

LIVING WHOLEHEARTEDLY AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD



Service Guide

HOME MISSION SUNDAY 2023
GROW TOGETHER, GO TOGETHER

GROW
TOGETHER
GO
TOGETHER



IRISHMETHODIST.ORG

Service Guide



INTRODUCTION

The theme for the Home Mission Sunday service 2023 is '**Grow together, Go together**'. Through hearing stories from across the island and reflecting on the call of the first disciples in Luke 5: 1-11, this service explores what it means to grow together as followers of Jesus and to go together on mission in the places that we find ourselves.

For this service, we have provided you with a **toolbox** of suggestions to help you prepare a Home Mission Service that best caters for your congregation. You should not feel you need to include everything that is here, but rather, that you can shape and mould your service for your own context. There are a couple of suggestions of service outlines that you may find helpful. We strongly encourage you to use the prepared video that communicates stories from across the Connexion, and clearly invites people into the theme of the service.

We also would encourage you to include a **financial appeal** as part of your service. You may wish to give out envelopes and ask them to return them the following week. The valuable financial support enables important work across our Connexion.



SERVICE OUTLINE IDEAS

Sample order of Service

OPTION 1

- Call to Worship
- Hymn/Song
- Introduction to Home Mission
Sunday
- Prayers
- Children's Talk
- Reading: Luke 5:1-11
- Offering
- Hymn/Song
- Home Mission Video & Reflection
- Response
- Intercession
- Hymns/Song
- Benediction

OPTION 2

- Call to Worship
- Time of Praise
- Prayer
- Introduction to Home Mission
Sunday
- Reading: Luke 5:1-11
- Home Mission Video & Reflection
- Group Discussion Questions
- Prayers & Intercessions
- Time of Praise
- Offering
- Benediction





CALL TO WORSHIP

(Based on Psalm 138:1-3)

*These can be read responsively with the congregational response in bold, or they can be read as a prayer of approach.

We give thanks to you Lord our God,
With our whole hearts we praise you.
We bow before you,
Thankful for your love and faithfulness.
When we call, you answer.
You strengthen our soul.
Strengthen us today.

Amen.



PRAYERS OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Present God, God with us.
We gather in this place in confident trust knowing that you are here.
You are the God who is always near, always at work for good.
You are awesome and great, a God of the possible.
Present God, receive our praise.

Enriching God, God in us.
We gather in this place in confident readiness knowing that you will speak.
Into our receptive hearts and minds, pour out your Spirit.
Reshape and refashion us for your Kingdoms sake.
Enriching God, we wait on you.

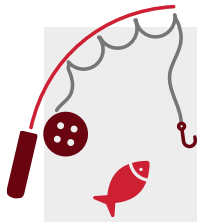
Moving God, God before us.
We gather in this place in confident expectation knowing that you are at work.
You are moving across this island, transforming lives, and drawing people to yourself.
You invite us to move with you.
Give us courage we pray.
Moving God, we come to follow.

Almighty God, Father, Son and Spirit, be known in us today. Amen.





CHILDREN'S TALK



OBJECTS / VISUAL AIDS:

Fishing rod, net, bait, hook
(anything fishing like will do!).

If you can't get hold of the objects, you can also use pictures that you put on the screen or print off.
We have provided some images to accompany this talk that you may find useful.
This PowerPoint is available to download with the other Home Mission Service Resources.



LESSON:

Does anyone here enjoy fishing?

Lots of people go fishing and they find it relaxing and enjoyable. Also, there are many people who fish for work, who go out, often on big trawler boats, to catch many fish that are then sold for people to eat.

Fishing was a job that we read about in the Bible, in fact, some of the disciples who first followed Jesus started off as fishermen, and fishing would have been how they provided for their family. They would have fished using big nets that they put down into the sea. But let's think about the fishing we might be more familiar with. Who can tell me what you need if you are going to go fishing?

- Allow children (or adults) to throw out some answers.

There are a few essential items that I want us to think about today:

1. **Rod or Net** – We will need something to catch the fish with, so either a rod or a net.
2. **Bait** – We will need something to attract the fish, some form of bait that will draw the fish towards the rod.
3. **Patience** – We will need to be ready to have patience. Fishing isn't always a fast activity, there is a time of waiting, of stillness and patience waiting for the fish to come.

In one story that we read in the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament, Jesus is inviting the disciples to come and follow him, and he says to them that from this point on they would no longer fish for fish, but they would now become fishers of people! It sounds like maybe a strange phrase for us. However, for the disciples it meant that Jesus was inviting them to come with him and to tell people the good news about Jesus, the good news that they were loved and welcomed into the family of God. This call to the disciples then, is the same as it is to us now. We too are invited by God to be fishers of people, to tell people the good news about the love of God.

And so, we are to become like the fishing rod or net, ready to be used to spread the good news of Jesus. We have the bait that is this wonderful news of Jesus that tells all people

that they are loved and welcomed into the family of God if they place their trust in Jesus. And we are to have patience. Spreading the good news of Jesus takes time, and it takes patience, we ought to be ready to wait and keep going, never giving up sharing the good news about Jesus.

Spreading the good news and the love of Jesus is all our jobs! No matter how young or how old we are, we can be fishers of people. All it takes is for us to show love like Jesus did, and to let people know that they are loved by our wonderful God.



PRAYER

Lord God, will you help us to share your love with others. Help us to tell people that you love them with a love that lasts forever. Use us to be your fishers of people. In the strength of Jesus, and the power of your Spirit. Amen.



BIBLE READING

LUKE 5:1-11 (NRSV)

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.



VIDEO



'Grow Together, Go Together'

Home Mission Video is available to download (11m)

**GROW
TOGETHER
GO
TOGETHER**





REFLECTION (7m)

Please begin this reflection with the prepared Home Missions Video. If you are unable to show the media video, then a script of the video is available for download. You could use different voices to read this script, so it feels more engaging.

The passage that we heard from in Luke's gospel records a significant moment in the lives of Simon Peter, James, and John. They have been going about their business, having a difficult and unfruitful time of fishing, and are packing up their nets, when Jesus enters the picture and makes a request to go out on their boat a little from the shore. I can imagine, a tired Simon Peter making a little sigh, yet doing as had been requested of him. Little did he know the significance of this request from Jesus. What was about to take place was potentially the most successful day of Simon Peter's career, yet also potentially the last day of his traditional fishing career.

What we see in this passage is Jesus coming alongside everyday ordinary people and inviting them to come and follow him. His entrance into their lives calls for change, it calls for it to be part of something more in spreading the gospel of Christ. I wonder if Simon Peter knew the gravity of what lay ahead would he have hesitated or was there simply something in the presence of Jesus that evoked a sense of courage and determination, that he left behind all that he had and followed him. We know the story of these disciples. We know that they continued to follow Jesus, journeying with him, growing in faith and knowledge as they watched carefully all that Jesus did. We also know that after the death and resurrection, these disciples went on to be leaders in the early church, devoting their lives to the cause of Christ. These ordinary fishermen became leaders. These everyday followers became the church. The love of Christ so took over their lives, that our lives remain impacted by their stories today. So, how might we dwell on this passage today to challenge our hearts on the call of Christ that is before each one of us?

Firstly, let's think about growth.

In this passage these ordinary fishermen knew little about what the Kingdom of God would really be like. It is doubtful that they imagined themselves as spiritual leaders, or that they would have believed that they would be used by God to change the world. Yet, the journey with Christ transformed their lives. They grew as individuals, but importantly, they grew as community.

Together they spent time in the company of Jesus, being attentive to his teachings, and working together to grow in their skills and knowledge. In this passage in Luke, we see that these three men were already in the practice of working together. As Simon tries to haul the large catch of fish, it tells us that he signalled for his partners, and they came to help with the work. Even before they are called by Christ, they are exercising community, but from this point on, the community changes in focus, and their community grows. It's not just the fishermen that they are now in company with, but a collection of people with a diversity of skills and potentially opinions too. Yet, despite difference, they were united in Christ. United, they grew from strength to strength, for the common goal was following Jesus.

Community is so important as we journey in faith. It is the community around us that should encourage and support and keep us accountable for following the ways of Christ.

This community of disciples were united with this call to come and fish for people, that was their common goal and purpose from this point on. This direction from Jesus drew them together. There is an insight in this for us to hear today. We hopefully find ourselves as part of a community of faith, one that should be united in the very same purpose as these early disciples, to make Christ known. We too should find our purpose in being 'fishers of people', but to live out that purpose well, we have need of one another. Just like the disciples, we maybe find ourselves in a community that is full of diversity, of different skills and perhaps opinions, yet the call of Christ should unite us and create beauty from our differences. The desire to make Christ known and exercise love in his name should be what unites us.

As we think today about mission, we want to invite you to think about who are the community around you that you are in this mission with? Is there a sense that you are united with the same purpose, willing to encourage and build one another up in the ways of God. How might the community here be strengthened so that together we can grow as followers of Christ? How might our differences become our strengths as we seek to grow together in the love of Christ?

Secondly, let's think about going.

What we see in this story of disciples is courage and obedience to follow. They set down their nets and they follow Jesus leaving all else behind. There is certainly a challenge in this response for each of us as we are invited to think about whether we have the same focus or priority to the calling of Christ in our lives.

As we follow the story of the disciples, we know that Jesus sends them out to continue to spread the good news that the Saviour has come. This sending out was part of their nature as a community of believers. They were not called to keep the good news of Jesus to themselves but had an explicit mandate to go and to share what all people needed to know. The disciples were obedient and focused on this pursuit and we can read that the early church grew in astounding ways because the good news of Christ captivated and enflamed hearts. The Church was not created to be selective, but rather it was to be ruled by an extravagant love of God that would always keep loving and calling people to love. The church, the people of God, were to reflect Christ in how they lived and loved so that Christ could be seen and so lives could be transformed, and the Kingdom of God expanded.

The Church ought to still be the same today. As people of God, we are called to reflect Christ in how we live and love so that others might come to know God and be transformed. And so, Christ still calls us to go. To go into our families, our workplaces, our neighbourhoods and reflect his love to people who have such a need to know him. This calling to go is not just an individual responsibility but a responsibility on us as a community, that together we reflect his love and welcome and invite people to know him more.

We live in a culture that is filled with struggles and stresses, where people seek validation from the wrong sources, or where greed or power has eroded kindness and compassion. People search for identity and belonging, and we hold the truth. The truth of a God who loves, who calls, who restores and redeems and heals. We must not stay quiet. People are awaiting the good news that we possess.



So, how might we go together? How might we share the love of Christ in a fuller way in this time and place? That is the question that is urgently before us.



RESPONSE

There are many ways that you could respond to this reflection, and you should choose what would work best for your congregation.

Here are a few suggestions:

SILENCE

Allow a time of silence for each member to think carefully about what God is saying to them. Place the two questions from the HM Video on the screen, or say them as an introduction to the silence:

- Who are you growing with?
- Who are you going with?

Then close the time of silence with prayer.

Please consider a way to follow up this time of reflection allowing people to share their thoughts of ways that your church might want to grow or go together. This might take place over a cup of tea, or at a midweek group or in small groups.

SONG

Use this song by Matthew West to speak for itself. Allow the questions of the lyrics to challenge your congregation and perhaps follow the song with a short time of silence.



Matthew West - *Do Something* - bit.ly/MW-DS

SMALL GROUPS

Take a few minutes to allow your congregation to speak in twos or threes about the answers to the questions mentioned above. Invite them to pray for one another.

RESPONSE SHEET

Give each person a response sheet that includes some questions, invite them to answer these individually and to return this sheet on the way out. The hope is that it allows you to see ways to encourage your congregation more, but also allows you to hear what God might be calling you into together as church. If making time in the service feels too much, then you could give these response sheets out at the end, allow them to think over it at home, and encourage them to bring it back the following week.



The Response Sheet is available to download with the Home Mission Service Resources.





INTERCESSIONS



We have provided some PowerPoint slides to accompany your intercessions which are available to download with the other Home Missions Service Resources.

Cultivating and Creating God as we come before you to intercede for others, we first acknowledge and give thanks for your goodness and love. You surround us every day with reminders of your presence that invite us to put our trust in you. You are so evidently at work in this world, and for that we give you all our praise.

Guide us by your Spirit that we would walk in your ways with a wholehearted devotion to Christ. Give us courage as we follow, and may our actions be marked by love. Grant us joy overflowing as we see your transformation in this world.

We pray this morning for those within our Connexion who are stepping out in pioneer ministries.

We pray for the Boardwalk Collective, North Coast, in their ministry focused on helping children, youth and young adults find hope and life in Jesus through the fun and adventure of outdoor boarding activities. We pray for their staff team: Chris Agnew, Matthew Beggs, Ken McCrea, Lewis McKelvey and Jade Ruel. Guide and direct them as they lead and encourage faith in others. We pray for pioneer mission leaders Chris & Hannah Agnew as they lead Coastal, a new church community in Portrush seeking to be a missional presence in the area.

We pray for Breathe, the small group of people in South Dublin who are seeking to bless and shape their community through everyday faith living. We pray for their leaders Anne Baenziger and Kathryn O'Mahony, give them wisdom and patience as they seek you in that area.

We pray for David and Jill Hines who have been working in the Ballynafeigh Circuit, South Belfast to develop long-term Mission Strategy based around prayer and hospitality to the least, the last and the lost. Continue to direct them as they build relationships with local people.

We pray for the Belfast City Centre Chaplaincy who are seeking to provide pastoral care for those working, living and relaxing in Belfast City Centre. Bless their volunteers who faithfully serve and seek to extend your Kingdom to the lives of those in Belfast.

We pray for Play it by Ear as they use their gifts of drama to engage with all ages. Bless Chris Neilands & Ross Jonas as they step into churches, youth groups and schools to teach and share about you.

We pray for Neil Curran, a pioneer mission leader serving with Braniel Church in Belfast. Pray for BASE Braniel, a brand new community hub on the church site that will be used for community engagements projects that better support the community and in turn give opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.



Pray for Rev Steven Foster, serving in Co. Galway as he builds relationships and seeks a new expression of Christian community in East Country Galway. As relationships are built help him see what God is doing. Lead them by your Spirit, equip them to serve, and overflow in them with love. Use them to share the Good News of Christ in ways that will call others into relationship with you.

As we pray for each of these people involved in Mission on this island, we also pray for ourselves.

Guide us to the people around us that you are calling us to love.
Equip and sustain us with courage to do as you are calling us to.
Resource us with all that we need to journey well with others.
Enlarge our vision, expand our dreams, and unite our hearts as we seek to love and serve you.

Make us wholehearted followers of Jesus for the transformation of the world.
In the name of Christ. Amen.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (FOR SERVICE OPTION 2)

Perhaps you want to take some time in your service to get people talking. These questions could simply be posed to those sitting near each other for a few moments to discuss, or more intentionally around table discussions that are feedback as part of your worship.

- How are we growing together, helping one another to be more like Jesus?
- Are there other ways we could grow together?
- How might we go together and step out in mission?
- What's our bold dream for how we want to see God transform this place and community?

The answers/feedback from these questions could shape a time of prayer together inviting God to reawaken, stir up, and move among you.



SONG SUGGESTIONS

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty	(STF 11)	(MP 237)
The church of Christ in every age	(STF 415)	
I have decided to follow Jesus		(MP 272)
God of justice (we must go)	(STF 699)	(MP 1174)
Hear the call of the Kingdom	(STF 407)	(MP 1282)
What grace is mine?		(MP 1368)
Will you come and follow me	(STF 673)	
Yet not I but through Christ in me		





BENEDICTION

Lord, be known in us this day.

As we grow together, equip us to go together.

As we learn to follow, empower us to bring along.

All blessing, honour and praise be yours, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Ever with us, ever good, ever ours!

Amen.

LIVING WHOLEHEARTEDLY AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD

