomaly, a freak story that bucks the trend of decline. Up and down the country, signs of renewal and revival are growing up in the most unlikely places: a gathering of mums after the school drop off in Essex that became an established worshipping community, a church plant in Oxfordshire on a new housing estate that became a pivotal connection point for the local community, a



well established church in Reading providing a place of home for refugees and asylum seekers.

I write about these stories and more in my latest book ‘Living His Story Together: Being a Community of Missionary Disciples’. The image of missionary disciples suggests movement and flexibility, an outwards orientation and a commitment to learning together. My intention has been to write a love letter to the church, not chastising us to pull up our socks and do better, but reminding us of the privilege to which we have been called. The fact that God has entrusted the living out of the gospel of Jesus to people like you and me is both humbling and challenging. Who knows what God might

do next? I, for one, am expectant.

*Revd Dr Hannah Steele is the Director of St Mellitus College London where she is also lecturer in Mission and Evangelism. She is the author of ‘Living His Story: revealing the extraordinary love of God in ordinary ways’ which was the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book in 2021 and a Sunday Times Bestseller.*