

Dear Friends,

Sometimes when we go for a walk down the street, we see something that grabs our attention. This may be an advert or a well-dressed window or something that is slightly out of the ordinary for a particular reason. Often it is just there, and rarely does it come with any form of explanation.

A week or so ago, I was walking down the High Street when a sign caught my eye. It said, 'How can we tell people that we exist?' It well and truly got my attention, not least because it was next to a vacant shop. Next to it was some explanation as to the artist, Mark Titchner who has been commissioned by Our Colchester Business Improvement District in collaboration with Firstsite. He is producing artwork based on questions suggested by Colchester residents focusing on life in the city today.

This question 'how can we tell people that we exist?' could mean so many different things. It could be about advertising for someone to come and fill an empty shop, raise the profile and aspirations of the city or a plea for something to change. I immediately read it in the context of the story of God. We are told in the Bible that we should share the Kingdom of God with others or at the end of Matthew's gospel to go and make disciples as in the Great Commission. Archbishop William Temple once said, 'The church is the only cooperative society in the world which exists for the benefit of its non-members.' How can we do that if we don't tell people we exist?

As we continue to have a focus on how we reach out as churches and as a Circuit to others, this is a valuable question for us today. The Methodist Church in its statement of 'Our Calling' talks of four aspects: Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism. For evangelism we are asked to make more followers of Christ. We can only do that if we tell people we exist.

How we share with others the love and grace of God, through Christ is done through our being empowered by the Holy Spirit. We don't do it on our own. We do it with and through God but also with each other. Every church has its own way of letting others know we exist, but we mustn't hide our lights under a bushel. As individuals, we can share our faith in the simple ways that help others through words and actions see something of the care and compassion of Christ.

The answer to the question 'how can we tell people that we exist' may look different for each person and church but it is a good question on which to ponder. We may feel that we can't share our faith, or we don't know what to do. The sign on the High Street is bold and eye catching. Let's not be afraid to ask others the question that's on the sign and trust in the Holy Spirit to enable the conversations to unfold and see where it leads.

God bless,
Chris