



PRACTICE 6 – RESOURCE FAITH SHARING

SUMMARY

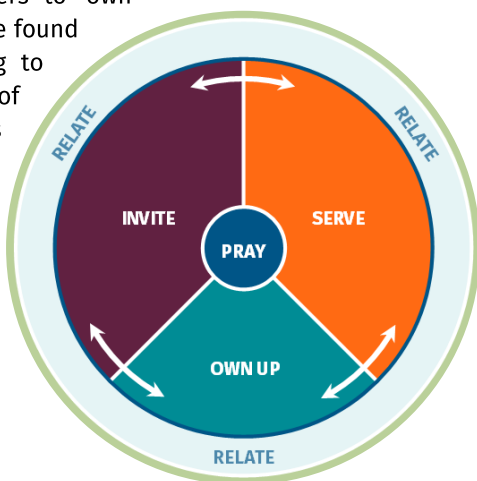
Once a term, resource your congregation members with something to share that helps people they know to find out more about the Christian faith.

“
 ‘But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have.’
 1 Peter 3:15

EXPLANATION

What we can expect from our congregation members when it comes to sharing their faith? CPAS have identified four things: Pray, Serve, Own up and Invite (see Guide 1). Practice 6 is one way of resourcing the ‘own up’ element of faith sharing.

In John 1:45 Philip says to Nathaniel, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about...’ and shares with his brother what he has found in Jesus. In a similar way we want to enable our congregation members to ‘own up’ to what they have found and have something to offer as a way of backing that up. This could be an item or suggestion. So, rather than expecting them to give a long spiel about the Christian faith, they can simply say...



- To someone who is struggling with anxiety, ‘I have found my faith has been a real help for me, and this leaflet helped me to find hope in uncertain times.’
- To someone who is stressed by all the preparations for Christmas, ‘I have found my Christmases are different since I discovered what it is really all about and this booklet (or other item) was a real help to me.’
- To someone who has shown interest in spiritual things previously, ‘I found that conversation we had about N really interesting and thought of it when I came across this and wondered if you would like a look?’
- To someone who thinks that science has dismissed the need for faith, ‘I have found that my scientific background and faith aren’t at odds with one another after all. This podcast explains why the two are complementary.’
- To someone who loves reading about the lives of other people and thinks Christianity is only for a certain type of person, ‘I have found it fascinating how the Christian faith isn’t for a certain type of people, but for all people, and this magazine has some great stories in it that illustrate that.’
- To someone who asks what you did over the weekend, ‘I had a great weekend, thanks. On Saturday I went swimming with a bunch of friends and then out for a meal in the evening. On Sunday I went to church, which I have found is such an important part of my week as I try to make sense of my faith and everyday life. Here’s an invite to a special service we are holding. I’d love you to come.’

The idea is to identify an item for congregation members to share with others at the start of a term (see below for some examples). Encourage people to pray for an opportunity to give the item or share the link with someone during the

Sign up for our free monthly leadership email, full of ideas and inspiration for busy leaders: www.cpas.org.uk/leadon.

course of the term. Be clear that ‘success’ is a willingness to pray for this opportunity and the courage to take it, rather than how people respond to the offer, because of course some people may not be interested, be offended or decline. In order to help your congregations know how to face potentially difficult responses, be sure to equip them with helpful ways to share the item or link, and how to handle any negative comeback. This isn’t about running a training course, but rather some simple one- to two-minute suggestions each time you talk about the idea. For example:

- If when you offer someone a booklet or link they politely decline, don’t take it personally. Just smile and say, ‘No problem, but if you ever want to know more about why my faith is so important to me, I’d be happy to chat.’
- When offering someone a magazine, be positive not apologetic: ‘I thought you might be interested in this as it has some really fascinating stories of how knowing God has made a difference in people’s lives, including N, the actor/sports person/reality TV star you really like.’ Don’t say people’s ‘no’s’ for them. Expecting people to at least have a look is better than: ‘I don’t know if you would be interested in this, and I hope you don’t mind me sharing it with you, and I quite understand you might want to say no...’
- When inviting your five to, for example, your carol service using an invitation card, why not welcome them to your home for mince pies and mulled wine beforehand (or to the pub if that is more appropriate)? Be straight about it, so people know what you are asking: ‘We’ve got our carol service in two weeks’ time and I love it as a way of kicking off the Christmas celebrations. Would you like to join me and come along? I’m having mulled wine and mince pies at my place for a few friends before we go, you’d be most welcome.’

If you have some drama types or video creators, they could have fun putting together some quick sketches or videos that illustrate both good and bad practice. Encourage people to try out some scenarios with church friends to get over their fears.

TIPS

- Try to identify resources that will work for most people in your congregation. For example, in a non-book culture, books may not be a good idea, but a video link might be.
- Remember to resource your children and young people as well as adults of all ages.
- It may be best to offer two or three options each term, but be careful, because the more options there are the easier it is to actually not choose any.
- There is a difference between encouraging people to do something and brow-beating people to do something. It is tricky: what for one person is a gentle encouragement, for another feels like unhelpful pressure. It is good to have identified some people to offer feedback on how it comes across when leaders up front ‘encourage’ people to make the most of the opportunity to share such resources.

- Give loads of practical examples of how people might offer a resource, so they can see themselves doing it.
- Each time you launch ‘the offer’, find a creative way of praying about it as a whole church.
- Build in help and accountability to whatever paths you normally use to help people in their discipleship (small groups, emails, prayers on Sunday, one-to-one conversations).
- Try to have some fun with this termly idea. If there are stories of it going wrong in an amusing way, share those stories. Adopt a light touch.
- Be sure to get lots of feedback, and tell stories that encourage people.
- Persist, because it may well take three or four terms for people to understand and join in with how this works.



RESOURCES

Here are some examples of the resources you can give to your people to share with others:

- An evangelistic booklet, for example Why Christmas, Hope in Uncertain Times, The Eggcellent Egg Hunt, or The Real Jesus.
- A link to a helpful website, for example, www.christianity.org.uk.
- A link to a YouTube video (for example [Phil Knox Lament](#), or a spoken word about Christmas), or perhaps something on your own channel.
- A link to a podcast, for example the [Unbelievable Podcast by Premier Radio](#).
- A magazine, for example the [HOPE magazine](#), or the magazine linked to the Queen’s platinum celebrations.
- A gospel, for example a copy of [Mark for adults](#) or young people⁵, or the [Uncover](#) materials produced for students.
- A pen with your church’s name and website address.
- An empty pizza box with an invitation to a special service and a voucher for a local Pizza place.
- Create your own.