

“seek first the Kingdom of God ...”

When our motivation for mission is inspired by the revealed nature of God, then seeing God's Kingdom grow will be our desire and aim. We will not be consumed by the internal agenda of our churches, but instead will long to see God's kingdom come – that is, his reign, values and presence being more fully known and experienced.

questions

- a) Which aspect of God's character is particularly significant for you, and why?
- b) How does thinking of the Church being partners with God in his mission affect your own understanding of mission?
- c) Do we recognise the temptation to approach mission motivated by a desire to see the needs of the church being met, rather than the Kingdom? If so, how can this be addressed and overcome?



MAP for Derby Diocese

what is mission?

material for PCC or group discussion

what is mission?

Mission is a word often used but it is not easy to find a concise definition which describes it, even less to find one on which everyone can agree. Mission has many elements to it, which is reflected in the widely used 'Five Marks of Mission':

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The language of the 'Mission Shaped Church' Report reflects this, describing mission as:

"God's missionary purposes are cosmic in scope, concerned with the restoration of all things, the establishment of shalom, the renewal of creation and the coming of the kingdom as well as the redemption of fallen humanity and the building of the Church."

It seems that the concept of mission is too rich to be reduced to a simple definition.

questions

- a) How would you begin to define 'mission'?
- b) Most people prefer to emphasise some of the Marks of Mission, more than others – which ones naturally appeal to you? How can we engage in those which don't come so naturally to us?
- c) As we seek to discern what mission means for us locally, how can we ensure that we listen to God and don't simply adopt an approach which is easy and convenient for ourselves?

The God of mission

"Mission has its origins in the heart of God . . . there is mission because God loves People"

David Bosch

"Mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in"

Rowan Williams

Mission is not the Church's idea, we did not invent it. Mission is, and always has been, in the very heart of God. His character and activity reflects this:

- God lovingly creates – he creates and sustains our world, loving all he has made.
- God saves – from the Garden of Eden onwards, the Bible is a record of God working to restore everything and everyone.
- God is present and active in our world – whether we can discern his activity, or not (& sometimes we can't), God is at work.
- God initiates – time and again, God makes the first move, he reaches out with love to a world in need.
- God reconciles – peace and justice are at the core of his purposes.
- God sends – just as the Father sent the Son, and together they sent the Holy Spirit, so God has sent the Church to be an instrument for mission in our world.

God's people are the product of the *missio Dei*, the mission of God; we are called to participate with God and be partners in his mission. This challenges any understanding of mission which is understood in terms of 'come to Church and join us' but rather requires us to share with God in being concerned for all in our communities and finding ways to go to them on their terms.