

Transformation

4. Transforming Our World

To explore:

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.' 2 Corinthians 5. 17-21

Aim: These four activities look at our interaction with the wider world and the gospel. One or two of them are fairly long so be careful how many you try to put into a session, but all of them might be useful at some point this year even if you don't use them now. They look at - the nations that come to us, letting people leave, our own experiences of international missions and finally an atheist perspective on the gospel and Christian missionaries. We are trying to get people to think beyond our city and to engage with what God is doing 'out there' and how we might be partners in that too.

A. Welcoming the Nations

Hundreds of international students come to Durham to study - and many end up in Kings.

1. How many international students would you say you know?
2. What do you think are the biggest challenges they face in coming to study in Durham?
3. What are the challenges of getting to know international students in our context?
4. What strikes you from the Times Higher Education article on the attached handout sheet?
5. How do you respond to the stories from the Friends

International website?

6. How far do you think these experiences happen in our context, here in Durham?
7. If God is bringing the nations to us how might we as a church be more effective in being 'ministers of reconciliation' i.e. introducing them to Jesus while they are here?

B. Giving People Away

One of our challenges as a congregation is that people come to Durham to train/learn and then move on - so we are constantly sending people out.

1. Make a list of those people know of who have left/moved on. Add to the list where you know they have gone to/what they are now doing.
2. Ask people to reflect on how they feel about this list, what is encouraging/discouraging about it? What are the positive and negative consequences of this for us as a congregation? (What do you think are the pros and cons of a more static congregation - which is what many churches have?)
3. How might we continue to have a servant heart towards people who come and go - and to engage positively with this rather than get 'newcomer fatigue'?

You might like to spend some time praying for those who have left - that they will be lights for the gospel where they are now.

C. Going to the Nations

Using a map of the world:

- Go round the group and put markers on the nations people have visited on either short or long term mission trips.
- Ask them to explain their experiences and the things they saw God do.
- What do people think are the pros and cons of short term mission trips?



- What ideas do people have for you as a cell (and we as a church) might expand our vision of partnership with world missions?

D. An Atheist Perspective

18 months ago the article 'As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God' was published in the Times newspaper (see the attached sheet.) Read it through together and discuss what strikes you, what you think the author understands Christian Mission to be about, and what it is actually about.