

## **Supporting People with Additional Needs in the Nottingham Diocese**

### **Proposal for a project of work for 2012**

## ***“Have I got Good News for you?”***

### **Preliminary considerations:**

This topic for 2012 has been suggested for several reasons:

1) We ended last year's "Story" with the story of the birth of Our Lord and the message of the angel to the shepherds: "I bring you good news of great joy; today in Bethlehem a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord" It makes logical sense to continue the story of Jesus' life concentrating on the "Good News" ('gospel')

2) The Pope has spoken repeatedly of what he calls the "new evangelisation" and there is a synod of bishops due to take place on this topic this year. In an increasingly 'secular' world the need has finally been perceived for a 'new preaching' of the Word of God, a new explanation of who Jesus is and what believing in Him might mean, rather as took place in the first days of the Church. It is almost as if we are having to 'start again' in telling people the message of Jesus and inviting them to honour Him. But we must be careful. What appears to be the approach 'from above' is not necessarily appropriate and betrays a church out of touch with where people are: more centralisation, clericalisation, imposition of practices and the requirement of obedience, translation of the texts of our prayer into complicated and unnecessary language, with the resulting perception that we are 'going backwards' rather than forwards. We must also beware the approach within some Christian communities of 'selling' the message of Our Lord as 'something that will be good for you' in a marketing strategy that can turn us inwards rather than looking outwards at Him and others.

3) It offers us an opportunity to keep a positive approach to our faith and to maintain the message and momentum of the beautiful "Mother Mary" presentation. The words of the songs, particularly the first three and last three describe our situation very honestly and offer a way of doing something about it that really is 'good news'.

4) We remind ourselves of course of the words of St. Augustine: "the evidence for God from someone else is not what that person says but what, believing in God, he uniquely is". If we want people to believe in God and Jesus Christ and if we want His message to be 'Good News' for them, then it must be 'Good News' for us, first, and be reflected in the manner in which we live our lives.

### **Methodology:**

It seems right that we should continue with the approach that has been quite successful over recent years – 4 liturgies on the theme and various group sessions or club nights on different aspects of it, leaving room for flexibility and encouraging the spontaneity of individuals and groups, interactive drama and practical tasks as well as the more

reflective discussions in our groups, etc. Two expressions stand out from the angel's message: "Good News" and "Saviour". What do we mean by "Good News" and how can we tell? What does He have to be the "Saviour" for and what is he trying to save us from. The use of the three songs at the beginning of "Mother Mary" situate not only the modern attitude to Christmas but also to a life that is over-saturated and full of banality without God: "I feel so empty now, and somehow far away". They speak of our self-seeking over indulgence at the expense of people living in poverty and hunger both near and far away. Groups could learn the songs or look at them on the DVD, then discuss what is in them. We could also look briefly at some of the 'bad' news that we read about each day and what it means, then talk about 'Good News' stories. Perhaps each group could appoint a number of 'good news hounds' to look at the papers each week and cut out examples of the good things that people are doing for each other or are happening to them. We need to steer away from 'me' and so 'my Good News is that it's my birthday soon' may not be appropriate! Better to think of things people have done for each other than what they have received, unless it is some family happiness like the birth of a child or someone recovering from illness. We might even make a "Good News noticeboard" in the place where we meet, which could be brought up to date regularly. The story of the development of all our groups is of course very good news and always has been. Therefore the effort to 'tell our story' by making up scrapbooks of photos and reminiscences would be a very positive contribution. These two activities could take place throughout the year. The next stage might be examining the scriptural texts – what did the early Church mean by 'Good News' and why was it so important to tell it to so many people. The message is of course the living of Jesus as God among us, his work, his words, his dying and rising and his invitation to his followers to tell people about him. Would they want to listen? Why is it so important that they do? Telling the story of Jesus could also mean recounting some of the events of his life in drama and art, or even presenting some of the 'stories' that he told in a modern idiom. We might then decide to take a break for 'the Olympics' and follow the theme of training, practice, effort, togetherness to win the prize, and the sharing of joy with others when it happens. Returning then to the "Good News", we could complete the year by concentrating on what Jesus asked his followers: "go out". The song "Come and follow me" from "Mother Mary" would be very useful here as it describes the complete transformation of the believer by the life and death of Jesus and invites us to 'change our mind', 'forget the past' and think again. Finally we could return to the good news of Christmas by concentrating on the last two songs and the result that our work and prayer together have achieved. Practical examples of what actually is "Good News" would be useful here.

Before our gathering in January, we might care to think how we could 'flesh this out' and arrange it into group evenings and our 4 liturgies. It might also be good to arrange to 'go out' into a local parish on a Sunday and lead the liturgy, rather as we did nearly 30 years ago with 'the Pauline Project', so that we can get the Good News message to more people. Invitations to the Loughborough and Nottingham groups are already in place for this.

## **Our life today**

*These songs tell of materialism and self-interest and what happens as a result of it – overspending and blindness to the needs and sufferings of others.*

*Music: “When all is said and done”*

Once again it’s Christmas time, why do we feel depressed?  
People rushing everywhere, as if they are possessed.  
We’ve lost the plot and meaning now, so all that’s left is us;  
for what we want and what we need, we’re making such a fuss.  
the rows, and fights and fallings out, to change this is a must

Supermarket trolleys crammed with food, we’ll surely waste;  
people living far and near who’d dearly love a taste  
of what we daily throw away, neglected in their need,  
how much could we help them if we only curbed our greed?  
selfishness consumes us so we cannot hear them plead

The treadmill of consumerism makes you want to shout;  
everything you have to buy so no one goes without.  
But what of those who’ve nothing do we think or even care?  
Can’t we see that what we have we’re really meant to share?  
Will we never change our lives it’s really so unfair?

Does it have to be this way can nothing yet be done?  
Is anything still left before all happiness is gone?

*Music: “Gimme, gimme, gimme”*

*The ‘hidden fear’ is that this might not actually be the most enjoyable way to celebrate Christmas at all*

Christmas Eve and we’ve hung up our stockings,  
Hoping for lots of presents once again for this as every year;  
Face-book, I-pods are all on our wish-lists  
Lots of other things too, but among them we detect a hidden fear  
Is this the only way to spend Christmas day?

Gimme, gimme, gimme the reason for Christmas,  
Won’t somebody show me how it really should be?  
Take me, take me, take me, back to the beginning,  
Back to the beginning so the truth I can see.

Too much food, drink and plain self-indulgence  
Over-fed, bored and moody,

Is the way that we spend all Christmas Day  
Other people have nothing to eat,  
They'd be glad of what we have  
What we waste and what we throw away  
Blinded by our own greed, we can't see those in need

Gimme, gimme, gimme etc.

Is this the only way to spend Christmas Day?

*Music: "SOS"*

*Here is a desperate cry for help to find another meaningful way of celebrating Christmas and living in general*

We feel so empty now, and somehow far away;  
the truth be told it's years since we've loved Christmas Day.  
We're going through the motions now smiling for other's sake,  
but all the time we fear, that when it's here, we'll break.

So every day we pray dear God, please stay and save our souls;  
the pain that lies inside no longer hide so save our souls.  
Take away all our greed and our need, we implore;  
what we lack get us back on your track, faith restored.

Can it be different yet or is it just too late?  
Are we to be condemned to this, an endless fate?  
And will we lose everything, our sanity and peace;  
is there an act of will to make it still a feast?

So every day we pray dear God, please stay and save our souls;  
the pain that lies inside no longer hide so save our souls.  
Make us new, just for you lift us up from the floor;  
Help us find, in our mind, Jesus Christ as our Lord

### **Scriptural Texts on the 'Good News'**

**Isaiah 61:1-3** "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to those in prison..... to comfort all who mourn"

*Here we are given some idea what the "good news" might entail. Jesus stood up in the synagogue, quoted this text and applied it to himself in Luke 4:21, and Paul refers to 'the scriptures' in Romans 1:1*

**Mark 1:1** "The beginning of the Good News, about Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

**Mark 16:16** “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the good news to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned”

*Mark uses the term only twice – at the very beginning and the very end of his gospel*

**Luke 2:10** “Listen, I bring you good news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

**John 17:20** “I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me”

*Our Lord is clearly referring to those who are to proclaim the ‘good news’, ie. his disciples, and the effect their message is supposed to have on others*

*There are much more references to the ‘good news’ in the Acts of the Apostles – the story of the work of the early Church – and the letters to the early Christians:*

**Acts 5:42** “They preached every day both in the temple and in private houses, and their proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ was never interrupted”

**8:40** “Philip found that he had reached Azotus and continued his journey proclaiming the good news in every town as far as Caesarea”

**13:32** *Paul speaking in the synagogue in Antioch:* “We have come here to tell you the good news. It was to our ancestors that God made the promise but it is to us, their children, that he has fulfilled it by raising Jesus from the dead”

**14:21** “Having preached the good news in that town (*Derbe*) and made a considerable number of disciples, they went back through Lystra and Iconium to Antioch”

**15:35** “Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed on in Antioch, and there with many others, they taught and proclaimed the good news, the word of the Lord.”

**16:10** “Once he had seen this vision we lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the good news.”

**20:24** “But life to me is not a thing to waste words on, provided that when I finish my race, I have carried out the mission the Lord gave me – and that was to bear witness to the good news of God’s grace”

**Romans 1:1** “From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, who has been called to be an apostle and specially chosen to preach the good news that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures.”

**1:9** “The God I worship spiritually by preaching the good news of his Son knows that I never fail to mention you in my prayers”

**1:17** “I owe a duty to Greeks just as much as to barbarians, to the educated just as much as to the uneducated, and it is this that makes me want to bring the good news to you too in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the good news – it is the power of God saving all who have faith, Jews first but Greeks as well – since this is what reveals the justice of God to us; it shows how faith leads to faith”

**10:15-16** “...they will never have a preacher unless one is sent, but as scripture says, ‘the footsteps of those who bring good news is a welcome sound.’ Not everyone of course, listens to the good news. As Isaiah says, ‘Lord how many believed what we proclaimed?’ So faith comes from what is preached and what is preached comes from the word of Christ.”

**15:16, 20** “He has appointed me as a priest of Jesus Christ, and I am to carry out my priestly duty by bringing the good news from God to the pagans....thus, all the way along, I have preached Christ’s good news to the utmost of my capacity”

**16:25-6** “Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the good news I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith”

**I Corinthians 1:17** “For Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the good news, and not to preach it in terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed”

**2:1-2** “As for me, brothers, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus and only about him as the crucified Christ.”

**4:16** “It was I who begot you in Christ by preaching the good news”

**9:13** “On the contrary we have put up with anything rather than obstruct the good news of Christ in any way.”

**15:1-5** “Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel that I preached to you, the gospel that you received and in which you are firmly established...namely that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised to life on the third day”

*This passage is precisely the ‘good news’ of the gospel*

**2Corinthians 4:3-4** “If our gospel does not penetrate the veil, then the veil is on those who are not on the way to salvation; the unbelievers whose minds the god of this world has blinded, to stop them seeing the light shed by the good news for the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**Galatians 1:6-10** “I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you and decided to follow a different version of the good news. Not that there can be more than one good news; it is merely that some troublemakers among you want to change the good news of Christ, and let me warn you that if anyone preaches a version of the good news different from the one we have already preached to you...he is to be condemned”

**1:11-19** “The fact is brothers...that the good news preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learnt only through a revelation of Jesus Christ...God called me through his grace and chose to reveal his son in me, so that I might preach the good news about him to the pagans.”

**2:2,5,8** “I went there (*Jerusalem*) as a result of a revelation and privately I laid before the leading men the good news as I proclaim it among the pagans...as a result these leaders had nothing to add to the good news as I preach it.”

**Philippians 1:4,12** “...every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped the spread the good news from the day you first heard it right up to the present...I am glad to tell you, brothers, that the things that happened to me have actually been a help to the good news”

**Colossians 1:5,23** “The good news, which has reached you, is spreading all over the world and producing the same results as it has among you ever since the day when you heard about God’s grace and understood what it really is.”

**1 Thessalonians 1:4-5** “We know, brothers, that God loves you and that you have been chosen because when we brought the good news to you, it came to you not only as words, but as power and the Holy Spirit and as utter conviction.”

**2:3,10** “We had, as you know, been given rough treatment and been grossly insulted at Philippi and it was our God who gave us the courage to proclaim his good news to you in the face of great opposition...it was God who decided that we were fit to be entrusted with the good news, and when we are speaking, we are not only trying to please men but God, who can read our inmost thoughts.”

**2:13-14** “Another reason why we constantly thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the message that we brought you as God’s message, you accepted it for what it really is, God’s message, not some human thinking.”

**2 Thessalonians 2:14** “Through the good news that we brought he called you to this (*to be saved by His Spirit*) so that you could share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

**2 Timothy 1:11** “He abolished death and he has proclaimed life and immortality through the good news, and I have been named its herald, its apostle and its teacher.”

**2:8** “remember the good news that I carry: Jesus Christ, risen from the dead”

**Titus 2:11-13** “You see, God’s grace has been revealed and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God and all our worldly ambitions”

**1 Peter 4:18** “The time has come for the judgement to begin at the household of God, and if what we know now is only the beginning, what will it be when it comes down to those who refuse to believe God’s good news?”

**1 John 1:5** “This is what we have heard from him and the message we are announcing to you: God is light, there is no darkness in him at all.”

*These passages clearly indicate that the ‘Good News’ is Our Lord himself, not a message, but a person, and that therefore we are telling people about Him, His life and what He came among us to do when we tell the ‘Good News’ to others.*

**Where is the ‘Good News’?**     *(from the liturgy of Midnight Mass, Hinckley 2011)*

*This may be done as a piece of choral speaking*

I bring you good news of great joy; today a Saviour is born for you. He is Christ the Lord

Where is the good news for us? How can we talk about good news today?

We are in the middle of a so-called recession and many people have no job now

There is an increase in crime in homes and in our streets

Many of our young people have gone away from us

There is poverty, starvation and homelessness all over the place and all over our world

So where is the good news?

*Music or song*

Wherever there is care for the earth, respect for all forms of life, a desire to conserve rather than destroy, that is good news

Wherever we cease polluting our beautiful world and encourage others to do the same at sea and on land, and in the atmosphere, when we think more carefully about the amount we waste and try to limit it as much as is possible, that is good news.

Wherever justice is promoted and implemented in relations between nations, races and individuals, that is good news

Whenever we speak the truth at all costs, even at a cost to ourselves, when we search for it and treasure it, that is good news

Wherever there is a willingness to forgive, a recognition of hurt caused and a request for forgiveness; wherever reconciliation can take place between those who have grown apart in anger, suspicion, or misunderstanding, that is good news

Whenever we can be humble and honest enough to admit our own faults and face up to what we have been and become, that is good news

*Music or song*

Wherever there is compassion that is sincere and sensitive, to the needs and sufferings of others, that is good news

Wherever there is a willingness among people to put the happiness and well-being of others before everything else of their own convenience, that is good news

Wherever there is a love and concern for another person more than for yourself, that is good news

Wherever children are nurtured with love, formed in the ways of goodness and selflessness, that is good news

When we teach them to be strong and able to withstand the pressure of peers wanting them to be and do something else, that is good news

Wherever anyone can say 'no' to that indulgence which might overtake and destroy them, and gently lead others in the same direction, that is good news

*We might be able to think of many more examples ourselves from our own experience and group discussions*

*Music or song*

In Jesus Christ, the Word of God took form and shape and became a human person

so that, in him, God could speak to our human situation

And thus, our world is graced, suffused with the glory of God

and there is no human situation which does not speak of him

and no gentle voice in which he cannot be heard

The Word became flesh and lived among us; we have seen his glory, we have heard his voice

Let us now proclaim his Word in our living and our doing

in our speaking and our listening, in our loving and our caring

in our believing and our witnessing, to proclaim the glory of God

I bring you good news of great joy: today a Saviour has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord

### **A different way of living**

*Music: "Take a chance on me"*

*In this very lively song we are invited to let the Lord turn us around, change our minds and hearts so that we may 'truly live'*

Can you change your mind, and be good and kind?  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will turn your life around, I will make you give;  
I will show you how to love, how to truly live.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort, once you are committed to me and what I stand for  
You can leave old ways behind you, follow on this new road, be caring and be cared for  
Listen to me now: if you can believe in me, I'll be there to set you free from yourself  
And I'll take away your pride, 'cos I'm always at your side,  
I will make you whole, give you back your soul.

Don't live in your head, live in mine instead.  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will show you other things you've not thought about;  
I will give you joy inside, make you want to shout.  
Open up your heart, make a brand new start,  
There's so much to see, come and follow me.  
See the suffering near to you, maybe far away,  
Let them all be dear to you, this and every day.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort etc.

I have giv'n my life, and endured the strife, of the pain and cross to achieve the loss  
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin, shutting other people out, letting no one in.  
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed to be crushing you, filling up your life  
with boredom, emptiness feeling lost and sad;  
all that dragged you down all that made you bad

Now you're free at last, what is past is past; look around and see, come and follow me.  
And you don't have to care what your friends might say;  
Just be strong and dare, live in me today.

*Repeat first verse*

*The last two songs are lovely Christmas anthems in which we can really celebrate the feast because at last we now know what it should mean for us*

*Music: "Does your mother know?"*

Here at last, Christmas Day; now we know what to do,  
what to think, what to feel, what to say: it's such a different way.  
Celebrate Jesus' birth, in this way mark the day,  
when he first came among us on earth, to show us what we are worth.  
It's a time for forgiving, now you're really living, all your dreams come true here today;  
no more jealous resenting, much more repenting, here's the one who takes sin away.

No more preening, no more posing no more pouting now;  
there's another way, he can show you how.  
The best present you'll be given on this Christmas morn  
is to know the truth: Jesus Christ is born

Stop yourself from selfish greed; so decide to provide  
from what you have for all those in need; it's such a wonderful deed.  
Make some friends you never knew, reach your hand out to give them  
your time and your smile, and renew the heart that was lost in you

It's a time for forgiving etc.

No more preening, no more posing etc.

It's the day for just sharing, try a little caring, open up your heart to your friends,  
you can tell them you're sorry, no need to worry,  
all the hurt you've caused you can mend.

You'll be smiling and carefree, we know that there'll be happiness unbounded this morn;  
'cos our old ways are past now, redemption's here at last now,

Jesus Christ our Saviour is born (*repeat*)

Jesus Christ our Saviour is born

*Music: "Super Trouper"*

Christmas used to fill me full of dread, just the thought of the expectation;  
Spending money that I didn't have to ensure a good celebration.  
Now I know it doesn't have to be, 'cos I've found another way;  
the best present we could ever have is freely giv'n to us today.

Happy Christmas to you and all your families, now we know what's true,  
No need to be blue, 'cos Jesus came for me and you.  
Have a great time being with each other, eat and drink much less  
hurt you've caused confess, this Christmas then will be the best

Jesus shows us how to live and love putting others' needs before ours  
forgetting everything we want or crave, then finding our joy in giving.  
When you love like this you come to life, learning how to hope and pray  
all your self-interest left behind, celebrate in joy today.

Happy Christmas to you and all your families etc.

It's different now, that we have heard, and accepted for ourselves the message of the truth  
that comes from him alone; if you believe, you'll live for him, and in him and be one

Happy Christmas to you and all your families etc.

## Session 1

## Where we left off – the story of Christmas

When we last gathered before Christmas we told the greatest ‘story’ ever – the story of the birth of Our Lord, God, who was there in the beginning, becoming one of us. The ‘message’ was proclaimed by the angels to shepherds in the fields: “Listen, I bring you good news of great joy – today a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord”. This year, we will be thinking more about the story of Jesus – what he said, what he did and what happened to him, and we will be thinking particularly about the “Good News” that this story means for all of us. To do so, we need to think about some of the ‘bad news’ too. For example, Christmas is not always ‘good news’ for everyone if you have little money, or sadness in your family; if you have fallen out with each other and can’t make it up; if you have too much money and spend it on things you don’t really need; if, because you have too much you get bored and disinterested, and forget about what Christmas is really for.

So how was Christmas for you this year? What did you enjoy about it, or what made you sad?

*Spend a few minutes in discussion on this topic and then put the answers together.*

Now we will have the opportunity to think about how Christmas was portrayed by some of our friends in Hinckley in their beautiful production of “Mother Mary”. It is, of course, the story of Mary and we have already sung some of the songs together, but it is also a story about today, and what Christmas has become for us. Listen to the three opening songs and see what you can pick out from them. What do the singers really think about Christmas? Is it ‘Good News’ for all of them?

*We now read or watch on the DVD the first three songs from “Mother Mary”. The words we need to pick out are in bold:*

**Song 1 – “Does it have to be this way?”** *Music: “When all is said and done”*

Once again it’s Christmas time, why do we feel **depressed**?  
People **rushing** everywhere, as if they are **possessed**.  
**We’ve lost the plot and meaning** now, so all that’s left is us;  
**for what we want and what we need, we’re making such a fuss.**  
**the rows, and fights and fallings out, to change this is a must**

Supermarket trolleys **crammed with food, we’ll surely waste;**  
**people living far and near who’d dearly love a taste**  
**of what we daily throw away, neglected in their need,**  
**how much could we help them if we only curbed our greed?**  
**selfishness consumes us so we cannot hear them plead**

The **treadmill of consumerism** makes you want to shout;  
**everything you have to buy** so no one goes without.  
But what of those who’ve nothing **do we think or even care?**

**Can't we see that what we have we're really meant to share?  
Will we never change our lives it's really so unfair?**

**Does it have to be this way can nothing yet be done?  
Is anything still left before all happiness is gone?**

**Song 2 – “Gimme, gimme, gimme the reason for Christmas”** *Music: “Gimme, gimme, gimme”*

*The ‘hidden fear’ is that this might not actually be the most enjoyable way to celebrate Christmas at all*

Christmas Eve and we've hung up our stockings,  
**Hoping for lots of presents** once again for this as every year;  
Face-book, I-pods are **all on our wish-lists**  
Lots of other things too, but **among them we detect a hidden fear**  
**Is this the only way to spend Christmas day?**

**Gimme, gimme, gimme the reason for Christmas,  
Won't somebody show me how it really should be?  
Take me, take me, take me, back to the beginning,  
Back to the beginning so the truth I can see.**

**Too much food, drink and plain self-indulgence  
Over-fed, bored and moody,  
Is the way that we spend all Christmas Day  
Other people have nothing to eat,  
They'd be glad of what we have  
What we waste and what we throw away  
Blinded by our own greed, we can't see those in need**

Gimme, gimme, gimme etc.

**Is this the only way to spend Christmas Day?**

**Song 3 – “Save our souls”** *Music: “SOS”*

*Here is a desperate cry for help to find another meaningful way of celebrating Christmas and living in general*

**We feel so empty now, and somehow far away;**  
the truth be told it's years since we've loved Christmas Day.  
**We're going through the motions now** smiling for other's sake,  
**but all the time we fear**, that when it's here, we'll break.  
So every day we pray dear God, please stay and **save our souls;**  
the pain that lies inside no longer hide so save our souls.

**Take away all our greed and our need, we implore;  
what we lack get us back on your track, faith restored.**

Can it be different yet or **is it just too late?**  
Are we to be condemned to this, an endless fate?  
And will **we lose everything, our sanity and peace;**  
**is there an act of will** to make it still a feast?

So every day we pray dear God, please stay and save our souls;  
the pain that lies inside no longer hide so save our souls.  
**Make us new, just for you lift us up from the floor;  
Help us find, in our mind, Jesus Christ as our Lord**

*Take some time to discuss all these things and ask the group if they agree. If Christmas is like this, then it really is 'bad news' not good news. And there are plenty of examples of 'bad news' in the press and on television to make us think that everything around us is bad. Get some 'newsreaders' to read the following in a makeshift 'studio':*

**Reader 1** Here is the news. These are extracts from the national and local press for the weekend of January 7-8 2012

**Reader 2** "A teenager and three young siblings have died after a house fire in Lancashire on Saturday night"

**Reader 1** "Police have been given until this morning to question a nurse on suspicion of three counts of murdering patients at Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport."

**Reader 2** "Two former Tibetan monks have set themselves on fire in Western China in a protest against Chinese rule"

**Reader 1** "Last year 183 different firms went bankrupt, according to figures out today"

**Reader 2** "At least 26 Catholic pastoral workers were killed in mission lands or among society's most disadvantaged communities, said a Vatican news agency. There were twenty five church workers killed in 2010 and 37 murdered in 2009."

**Reader 1** "A priest has described how he feared parishioners' lives were in danger when a fight broke out in his church during midnight Mass on Christmas Eve."

**Reader 2** "An Islamic extremist group took responsibility for bombings of Christian churches over Christmas in Nigeria which left more than 40 people dead."

**Reader 1** And now the news where you are...

*Use local material for this extract, eg. Hinckley*

**Reader 3** Good evening. Here is the news for the Hinckley area of the West Midlands

**Reader 4** “A Christmas fight broke out in town outside the Elements night club. One man punched another at 2.30am on Christmas morning and was arrested and cautioned.”

**Reader 3** “Police are appealing for witnesses to come forward after a brick was thrown at a car in Burbage.”

**Reader 4** “Two teenage girls face the possibility of living on the streets as they try to make their own way into the working world.”

**Reader 3** “A clampdown on drink driving has seen 119 people arrested across the county since the start of Christmas.”

**All** **Does it have to be this way can nothing yet be done?  
Is anything still left before all happiness is gone?**

### **Looking for ‘good news’**

If you see or read all ‘bad’ news’ you can end up thinking that’s all there is, and that there is no ‘good news’ anywhere. So we’re going to look for some. There will no doubt be some ‘good news’ among our families and friends, so let’s share that for a moment.

*Brief discussion on any ‘good news’ that members can think of.*

We would now like to ask two or three group members to be ‘good news hounds’, that is to look at the newspapers and some magazines, or write something down that you have seen on the TV news that is ‘good’, and come along to share it next time. We will then try to make a ‘good news’ spot in each of our club night, and possibly have a ‘good news’ noticeboard in the church or centre, so that other people can share it as well. We are also going to spend some time this year remembering our own ‘good news’ stories – the story of each group, how it began and what has happened since. We will try to make a scrap book with photos and articles to remind ourselves of all the good things that have happened because we are together in our group and in SPANNED.

“Listen, I bring you good news of great joy – today a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord”.

## **Session 2**

## **Where is the 'Good News'?**

*Gather the group together and begin the session by asking if anyone has some 'good news' to share with us. Then ask the 'newshounds' what they have found and paste it on the 'Good News' noticeboard.*

### ***Nottingham***

- *David is now 11 stone 3lbs*
- *Robert is back with the group having been ill*
- *Martin spent 20 minutes on a treadmill*
- *Ken – Forest scored at home and actually won a game!*
- *Wendy – our newshound – found a story about a school re-opening in Nottingham, having been closed nearly four years ago and another about Catholic prison chaplains wanting to set up 'basic Christian communities' to support offenders in their first months after release*

### **Music "American Pie" (Don McLean)**

*Play or sing this great song, emphasizing the words: "I met a girl who sang the blues and asked her for some happy news, but she just smiled and turned away..."*

A long, long time ago, I can still remember how that music used to make me smile;  
and I knew if I had my chance, that I could make those people dance,  
and maybe they'd be happy for a while.  
But February made me shiver, with every paper I'd deliver.  
Bad news on the door step, I couldn't take one more step.  
I can't remember if I cried, when I read about his widowed bride,  
but something touched me deep inside, the day the music died.  
So bye, bye Miss American Pie; drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry;  
them good old boys were drinking whisky and rye,  
singing, this'll be the day that I die; this'll be the day that I die.  
Did you write the book of love and do you have faith in God above?  
If the Bible tells you so. Now do you believe in rock and roll,  
can music save your mortal soul and can you teach me how to dance real slow?  
Well, I know that you're in love with him, 'cause I saw you dancing in the gym;  
you both kicked off your shoes, man I dig that rhythm and blues.  
I was a lonely teenage broncin' buck with a pink carnation and a pick up truck,  
but I knew I was out of luck, the day the music died.  
So bye, bye....  
I met a girl who sang the blues and asked her for some happy news,  
but she just smiled and turned away.  
I went down to the sacred store where I heard the music years before,  
but the man there said the music wouldn't play.  
And in the streets the children screamed, their lovers cried and the poets dreamed.  
But not a word was spoken; the church bells all were broken.

And the three men I admire the most – the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost –  
they caught the last train for the coast, the day the music died.  
And they were singing, bye, bye...  
This'll be the day that I die.

*If you like, talk a little about 'blues music' and where it comes from. You could also make up your own 'blues' verses and sing them together – hopefully this could be quite amusing if everyone joined in the composition!*

### **Nottingham**

*Tony told us about the history of 'blues' music in the deep south of the United States and how it sprang out of the desperation of black slavery and misery as a way to express the hurt and suffering. They sang it when things were very bad and sad for them. As years went on, it became commercialised and linked with rhythm music, until now it is very common. It is very straightforward with three lines in each verse with the first one being repeated. We then made up some of our own:*

*Well, Mr. John Leonard, done lost his mobile phone (repeat)  
He asked a bloke if he could borrow his but he said, hey what's yours is mine, what's mine's my own.*

*Well Martin Stiegler did 20 minutes on the treadmill (repeat)  
It would be great if it was moving but in fact it was standing still.*

*Mr. Michael Moseley, he's a Notts County fan (repeat)  
When asks what time's the kick off, they say, just get here as soon as you can*

*Well, Steve Peat's looking forward to his holiday in Wales (repeat)  
where he'll find that poor girl Lindsey and tell her all sorts of tales*

*Now Declan Donohue, he went down to a Forest game (repeat)  
He walked straight up to the goalie and said, hey babe, what's your name*

*Well they played for ninety minutes and just couldn't score a goal (repeat)  
Dec said, it's so simple, you just put it right through that hole*

*Miss Mairead Dobbin, she's qualified as a nurse (repeat)  
She's trying to make you feel better, but hey, it just makes it worse*

### **Derby**

*Bishop John Carey, he's the holiest of us all (repeat)  
He'd better be careful, 'cos, the mighty, how they fall*

*Our reporter Kenny, likes to write everything down, and down, and down... (repeat)*

*When you get one of his 25 page specials, it sure does make you frown*

*Our Fr.Frankie, he used to be thin and have hair (repeat)  
Now he's bald and fat, and can't do anything about that; it just isn't fair*

*Peter's a producer, he did an opera this year (repeat)  
They all sing so well 'cos he makes them tremble with fear*

*Joan is our darling, the same age as Brigitte Bardot (repeat)  
compare her with that polyfilla'd face, which one do you prefer, well we know*

*Miss Alison Lydiate, she's got Australia on her mind (repeat)  
and if she can't have her Aussie bear, or her music on the tape to share,  
well, she's not very kind*

*Donna's got a bloke in tow, or three or four, we never know;  
she keeps them dangling by a string, now that's not such a loving thing,  
as long as they are far away nor meet each other every day,  
she's safe for now, but when they come together, then who knows?*

### ***Hinckley***

*Miss Jane Carver, fancies dyeing her hair (repeat)  
Whether it's blue or black, blonde or brown, well, she doesn't care*

*Our Laura's a megastar, acts in all of our plays (repeat)  
She always shouts, so there's no doubt what she is wanting to say*

*Miss Hannah Glasgow likes to keep her hair straight (repeat)  
She's so keen she keeps that gadget on all day and usually it makes her so late*

*Lauren is a worrier if her lift will arrive (repeat)  
She's on the phone in case she's left alone even if you're late by just five*

*Mr.Daniel Blackbourne, likes a drink now and then (repeat)  
At the midnight hour, we drag him from the bar, and take him back to his den*

*Dale and John are fussy always asking what's next (repeat)  
They want to know before we start what time we'll finish then their part  
they'll play and read from the text*

**The real 'origin' of 'the blues'** – the need to sing when you are in pain and difficulty stretches in fact much further back than the time of slavery in America. It can be found in the psalms of the Old Testament, many of which were written when the people were in exile from their own country, living lives of oppression, torture and drudgery. They gave vent to their feelings in these beautiful hymns.

We then learned Don McLean's version of "By the rivers of Babylon" in an around:

By the waters, the waters of Babylon;  
we lay down and wept, and wept for thee, Sion;  
we remember thee, remember thee, remember thee, Sion.

**Reading**      *A number of 'readers' could do the following:*

Reader 1      Here is an extract from the liturgy of Midnight Mass in Hinckley this Christmas

Reader 2      The angel said to the shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy; today a Saviour is born for you. He is Christ the Lord

Reader 1      So where is the good news for us? How can we talk about good news today?

Reader 2      We are in the middle of a so-called 'recession' and many people have no job now

Reader 1      There is an increase in crime in homes and in our streets

Reader 2      Many of our young people have gone away from us

Reader 1      There is poverty, starvation and homelessness all over the place and all over our world

Both          So where is the good news?

*Music:* By the waters of Babylon

Reader 3      Wherever there is care for the earth, respect for all forms of life, a desire to protect rather than destroy, that is good news

Reader 4      Wherever we cease polluting our beautiful world and encourage others to do the same at sea and on land, and in the atmosphere, that is good news

Reader 3      When we think more carefully about the amount we waste and try to limit it as much as is possible, that is good news

Reader 4      Wherever justice is promoted in relations between nations, races and individuals, that is good news

Reader 3      Whenever we speak the truth at all costs, even at a cost to ourselves, when we search for it and treasure it, that is good news

Reader 4      Wherever there is a willingness to forgive, when we admit we have caused hurt and can ask for forgiveness that is good news

Reader 3      Wherever those who have grown apart in anger, suspicion, or misunderstanding can make it up, that is good news

Reader 3      Whenever we can be humble and honest enough to admit our own faults and face up to what we have been and become, that is good news

*Music:* By the waters of Babylon

Reader 5      Wherever there is compassion that is sincere and sensitive, to the needs and sufferings of others, that is good news

Reader 6      Wherever we are willing among to put the happiness and well-being of others before our own, that is good news

Reader 5      Wherever there is a love and concern for another person more than for yourself, that is good news

Reader 6      Wherever children are nurtured with love, formed in the ways of goodness and selflessness, that is good news

Reader 5      When we teach them to be strong and able to withstand the pressure of peers wanting them to be and do something else, that is good news

Reader 6      Wherever anyone can say ‘no’ to what they want and ‘yes’ to what others want, that is good news

*We might be able to think of many more examples ourselves from our own experience.*

**Prayer**      As we will see in the coming weeks, Our Lord Jesus came to show us how to live splendidly like this, for him and for others before ourselves. This is real joy, when we have forgotten ourselves and lost ourselves in others’ needs, we find our true selves. This is Jesus’ message to us and to the whole world, and this is why his coming was such ‘good news’ for everyone. Listen: I bring you good news of great joy: today a Saviour has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord

**Hymn**      I mustn’t forget

1. Autumn days when the grass is jewelled and the silk inside a chestnut shell;  
jet planes meeting in the air to get re-fuelled, all these things I love so well.  
So I mustn’t forget, no I mustn’t forget, to say a great big ‘thank you’, I mustn’t forget.
2. Clouds that look like familiar face and a winter’s moon with frosted rings;

smell of bacon as I fasten up my laces and the song the milkman sings.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.

3. Whipped up spray that is rainbow-scattered and a swallow curving in the sky;  
shoes so comfy that they're worn out and they're battered and the taste of apple pie.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.

4. Scent of gardens when the rain's been falling and a minnow darting down a stream;  
picked up engine that's been stuttering and stalling and a win for my home team.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.

### **Session 3                      Here is the Good news!**

*Recap last time and repeat the exercise with the 'good news hounds' and asking group members for any good news of their own. Show the DVD of the last three songs of 'Mother Mary', which bring us back into the present and show us what Christmas, and indeed our whole lives, can be like if we 'Come and follow me'.*

#### **Song 4                      "Come and follow me"                      Music: "Take a chance on me"**

*In this very lively song we are invited to let the Lord turn us around, change our minds and hearts so that we may 'truly live'. All the words are key words!*

Can you change your mind, and be good and kind?  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will turn your life around, I will make you give;  
I will show you how to love, how to truly live.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort, once you are committed to me and what I stand for  
You can leave old ways behind you, follow on this new road, be caring and be cared for  
Listen to me now: if you can believe in me, I'll be there to set you free from yourself  
And I'll take away your pride, 'cos I'm always at your side,  
I will make you whole, give you back your soul.

Don't live in your head, live in mine instead.  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will show you other things you've not thought about;  
I will give you joy inside, make you want to shout.  
Open up your heart, make a brand new start,  
There's so much to see, come and follow me.  
See the suffering near to you, maybe far away,  
Let them all be dear to you, this and every day.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort etc.

I have giv'n my life, and endured the strife, of the pain and cross to achieve the loss  
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin, shutting other people out, letting no one in.  
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed to be crushing you, filling up your life  
with boredom, emptiness feeling lost and sad;  
all that dragged you down all that made you bad

Now you're free at last, what is past is past; look around and see, come and follow me.  
And you don't have to care what your friends might say;  
Just be strong and dare, live in me today.

*Repeat first verse*

*The last two songs are lovely Christmas anthems in which we can really celebrate the feast because at last we now know what it should mean for us*

**Song 5 "Jesus Christ the Saviour is born" Music: "Does your mother know?"**

Here at last, Christmas Day; now we know what to do,  
what to think, what to feel, what to say: it's such a different way.  
Celebrate Jesus' birth, in this way mark the day,  
when he first came among us on earth, to show us what we are worth.  
It's a time for forgiving, now you're really living, all your dreams come true here today;  
no more jealous resenting, much more repenting, here's the one who takes sin away.

No more preening, no more posing no more pouting now;  
there's another way, he can show you how.  
The best present you'll be given on this Christmas morn  
is to know the truth: Jesus Christ is born

Stop yourself from selfish greed; so decide to provide  
from what you have for all those in need; it's such a wonderful deed.  
Make some friends you never knew, reach your hand out to give them  
your time and your smile, and renew the heart that was lost in you

It's a time for forgiving etc.

No more preening, no more posing etc.

It's the day for just sharing, try a little caring, open up your heart to your friends,  
you can tell them you're sorry, no need to worry,  
all the hurt you've caused you can mend.

You'll be smiling and carefree, we know that there'll be happiness unbounded this morn;  
'cos our old ways are past now, redemption's here at last now,  
Jesus Christ our Saviour is born *(repeat)*

Jesus Christ our Saviour is born

(Suggestions for First Liturgy – “Good News Tree”; “Babylon”)

**Song 6** “Happy Christmas to you” *Music: “Super Trouper”*

Christmas used to fill me full of dread, just the thought of the expectation;  
Spending money that I didn’t have to ensure a good celebration.  
Now I know it doesn’t have to be, ‘cos I’ve found another way;  
the best present we could ever have is freely giv’n to us today.

Happy Christmas to you and all your families, now we know what’s true,  
No need to be blue, ‘cos Jesus came for me and you.  
Have a great time being with each other, eat and drink much less  
hurt you’ve caused confess, this Christmas then will be the best

Jesus shows us how to live and love putting others’ needs before ours  
forgetting everything we want or crave, then finding our joy in giving.  
When you love like this you come to life, learning how to hope and pray  
all your self-interest left behind, celebrate in joy today.

Happy Christmas to you and all your families etc.

It’s different now, that we have heard, and accepted for ourselves the message of the truth  
that comes from him alone; if you believe, you’ll live for him, and in him and be one

Happy Christmas to you and all your families etc.

*In discussion – little groups or the large group - think about the words to all these songs,  
considering the last two first and ending the session with “Come and Follow me”. We  
could try to learn this song for our first liturgy in May. It is a little fast but lively and is  
applicable to our whole lives with the Lord, not just Christmas.*

*We will hopefully have reached the conclusion that the ‘Good News’ is Jesus himself and  
his message. In our next sessions, we can look at extracts from the gospels and other New  
Testament documents to see incidences of how Jesus brought ‘Good News’ to others  
(healings) how he told it to them ( parables) and how, afterwards, his friends set about  
‘preaching’ that good news all over the world.*

## **Session 4            Sharing the Good news!**

*Ask the 'Good News hounds' for any contribution they would like to make. Note down what they say. Some of it may be made into 'fruits' for our tree at the AGM Mass.*

*Recap events over Easter. What happened to Jesus? What happened to his friends?  
How is this 'Good News' for us?*

Make the 'tree' branches and the 'fruits' to go on them – each group will be supplied with a number of labels on which they can write their 'Good News' and bring them up during Mass to hang on the tree.

Learn the hymns: 'By the waters of Babylon'; "God's Spirit is in my heart"; "I mustn't forget" and "Come and follow me"

Prepare Liturgy for AGM Mass – see below

### **Liturgy 1 – Where is the "Good News"? – AGM Mass at Mickleover – 20.5.12**

**Entry Hymn**            Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice

**Introduction**        *Derby Group*

- Reader 1            Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Annual General Meeting Mass – we hope you're having a lovely time with us today
- Reader 2            This year in SPANNED we have been thinking about 'Good News' – not just for ourselves but for the world
- Reader 3            Trouble is, it's not so easy to find any 'Good News' these days, is it?
- Reader 1            So where is the good news for us? How can we talk about good news today?
- Reader 2            We are in the middle of a so-called 'recession' and many people have no job now
- Reader 1            There is an increase in crime in homes and in our streets
- Reader 2            Many of our young people have gone away from us
- Reader 1            There is poverty, starvation and homelessness all over the place and all over our world
- Both                So where is the good news?

*Hinckley Group*

- Reader 3 As long ago as Christmas, we were trying to think about ‘Good News’
- Reader 4 The angel said to the shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy; today a Saviour is born for you. He is Christ the Lord
- Reader 3 So was Christmas really “Good News” for you? What can you remember about Christmas last year anyway?
- Reader 4 I got lots and lots of presents – clothes, chocolates, and all that
- Reader 3 And what did you do with them?
- Reader 4 I put them away in a cupboard – I’ve got so many of those things that I really don’t know what to do with them
- Reader 3 And what else?
- Reader 4 There was too much food – We wasted lots of it and threw it away and I was so podged I couldn’t do anything for the rest of the day except go to sleep and drink
- Reader 3 Drink?
- Reader 4 Yeah...too much of that too; I had a hangover for days and can’t remember much of the day except the row
- Reader 3 The row?
- Reader 4 Yeah...the family row...we have one every year. It’s because we don’t see much of each other and when we do, we sort of fall out – it’s daft really
- Reader 3 Isn’t it?
- Reader 4 Then you feel a bit bored and empty and wonder whether it was really worth the trouble after all
- Reader 3 Not much good news there, then?
- Reader 4 God no; it’s usually a bit of a disaster

*Nottingham group*

- Reader 5 The reason there’s lots of bad news about and so little good news is that we’ve missed the point, not just at Christmas but always

- Reader 6      The point is that if you keep thinking about yourself and no-one else, you will be bored, fed-up, angry, selfish and horrible – you will not know what it is to live at all
- Reader 5      It's like being trapped, in a prison inside you can't get out of
- Reader 6      And you don't know how to escape
- Reader 5      The 'Good News' is that there is another way, a way out; there is a way of really living
- Reader 6      You can be freed, saved; there is another way, a better way, a truer way and that is the way of Jesus
- Reader 5      Jesus is the Good News for all of us – he is God's Son who came to live among us – that's what Christmas is really about – God's new way of living that Jesus shows us
- Reader 6      Throughout all his life – in what he said and what he did – Jesus showed us how to live –to give, to share, to think of others first, to forget about ourselves completely
- Reader 5      And this is what we've been trying to learn about this year
- Reader 6      Later on, we will find out what Jesus did for people and what happened to them because of it
- Reader 5      And what he said – his message – not just to the people of his time but to all people at all times
- Reader 6      Not that long ago we celebrated Holy Week and Easter – Jesus giving away his life on the cross and rising to new life
- Reader 5      And next weekend we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost, when Jesus sent his Holy Spirit on his friends so that he could live in them and make them strong
- Reader 6      Jesus sends us his Holy Spirit too and wants us to be strong so that we can tell more people about him and his way
- Reader 5      This is wonderful news for everyone – Jesus is offering all of us a new life that lasts for ever
- Reader 6      So let's be glad and be happy today – we really have some 'Good News' to share. Later in the year, we will think about how we can share this news

with others, because that is what Jesus asked his friends to do: 'go out and proclaim the good news to all people'.

### **Rite of Penance**

**Priest**            Let us now tell Jesus that we are sorry for all the times we have not allowed him to be Good News for us or shared that news with others...  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our brother and our friend; Lord have mercy  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our healer and our redeemer; Christ have mercy  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our Lord and our God; Lord have mercy

**Prayer**            Dear Father in heaven, you have given us Jesus your Son, who is always Good News for us. Help us to honour him and not to be afraid to tell everyone about him. He is Lord for ever and ever

### **The Word of God**

**First Reading**            A reading from the prophet Isaiah            *Ann Barlow*

“The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to those in prison..... to comfort all who mourn”  
This is the Word of the Lord

**Psalm**    Hymn: God’s Spirit is in my heart

**Gospel**    A reading from the holy gospel according to St.Luke    *Derby group*

*Music: Clannad*

**Narrator**            Jesus went back to Galilee, made strong by God’s Spirit in his heart.

*Enter Jesus with lots of people shaking hands with him and patting him on the back*

Everybody there was talking about him. He told the people the Good News in their meeting houses and everybody had a good word to say for him. He came at last to Nazareth where he had grown up. On the Saturday, the holy day of the Jewish people, he went along to the meeting house there and the leader of the meeting house asked him to read the bible to the people.

*Enter the leader with a big book. Jesus takes it from him and holds it up to read.  
Everyone sits on the steps around him and listens*

He opened the bible at the book of Isaiah, one of God’s great men of old, and spoke these words from it:

Voice of Jesus      God's Spirit is in my heart; he has called me to do great work. This is what I have to do – give the Good News to the poor, tell prisoners that they are prisoners no longer and blind people that they can see; to set conquered people free and tell everyone that God's great day has come.

Narrator            Jesus closed the book, gave it back to the leader and then sat down.

*He does so*

Everybody was staring at him. Then he said:

Voice of Jesus    “You have been listening to the words of the bible,” he said; “today, what God said would happen, has happened.”

Narrator            This is the gospel of the Lord

### **Offertory**

*Loughborough group*

Reader 7            A long time before Jesus was born, the Jewish people were having a terrible time – there was no good news for them because they were invaded and taken away to a different country – Babylon – and longed to go home

Reader 8            They were so sad, they could not laugh or be happy – everything was bad news for them, and so they sang this beautiful and haunting song:

**Song:**            *By the waters of Babylon (sung in the round)*

Reader 7            Sometimes, even now, we think that there is nothing but bad news but this is not true – it's just that we have to look very carefully

Reader 8            We have made a 'Good News' tree, to remind us of the good news that is still all around us today. In this offertory, we bring some of our own Good News to God....

*Little 'fruits' are put on the tree and some of the 'Good News' on each 'fruit' could also be explained by each group leader*

*Leicester group*

Reader              And now we light a candle for all of our friends who have died since we last met here for our AGM: Eileen Curtis, John Doyle, Marjorie Smith, Josephine McCready, John McEnery, Peggy Gray, Audrey Wilbram,



us: it is good news that we all woke up this morning, ready to live the life that you have given us; it is good news that we have the family and friends you have given us to love us and look after us; it is good news that we are all here today to honour you and your Son; he is the good news we want to share and shout to others, the news about how to live splendidly and happily. And so we praise you with him and all your saints in heaven as we say: Holy, holy

## **Eucharistic Prayer No.2**

You are indeed, holy O Lord, the fountain of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray by sending down your Spirit upon them, So that they may become for us + the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his passion, he took bread, and giving thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take this all of you and eat it; this is my body which will be given up for you.

When supper was ended, he took the cup, again he gave you thanks and praise, and giving the cup to his disciples, said: Take this all of you and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood, the new and everlasting covenant; it will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

Let us proclaim together our faith in this mystery: When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his death and resurrection, we offer you, Father, the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and serve you. May all of us who share in the body and blood of your Son be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Lord your Church, throughout the world; and bring us into the fullness of love together with Benedict our Pope, Malcolm our bishop and all who serve your people.

Remember all our brothers and sister who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again; bring them and all who have died, into the light of your presence.

Have mercy on us all; make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the Virgin mother of God, the apostles, the martyrs. St. Bernadette and all your saints, who have done your will throughout the ages. May we praise you in union with them through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever.

## **Our Father**

## Communion Hymn

*I mustn't forget*

1. Autumn days when the grass is jewelled and the silk inside a chestnut shell;  
jet planes meeting in the air to get re-fuelled, all these things I love so well.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.
2. Clouds that look like familiar face and a winter's moon with frosted rings;  
smell of bacon as I fasten up my laces and the song the milkman sings.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.
3. Whipped up spray that is rainbow-scattered and a swallow curving in the sky;  
shoes so comfy that they're worn out and they're battered and the taste of apple pie.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.
4. Scent of gardens when the rain's been falling and a minnow darting down a stream;  
picked up engine that's been stuttering and stalling and a win for my home team.  
So I mustn't forget, no I mustn't forget, to say a great big 'thank you', I mustn't forget.

### *Scunthorpe group*

Reader 9      There is 'Good news' all around us if we care to look and listen

Reader 10     Here's some Good News that we might not have thought about before

### *This could be mimed*

Reader 9      Wherever there is care for the earth, respect for all forms of life, a desire to protect rather than destroy, that is good news

Reader 10     Wherever we stop polluting our beautiful world and encourage others to do the same at sea and on land, and in the atmosphere, that is good news

Reader 9      When we think more carefully about the amount we waste and try to limit it as much as is possible, that is good news

Reader 10     Wherever justice is promoted in relations between nations, races and individuals, that is good news

Reader 9      Whenever we speak the truth at all costs, and stop lying, that is good news

Reader 10     Wherever we are willing to forgive, and to admit we have caused hurt and can ask for forgiveness that is good news

Reader 9      Wherever we try to make up, that is good news



I have giv'n my life, and endured the strife, of the pain and cross to achieve the loss  
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin, shutting other people out, letting no one in.  
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed to be crushing you, filling up your life  
with boredom, emptiness feeling lost and sad;  
all that dragged you down all that made you bad

Now you're free at last, what is past is past; look around and see, come and follow me.  
And you don't have to care what your friends might say;  
Just be strong and dare, live in me today.

*Repeat first verse*

## **Session 5                  Jesus is 'the Good News'**

*In this session we want to show that Jesus himself is the 'Good News'. Think about the words of "Come and Follow Me" for a little while and pick out the items of 'Good News' in it, such as, 'be good and kind', 'give' 'how to love', 'truly live', 'leave old ways behind and follow on a new road', 'be caring' 'set you free from yourself', 'give you back your soul', 'joy inside', 'seeing suffering', 'redeemed from all that seemed to be crushing you, filling up your life with boredom, emptiness', 'you don't have to care what your friends might say', etc. We will think about some of the things that Jesus did and how they were 'Good News' for people, and how he told his 'Good News' in certain stories.*

### **What Jesus did – Forgave people:** Mary Magdalen, Matthew, Zacchaeus

Narrator 1        We know that Jesus met so many people during his life; some of them came to love him, but others were jealous of him and angry with him. That's why they crucified him, because they wanted him out of the way. The people that loved him specially were those he did things for. Some of them he healed from a sickness or difficult condition; others he forgave and helped them to feel good about themselves again.

*Enter Jesus*

Narrator 2        Many of these were tax collectors. They were thought to be the worst of the worst people because they were collecting taxes from their own people to give to the Romans, and often they stole some of the money for themselves. But some of them did not feel good about it; they knew they were doing wrong but couldn't find a way out, like Matthew.

*Matthew is seen sitting at a table counting money*

He was sitting collecting taxes when Jesus called him to be one of his followers. All of a sudden he realised what he had been doing and just gave it all up, left the table and the money and went after Jesus.

*Jesus beckons him and he leaves everything*

Narrator 1      Then there was Zacchaeus

*Enter Zacchaeus, who stands on a chair*

He got rich from being a tax collector too, but he wasn't happy about it. He'd heard about Jesus from people and all the wonderful things he was doing and he wanted to see for himself, but he was only a little chap and the crowd was so big. In the end he climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus, who called him down and invited himself to lunch.

*This is acted out, with a large crowd surrounding Jesus, who calls Zacchaeus down*

Zacchaeus was so shocked and delighted that he told everyone that he would give back every penny he had taken from anyone ten times over. Here is a man for whom meeting Jesus really was 'Good News'

Narrator 2      Then there was Mary Magdalen

*Enter Magdalen*

They said she had a bad name and was not the sort of woman to be friends with, but she became Jesus' friend, because he saw something deep within her

*She approaches Jesus*

She loved him so much that she spent all her money buying expensive ointment to put on his feet before he died

**Song:** Said Judas to Mary

*She anoints Jesus' feet*

And then she was the very first person to see him after he rose from the dead. She had gone to the tomb and found it empty and when she met Jesus she thought he was the gardener until he spoke to her

Jesus              Mary

Mary              Master! It's you!

Narrator 2      Then he told her to go and get the others and she went away overjoyed. Here was the best news of all – Jesus wasn't dead, but he was alive, the most amazing thing ever

## **Jesus healed people:**

Narrator 1 Jesus also healed many people. If they were sick or disabled – deaf, blind or unable to walk – they could not go to work and earn a living, and there was no help from the state, so they were forced to beg on the streets and be insulted

*People enter, begging and others turn away from them*

Narrator 2 There was a blind man called Bartimaeus. He had been blind since he was born so had never see anything in all his life. He begged on the streets and when he heard that Jesus was coming, he cried out

Bartimaeus Jesus, Jesus, have pity on me

Narrator 2 So Jesus healed him and gave him sight.

*Jesus approaches and heals him*

But the Pharisees were not pleased; they didn't want anyone to heal anyone else, so they got hold of Bartimaeus and questioned him

*Pharisees enter and grab Bartimaeus*

But Bartimaeus stood his ground. Not only could he see people and everything around him, he could also see in his heart who Jesus really was

Bartimaeus I think he's the Son of God

Narrator 2 But the Pharisees definitely did not want to hear that, so they chased him away. But Bartimaeus had the best news of his life – he could see and he also had faith

Narrator 1 There was a Roman centurion too – he was not a believer, nor one of the Jewish people. His son was very sick and going to die. He heard about Jesus and found him

*Enter the centurion, who approaches Jesus*

Centurion Can you please cure my son?

Narrator 1 Jesus told him that his son would recover, and when he got home, he found his son in perfect health – real 'Good News' for all the family

*The centurion goes off and finds his son, hugs him and looks back at Jesus*

Narrator 2     The people worst off of all though were lepers

*Enter lepers*

Not only did they suffer from a dreadful condition but people were afraid that they might catch it from them so forced them to live out in the country away from everybody. They also thought that lepers were so wicked that their wickedness broke out in the sores on their bodies, so they were people to be avoided at all costs. They lived miserable, hungry and painful lives. It was so terrible. But they heard about Jesus too and they thought, maybe he won't reject us or turn away from us; maybe he can heal us as well as the others, so they set off to find him

*The lepers find Jesus who touches them and cures them. They are filled with joy. Music – "Macedonian morning", from 'Riverdance' – could be used here to make this more effective*

Jesus touched them – no one was supposed to do that in case they caught the leprosy, but Jesus was not afraid – and he cured them. What Good News is this – they could go back to their families and live normal lives again

Narrator 1     There are lots of other stories about how Jesus healed people. Let's see if we can remember any of them and what happened to the people when they were healed.....

*Ask the group to see who can remember different 'healing' episodes*

How would they all react when he did this to make them better or feel better about themselves? That would certainly have been 'Good News' for them

## **Session 6                   Jesus tells 'the Good News'**

*In this session we want to concentrate on the teaching of Jesus and the effect it had on people. We will use some of the parables, which make for good interactive drama, and begin with the beatitudes.*

***"Blessed are they who...."***   *Music: Elgar's "Nimrod"*

Narrator   A reading from St.Matthew's gospel

0.10   Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill (*Jesus walks up the aisle, followed by the disciples who arrange themselves in three groups on the sanctuary*). There he was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak; this is what he taught them.

- 0.40 How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *(a group together with their heads down; Jesus points upwards and they lift up their heads).*
- 1.15 Happy the gentle; they shall have the earth for their heritage. *(A group with their arms around each other. Jesus points to them and makes a sweeping gesture outwards).*
- 1.45 Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied *(Group with hands outstretched in supplication; Jesus puts something into each of their hands).*
- 2.00 Happy the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them *(figures kneeling to each other; Jesus lifts them up).*
- 2.20 Happy the pure in heart; they shall see God *(A group with their hands across their hearts; Jesus points to heaven).*
- 2.40 Happy the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God *(People standing back to back; Jesus turns them to face each other and puts their hands in each other's).*
- 3.10 Happy those who mourn; they shall be comforted *(Group with hands over their faces; Jesus consoles them).*
- 3.30 Happy are you when people abuse you, and persecute you, and speak all kinds of wickedness against you; rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. *(Everyone groups together and holds hands; Jesus stands in the middle and slowly raises his hands to heaven. Everyone else follows suit).*
- 4.00 This is the gospel of the Lord

### ***The Good Samaritan***

- Narrator A reading from St.Luke's gospel. There was a lawyer who wanted to catch Jesus out and so he came up to him and said
- Lawyer Master, what must I do to live for ever?
- Jesus What is written in our law? What does it say there?
- Lawyer Well, it says, you must love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour in the same way
- Jesus That's absolutely right. Do this and life will be yours

Narrator But the man was a bit smooth and proud. He wanted to be seen in a good light, so he asked Jesus

Lawyer And who is my neighbour?

Narrator So Jesus told him this story

Jesus Once upon a time, there was a man on his travels, when he was mugged by robbers; they beat him up, stole all his money and ran off leaving him seriously injured. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side

*A priest enters and makes a point of ignoring him*

Also, a temple official came up and when he saw him he passed by too

*The temple official does the same*

But then a Samaritan traveller found him

*The Samaritan enters and goes over to the man*

When he saw how injured the man was, he felt sorry for him. He bandaged his wounds and took him to an inn where he could sleep. The next day he gave the innkeeper some money

*The innkeeper enters and the Samaritan gives him money*

Samaritan Will you please look after my friend while I am away, and if I owe you any more, I will pay you when I come back

Narrator Then Jesus asked the lawyer

Jesus Now which of these three people proved to be a good neighbour to the man who was robbed?

Lawyer Well the one who took pity on him, of course

Jesus Right then, you go and do the same yourself

### ***The Prodigal Son***

Narrator 1 Jesus told this story to his friends about how great God's love is for us even when we do not appreciate it

Narrator 2      Once upon a time there was a man who had two sons

*A man enters with his arms round two sons*

Narrator 1      The elder son was very loyal and trustworthy; he worked hard for his Dad and his family, every single day and never put a foot wrong

Narrator 2      He was the most faithful son anyone could have, but he was a bit, you know, boring

*The elder son looks serious and goes off to work, which he acts out throughout the story*

Narrator 1      But the younger son, well, he was quite different – a cheeky chap, not one bit reliable, and really rather selfish

*The younger son looks cocky and cheeky*

Narrator 2      He wasn't going to waste his life messing around on his father's farm; he wanted to see the world and live! He wanted to rock and roll and have a good time. He loved and admired his brother but thought he was a bit, you know, boring

*Reaction between the two brothers*

Narrator 1      So, he thought to himself, blow this for a game of soldiers; I'm not going to hang round here for ever. I'm off!

Narrator 2      Now my Dad's got all this money, which he's going to leave to me and him when he pops his clogs, so why don't I get my share now, instead of having to wait years and years, and then I'll be able to enjoy it while I'm still young. What a brilliant idea!

Narrator 1      So he went up to his Dad straight away and said:

Younger Son    Dad, can I have my share of the cash now, you know before you.....you know (pop your clogs) 'cos I feel I need some experience of the world and to see a few places before I eventually settle down

Narrator 2      Good idea that, he thought, 'before I settle down' – he had no intention of settling down anywhere, but his Dad was not to know that, was he?

Narrator 1      So his Dad, being good and kind, and realising that his son would not be happy until he'd gone and seen a bit of the world, gave in and let him have his inheritance. He was delighted!

*The father gives his son a bit bag of cash and he reacts, looking over his shoulder at his brother who is still working away and looks sullenly back at him*

Narrator 2     Then he packed his bags and set off

Younger Son    I'm off to see the world!

Narrator 1     Having said goodbye to his Dad and his brother  
*He waves at them both*

Narrator 2     Who was not a happy person because he was, you know, a bit....well,  
boring

*The brother scowls at him and he cocks a snook back*

Narrator 1     Well, you know what happens to people when they suddenly get lots of  
money by winning the lottery or coming up on the pools....well, they can  
go a bit mad, can't they?

Narrator 2     This lad certainly did – he just spent and spent and spent

Narrator 1     And all of a sudden he seemed to gain a lot of friends

*'Friends' appear and there is a lot of partying*

Narrator 2     Then there were parties, and parties and more parties

Narrator 1     And spending and spending and more spending

Narrator 2     Until eventually.....as always happens.....the money ran out

*The son shows empty pockets*

Narrator 1     And all of a sudden the friends disappeared just as they arrived

*The 'friends' wave at him and leave. He is on his own*

Narrator 2     And he was left on his own....with nobody....no money...no job

Narrator 1     So he had to go and look for work....only there was none

Narrator 2     Well, there was one job....feeding pigs....ugh! Not very nice, but needs  
must have

Narrator 1     Now this lad wasn't exactly used to hard work....well, he wasn't used to  
work at all....so he was not very happy

Son            I'm not very happy

Narrator    2    And the pigs weren't very nice to him

*'Pigs' enter and snort around him*

Narrator    1    Then one day...he got a brilliant idea

Son            What a brilliant idea!

Narrator    2    He thought, I know...I'll go back home...I'll act all humble and tell my Dad just to treat me like one of the servants then at least I won't have to feed these pigs any more. Anything's got to be better than this

Narrator    1    So off he went. Now his father, who loved him and missed him, had been very worried about him, because he knew what he was like.

Narrator    2    Every day his Dad would look out from the top of the house to see if his son was coming back and he was sad when nobody appeared

Narrator    1    Then one day, what do you think...he looked and he saw this figure slowly coming towards the house and yes...it was him; it was really him. His son was coming home

Narrator    2    His Dad was overjoyed and ran out all the way up the road to meet him and gave him the biggest hug you could ever see

Narrator    1    Now the young lad had prepared his speech carefully and knew what he had to say was important

Son            Look Dad, I've messed up a bit...well, a lot really....well, big time, if the truth be told, and I've spent all your money. It was good while it lasted...yeah, very good...but nothing lasts for ever. So I thought if I came home and lived with the servants then at least I'd have a roof over my head and could be with you...so if you don't mind

Narrator    2    Don't mind! His Dad was absolutely delighted. He was having none of this 'servant' business. He called some of his servants and told them

Father        Get him some decent gear so that he can lose these awful clothes. I want the best clothes you can find and nice sandals as well. And, I tell you what, kill that cow we've been fattening – we are going to have one almighty feast here today, because my son's come home

Narrator    1    So they all made such a fuss of him and he was loving it...no more talk of being a servant now, and what a party they had

*A great party starts and there is much eating and dancing*

Narrator 2 Now the other son, you know the one who was a bit...well, boring...you almost forgot about him now, didn't you?

Narrator 1 Well he was working away in the fields as he always did – faithful and loyal to the end.....when he heard the noise

Narrator 2 The noise?

Narrator 1 Yeah....the noise of the party....the music was so loud you could hear it for miles. So he sent for one of the servants to find out what was going on

Elder Son Find out what's going on and what all that noise is about

Narrator 2 The servant came back and said

Servant Your brother's come home!

Elder Son What?

Servant Your brother's come home and your father's having a big party for him

Elder Son What?

Servant Even killed that cow you've been fattening, got him some new clothes and everything

Elder Son What?

Narrator 1 He was not a happy person....no no....not a happy person at all

Elder Son I am not a happy person

Narrator 2 In fact, he was very angry

Elder Son I'm very angry

Narrator 1 He was so angry that he refused to go into the party and meet his good-for-nothing- brother who had spent all the money, come home, and now his Dad was making a fuss of him instead of throwing him out on his ear

Narrator 2 So he strutted and strutted round the house, getting angrier and angrier

Narrator 1 His father heard that he was outside and came out to him...and he exploded

- Elder Son      What the hell do you think you're doing
- Father            What do you mean?
- Elder Son      This waster clears off with all your money, spend it all on wine, women and song, and then he has the cheek to come back here, and then...and then...you go and make a fuss of him. You should throw him out. I never want to see him again
- Father            Now Son, don't get cross
- Elder Son      Cross, cross.....don't get cross! Are you joking or what? Look at all I've done for you...slaving away for years and years...working my socks off for you and this farm, and what do I get? Nothing? Now parties, no fatted cows, nothing! But him...when he's just gone and wasted everything and look what you've done for him...It's a disgrace....he's a disgrace and so are you for falling for it
- Narrator 2      The father put his arm around his son and tried to explain
- Father            Look, son....I know you feel cross and I suppose you've a right to be. But you know I love you and appreciate all you do...you know that. Everything I have is yours. But...but it's only right that we should celebrate and rejoice because your brother has come home. He's made mistakes and hopefully learned his lesson....he was lost and now we've found him....it's like he had died and now has come back to us alive. That's why we need to be happy and be glad

**Liturgy 2      St.Bernadette's, Scunthorpe – July 1 2012**

*Before Mass: Each group should think of a few items of 'Good News' that has happened to them lately, and write it on the labels provided. These will then be out on 'fruits' for the 'Goods News' tee. Could the Scunthorpe group provide some branches for the tree, the trunk of which we will bring from Hinckley?*

**Entry Hymn**    Let all that is within me cry holy

**Introduction**      *Scunthorpe*

Reader 1        Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Mass here in Scunthorpe. It is lovely to see so many of you here with us again and we hope you've been enjoying yourselves already. This year, as you know, we've been thinking about Good News

Reader 2      At Mickleover, we talked about ‘Good News’ and ‘Bad News’ and we made our ‘Good News’ tree. At the end of Mass, we concluded that it was Jesus himself who is the ‘Goods News’ – what he did and does for us and others and what he says, shows us what it is like to live in his way

Reader 3      And his way is so different from the way that most people now live – his way is to give away your life to God and others, to share, to think of others and forget yourself

Reader 4      This is not easy, as we are often too tempted to think only of ourselves

*A lady enters in a pose and says:*

Lady          Because you’re worth it....!

Reader 4      But we are not worth it of course, or worth anything without Our Lord. That is why we need to tell him we are so sorry for all the times we have thought only about ourselves and forgotten him and others

Reader 6      Lord Jesus Christ, you are our brother and our friend, Lord have mercy

Reader 7      Lord Jesus Christ, you are our healer and our redeemer, Christ have mercy

Reader 8      Lord Jesus Christ, you Are our Lord and out God, Lord have mercy

## **The Word of God**

*Loughborough group*

Narrator 1      We know that Jesus met so many people during his life; some of them came to love him, but others were jealous of him and angry with him. That’s why they crucified him, because they wanted him out of the way. The people that loved him specially were those he did things for. Some of them he healed from a sickness or difficult condition; others he forgave and helped them to feel good about themselves again.

*Enter Jesus*

Narrator 2      Many of these were tax collectors. They were thought to be the worst of the worst people because they were collecting taxes from their own people to give to the Romans, and often they stole some of the money for themselves. But some of them did not feel good about it; they knew they were doing wrong but couldn’t find a way out, like Matthew.

*Matthew is seen sitting at a table counting money*

He was sitting collecting taxes when Jesus called him to be one of his followers. All of a sudden he realised what he had been doing and just gave it all up, left the table and the money and went after Jesus.

*Jesus beckons him and he leaves everything*

Narrator 1     Then there was Zacchaeus

*Enter Zacchaeus, who stands on a chair*

He got rich from being a tax collector too, but he wasn't happy about it. He'd heard about Jesus from people and all the wonderful things he was doing and he wanted to see for himself, but he was only a little chap and the crowd was so big. In the end he climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus, who called him down and invited himself to lunch.

*This is acted out, with a large crowd surrounding Jesus, who calls Zacchaeus down*

Zacchaeus was so shocked and delighted that he told everyone that he would give back every penny he had taken from anyone ten times over. Here is a man for whom meeting Jesus really was 'Good News'

*Leicester group*

Narrator 3     Then there was Mary Magdalen

*Enter Magdalen*

They said she had a bad name and was not the sort of woman to be friends with, but she became Jesus' friend, because he saw something deep within her

*She approaches Jesus*

She loved him so much that she spent all her money buying expensive ointment to put on his feet before he died

**Song:**         Said Judas to Mary

*She anoints Jesus' feet*

Narrator 3     And then she was the very first person to see him after he rose from the dead. She had gone to the tomb and found it empty and when she met Jesus she thought he was the gardener until he spoke to her

Jesus            Mary

Mary            Master! It's you!

Narrator 3      Then he told her to go and get the others and she went away overjoyed. Here was the best news of all – Jesus wasn't dead, but he was alive, the most amazing thing ever

*Derby group*

Narrator 4      Jesus also healed many people. If they were sick or disabled – deaf, blind or unable to walk – they could not go to work and earn a living, and there was no help from the state, so they were forced to beg on the streets and be insulted

*People enter, begging and others turn away from them*

Narrator 5      There was a blind man called Bartimaeus. He had been blind since he was born so had never see anything in all his life. He begged on the streets and when he heard that Jesus was coming, he cried out

Bartimaeus      Jesus, Jesus, have pity on me

Narrator 4      So Jesus healed him and gave him sight.

*Jesus approaches and heals him*

But the Pharisees were not pleased; they didn't want anyone to heal anyone else, so they got hold of Bartimaeus and questioned him

*Pharisees enter and grab Bartimaeus*

But Bartimaeus stood his ground. Not only could he see people and everything around him, he could also see in his heart who Jesus really was

Bartimaeus      I think he's the Son of God

Narrator 5      But the Pharisees definitely did not want to hear that, so they chased him away. But Bartimaeus had the best news of his life – he could see and he also had faith

Narrator 4      There was a Roman centurion too – he was not a believer, nor one of the Jewish people. His son was very sick and going to die. He heard about Jesus and found him

*Enter the centurion, who approaches Jesus*

Centurion Can you please cure my son?

Narrator 5 Jesus told him that his son would recover, and when he got home, he found his son in perfect health – real ‘Good News’ for all the family

*The centurion goes off and finds his son, hugs him and looks back at Jesus*

*Scunthorpe group*

Narrator 6 The people worst off of all though were lepers

*Enter lepers*

Not only did they suffer from a dreadful condition but people were afraid that they might catch it from them so forced them to live out in the country away from everybody. They also thought that lepers were so wicked that their wickedness broke out in the sores on their bodies, so they were people to be avoided at all costs. They lived miserable, hungry and painful lives. It was so terrible. But they heard about Jesus too and they thought, maybe he won’t reject us or turn away from us; maybe he can heal us as well as the others, so they set off to find him

*The lepers find Jesus who touches them and cures them. They are filled with joy*

Jesus touched them – no one was supposed to do that in case they caught the leprosy, but Jesus was not afraid – and he cured them. What Good News is this – they could go back to their families and live normal lives again

Narrator 6 There are lots of other stories about how Jesus healed people. Let’s see if we can remember any of them and what happened to the people when they were healed.....

*Ask the group to see who can remember different ‘healing’ episodes*

How would they all react when he did this to make them better or feel better about themselves? That would certainly have been ‘Good News’ for them

*Hinckley group*

Narrator 7 Jesus also told people the ‘Good News’ of how to live splendidly, first of all to his disciples then to everybody

0.10 Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill (*Jesus walks up the aisle, followed by the disciples who arrange themselves in three groups on the sanctuary*). There he was

joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak; this is what he taught them.

- 0.40 How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *(a group together with their heads down; Jesus points upwards and they lift up their heads).*
- 1.15 Happy the gentle; they shall have the earth for their heritage. *(A group with their arms around each other. Jesus points to them and makes a sweeping gesture outwards).*
- 1.45 Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied *(Group with hands outstretched in supplication; Jesus puts something into each of their hands).*
- 2.00 Happy the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them *(figures kneeling to each other)*
- 2.20 Happy the pure in heart; they shall see God *(A group with their hands across their hearts – Jesus points to heaven)*
- 2.40 Happy the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God *(People standing back to back; Jesus turns them to face each other and puts their hands in each other's).*
- 3.10 Happy those who mourn; they shall be comforted *(Group with hands over their faces; Jesus consoles them).*
- 3.30 Happy are you when people abuse you, and persecute you, and speak all kinds of wickedness against you; rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. *(Everyone groups together and holds hands; Jesus stands in the middle and slowly raises his hands to heaven. Everyone else follows suit).*
- 4.00 This is the gospel of the Lord

**No homily**

**Offertory** *Each group bring up their fruits and the leader tells us what is written on them*

**Offertory Hymn** Take our bread

**Eucharistic Prayer No.2**

**Our Father**

**Communion Music** “In the Lord” *(Margaret Rizza CD)*

**Communion Hymn**     This is my body

**After Communion**

*Nottingham group*

Narrator 8     Jesus said to his friends:

Jesus            I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for my sheep

*A group of enter and walk around as if they don't know what they are doing*

Narrator 8     Ladies and gentlemen, for the purposes of our understanding the gospel story we have just heard, I want you to imagine that these people are sheep and rather silly sheep at that.

Narrator 9     Of course, they are not sheep, nor are they silly; they're just pretending to be. And sheep, as you may know, can sometimes be very silly indeed.....*(Loud)* I said, they can sometimes be very silly indeed.

*The 'sheep' start acting silly, 'baaing', looking at the ground, wandering off in all directions.*

Narrator 8     That is why they need someone to look after them.... *(Loud)* That is why they need someone to look after them.

*The sheep look up and return to some sort of order, huddled together.*

Narrator 9     This is what Jesus means when he tells us the story about the sheep. If the person looking after them is paid, he doesn't really care about them, only about his money. They can wander off and be lost.

*A man enters, looking totally disinterested; he casts a look at the sheep and then goes and leans on the lectern, smoking and examining his nails. Throughout the following action, he makes no move at all to help the sheep. Some of the sheep wander away.*

I said, they can wander off and be lost

*The sheep look up, surprised, 'baa', and make a 'what me?' gesture. The narrator nods and they reluctantly come back.*

Narrator 8 Thieves can come and steal them

*Two thieves come in stealthily and 'lift' the sheep.*

Narrator 9 Wolves can come and frighten them or even kill them.

*Two wolves run in and 'attack' the sheep, who fall to the ground; the wolves retire.*

Narrator 8 Or they can run out of pasture to feed on and not know what to do next.

*The sheep look longingly at the ground, examine it, and look bemused.*

Sheep We don't know what to do next.

Narrator 9 This is because the shepherd is only a hired man, and doesn't really care for the sheep.

Hired Man I don't really care about you; there's no money in this job, anyway.

Narrator 8 And if danger comes, he runs away from the sheep and leaves them.

*The hired man sees something coming, takes fright and runs away; the good shepherd enters.*

Narrator 9 But the good shepherd really does care for his she

*The good shepherd gathers them together and gives them a hug.*

Narrator 8 He won't let them wander off on their own.

*One or two sheep try to wander off, but he taps them on the shoulder, crooks his finger to them and gently leads them back.*

Narrator 9 He'll protect them from thieves.

*The two thieves come back stealthily and try to steal a sheep, but the shepherd sees them, wags his finger, and beckons them away.*

Narrator 8 No wolves will come and harm them.

*The wolves return and the shepherd rushes at them to shoo them away.*

Narrator 9 And he will find them good places to pasture.

*The shepherd leads them to another corner, shows them the ground and they all look pleased. He then comes back to the centre.*

Narrator 8     He knows every one of them by name.

*The shepherd calls each sheep by name, and the sheep follow him, gathering themselves into him.*

Narrator 9     The good shepherd loves his sheep, and would lay down his life for them if necessary.

Narrator 8     This is how Jesus thinks about us; this is how he loves us.

Jesus            I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep and they know me. I watch over them always, and they follow me. I go before them to guide them and protect them from harm. I love them so much, that I would lay down my life for them.

Narrator 9     Jesus is the good shepherd; we are his sheep. Sometimes we are silly and do daft things...

*Some of the sheep start 'baaing' and acting the fool; they look at Jesus who shakes his head.*

Narrator 8     Sometimes we wander off, because we think we can manage on our own.

*Some sheep proudly march away. They scratch their heads, look around, see nothing, and gingerly come back.*

Narrator 9     Sometimes we need someone to turn to when we are frightened or sad.

*Some sheep look sad and nuzzle into the shepherd.*

Narrator 8     Jesus loves us so much that he did lay down his life for us, to save us and help us to live happily for ever.

## **Final Prayer**

## **Blessing**

**Final Hymn**     Come and follow me

*In this very lively song we are invited to let the Lord turn us around, change our minds and hearts so that we may 'truly live'*

Can you change your mind, and be good and kind?  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will turn your life around, I will make you give;  
I will show you how to love, how to truly live.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort, once you are committed to me and what I stand for  
You can leave old ways behind you, follow on this new road, be caring and be cared for  
Listen to me now: if you can believe in me, I'll be there to set you free from yourself  
And I'll take away your pride, 'cos I'm always at your side,  
I will make you whole, give you back your soul.

Don't live in your head, live in mine instead.  
Look around and see, come and follow me.  
I will show you other things you've not thought about;  
I will give you joy inside, make you want to shout.  
Open up your heart, make a brand new start,  
There's so much to see, come and follow me.  
See the suffering near to you, maybe far away,  
Let them all be dear to you, this and every day.  
Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn't take that much effort etc.

I have giv'n my life, and endured the strife, of the pain and cross to achieve the loss  
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin, shutting other people out, letting no one in.  
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed to be crushing you, filling up your life  
with boredom, emptiness feeling lost and sad;  
all that dragged you down all that made you bad

Now you're free at last, what is past is past; look around and see, come and follow me.  
And you don't have to care what your friends might say;  
Just be strong and dare, live in me today.

*Repeat first verse*

## **Session 7                    "The best that you can be" – the Olympic Games**

*We are now taking a short break from our project to concentrate on the forthcoming London Olympic Games. Many group members have been to see the Olympic torch relay or even had the chance of carrying the torch themselves. We will spend two or three evenings on the Games and then return to our 'Good News' work. There is some good material in the July and August issues of "The Tablet", and in particular articles by the Games senior chaplain, Mgr. Vladimir Felzman, which we include here.*

## Background

The Olympic Games originated in ancient Greece about 776 BC when athletes competed in various events for an olive wreath to be placed on their heads. They were to be a celebration of physical prowess and a salute to the ancient gods but also an opportunity to celebrate peace, goodwill and universal human fraternity. The modern Olympics in fact originated in Much Wenlock in Shropshire in 1850, where a local surgeon, Dr. William Perry launched the Wenlock Olympic Games and in 1866 the national Olympic Games. This is what inspired a Frenchman, Baron Pierre de Coubertin to launch the international Olympic Games in 1894 as a way of bringing the family of the world together in peace and fraternity. Two mottos he chose in 1894 originated from the church: “Faster, higher, stronger” was borrowed from a Dominican priest friend, Henri Didon, and “the most important thing is not to win, but to take part” from a sermon from the Bishop of Pennsylvania.

Symbols: The Olympic rings – five interlocking rings – black, blue, yellow, green and red – was originally designed by de Coubertin in 1912 to represent the continents of the world, coming together in one place in pursuit of excellence.

The Olympic flag – containing the rings on a white background – is flown for the entire duration of each games at the Olympic stadium and at the end of the games is passed from the mayor of the host city to the mayor of the host city of the next Olympiad, thus ensuring a continuity and tradition between each of the events.

The Olympic torch – the modern tradition of moving the Olympic flame via a relay system from ancient Greece to the site of the event began with the Berlin Games of 1936. The torch is lit from the rays of the sun in Greece and then taken by special ‘torches’ (8,000 in all this time!) to the host city. This year’s torch relay has taken place all over Britain and our own Jack Marshall of Scunthorpe carried it in Doncaster. The end of its journey will be the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, when it will be used to light a huge cauldron of flame over the stadium for everyone to see throughout the games. At the end of the games, the flame is ceremoniously extinguished.

Medals – of gold, silver and bronze are awarded to those finishing first, second and third respectively in each event of the games. Once you are an Olympic champion, you are a champion for life.

Anthems – several well-known composers have written special anthems or ‘hymns’ for the celebration of each Olympiad.

In the Olympic Games we want to see people doing the very best that they can on the day to make all their training and sacrifices worth while, to stretch their bodies and minds to the limit. Sport requires tolerance of pain, deferment of gratification and sacrifice, and can take human beings beyond mere mortality even if only for one blissful moment. We can see how these elements also are involved in ‘perfecting’ ourselves spiritually, and there are many sporting metaphors in the Bible as we will see, which we will use to describe the journey to salvation and perseverance to the end. (cf. Phil. 3:3). In the life of prayer we have to discipline and train ourselves in the love of God and devotion to him and not be the sort of self-seeking ‘spiritual couch potatoes’ that we have become, whose only exercise is reaching for the remote control. If the games succeed in breaking us out

of our comfort zone and taking up exercise, no matter how little, perhaps they will encourage us to make more spiritual sacrifices as well so as to gain the prize. So take up prayer and its discipline so that you can best the 'best that you can be'. It is amazing how so many 'winners' at the very moment of their triumph kneel down on the track or make some sort of acknowledgment to the 'above'. This surely cannot be an accident, but a clear admission that whatever is good in them or has brought them to this pinnacle of achievement comes from God and that therefore he should be thanked and honoured for it. Remember the great Eric Liddell from "Chariots of Fire" – "'God made me fast and when I run, I feel his power". We admit that sport can also foster greed, vanity, a determination to succeed at all costs, and reveals a darker side in humans that need to be purified. This can happen to us in any walk of life and so we discover the need to purify ourselves from all selfish ambition and obsessiveness so that we can be generous in victory as well as in defeat. The affinity between real athletes after a race and respect for each other's achievements is always something very encouraging to see. The world's athletes should take it upon themselves to teach the rest of us what the human spirit is capable of – mind, body and soul – at its best.

Sport is a worthy way to live life to the full and that is the connection with our "Good News" project this year – losing your life to find it. It can funnel away aggression from what is destructive to the quiet joy of self-confidence as performances improve. At best, sport is an icon, educating, exciting, uniting, stimulating, uplifting and beautiful. It glorifies God by lifting the spirits and creating genuine commitment – "the glory of God is a person fully alive" as S.Irenaeus said in the second century. Jesus offers us life to the full – cf. Jn.10:10 – in our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual lives. Sport can offer us an exhilaration when we see wonderful things happening in the pool or on the track and we leap out of our seats; we share in the joy of the winners but we thus become part of it ourselves. In prayer we are united with Jesus and share his joy – the joy of his rising to new life is our joy, our rising to life as well. We feel great amazement at the achievements of some of the athletes and so we can know what it is to feel great amazement at the wonder of God as well. All this takes us away from the stifling self-absorption which can ultimately destroy us. Before the games, the British nation awarded itself the gold medal for moaning – waste of money, too much inconvenience etc. – but afterward the opposite was true. We looked beyond 'what is in it for me' to delight in the performances and triumphs that we saw in the flesh or on TV. If we can rejoice in their triumphs maybe we can rejoice at other things as well.

We don't just need a perfectly toned body to do sport and this is what the paralympics show us – a wheelchair is not as limiting as it might be, partial sight, loss of hearing or intellectual impairment are no longer barrier to our being the 'best that we can be'. Many of the paralympians are certainly 'athletes' in their own right, like Sarah Storey, the cyclist who nearly made it into the Olympic squad, but others have found sports that suit their disability and have overcome great personal trauma – eg. injuries through accidents, terrorist attacks or serving in the army – to persevere and succeed in them. Above all others they know what it is to go through the pain barrier, to fight with frustration and overcome it and to perfect good habits and skills. To taste success and learn from failure is important for them and for all of us. Belonging to a team (this is surely what the 'church' is) with a common goal gives people a sense of identity as a community. Sport reminds us of faith – commitment to a way of living, in community with a common goal

that points us to life at its best. The joy and exhilaration we experience is often revealed in our singing and dancing as an expression of some thing coming from within us and bursting out of us. Through sport, we see humanity at its most sublime and mysterious and it seems to satisfy our yearning for spiritual communion between people from every part of our global city. It is a joy and therefore a cause for hope and hope is a combination of faith and hard work. Behind every athlete is a team of 'helpers' to bring them to the pinnacle of their powers, so too with us, there are so many people to help us and encourage us if we only care to acknowledge them, and we learn that we can achieve more together than alone. Look at the projects we have done together in SPANNED over the past few years and see how much we have achieved when we put it all together. There is so much still to learn – don't give up when it gets difficult, practice prayer and train for it – this takes hours of commitment and is not just a 'quick fix'. Look at the monks of Mount St. Bernard Abbey who have devoted their lives to the discipline of prayer for the sake of the rest of us – what an example they are. In Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, he said that participation is about making an individual 'contribution' by being able to live life to the full as well as accommodating other people and he made reference to sport and its objectives, which he singled out as:

- aim high and play fair
- respect your own body, your opponents and the rules of the game
- be humble in victory and dignified in defeat
- strive for excellence while protecting the weak
- do your best for your team
- seek solidarity with all beyond racial and cultural differences
- try to acquire the virtues so that you can be the best that you can be

*During this session we begin by explaining the above and then asking members if any of them have won medals for anything – perhaps they might care to bring them to show us next time. We could even make some medals ourselves and award them to each other. Ask members to suggest what others might be given a medal for – eg. smiling, kindness, art, acting, losing weight, serving Mass etc. Make sure that everyone is nominated for an award for something – this could be written on the 'medal' during the next session.*

Memories – what great Olympic achievement can we think of?

*Ask group members and see what they can remember. Eg. Torville and Dean, Nadia Comaneci, Chris Hoy, Rebecca Adlington, Kelly Holmes, Sally Gunnell, Steve Redgrave, Jesse Owens, Bob Beamon, Dick Fosbury etc. Can you think of any great Olympic stories? Show film (DVD) of great Olympic moments if possible. What are you looking forward to seeing in the Olympics this year?*

Learn Tony Wheat's new hymn specially written for us – "God of my hopes, God of my dreams"

## Session 8      The Olympics and us

*We want to try to relate the Olympics to our lives as followers of Our Lord and there are many ways in which we can do this:*

**The athletes** – are chosen by their countries because:

- they are good at what they do
- someone spots their potential for greatness.
- often the people that do well are not the ones you might expect
- they have to train and be trained and this can mean great efforts and sacrifices over long periods of time
- they need encouragement and help to achieve their potential – coaching, kit, training facilities, doctors, nutritionists, and of course, their families
- they compete to do as well as they can for themselves, their team and their country. And even if they don't win a medal, just taking part in the Olympics is a great achievement. Everyone wants to do their best
- they can sometimes achieve great things that are remembered for years

Jesus chose special 'friends' to be his apostles and followers:

- he spotted their potential
- often the people he chose were not the ones you might expect – dodgy characters!
- this involved changing their whole lives and giving up their work
- he trained them by being with them and 'taking them away to a quiet place' from time to time
- they had to keep working to understand what Jesus was asking of them
- they were never alone – Jesus was there to help them and even after he went back to the Father in heaven, he sent his Holy Spirit so that he could still be with them
- he reminded them to look after each other and to remember that they were not following him for themselves but for others
- sometimes they had to make great efforts and sacrifices for him
- often those 'sacrifices' meant giving up their whole lives as martyrs

What about us?

- how are we called and 'selected' for God's team?
- how does Jesus train us and encourage us?
- how does Jesus ask us to do things differently?
- how should we support each other as a team?
- how does the Holy Spirit help us today?
- what were the apostles' 'moments of glory', ('gold medals'). What could we achieve for Jesus and the Father?
- What is 'the best that we can do'?

**The rings** – All the world is coming together and united in one piece – are we aware of what this might mean? Rich and poor countries all coming to do their best'. How can we

help to bring the world together? If the rings interlock as one piece, what does this say to us about the Church, the one body of Jesus, and our relationship with each other?

**The flag** – is passed from one Olympic Games to another and represents the continuity of the spirit of the Olympics.

- we pass the Spirit of our gatherings from one event to another each time we meet.
- every Mass is a passing on of the Spirit of Jesus who is as truly with us now as he was with his first friends.
- the church represents the passing of the early ‘tradition’ (literally ‘handing on’) from the early days until now

**The flame** – represents ‘light in the dark’ that is passed all round the world

- Jesus said: “I am the light of the world”
- and also: “let your light shine before men so that they may give the glory to your Father in heaven”
- at Pentecost, the Spirit came down on the apostles ‘like tongues of fire’
- St.John says: “this is the message we are announcing to you: God is light; there is no darkness in him at all”
- St.Paul says: “that is why I am reminding you to fan into a flame the light you first received”
- the ‘light’ is what is inside us and it shows itself through what we say and do in Jesus’ name
- we pass it on from person to person
- we hope that the world will see it and join in

## **Session 9      Olympic memories and the Annual Mass**

*In this session we ask members what were their best memories from the Olympics this year and then we prepare for our Annual Mass together.*

### **Liturgy 3 – Celebration – Annual Mass at Hinckley – September 15 2012**

**Before Mass:** *The banner and flag bearers assemble in the porch and enter in front of the bishop and priests*

**Music:** “I was glad” (C.H.Parry)

**Greeting:** The bishop

**Welcome:** *our Chairman, Simon Brittle, will address the congregation.*

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to Hinckley for our Annual Mass. As Mass begins, we need to give some explanation of what we are trying to do today. In effect, three things: We are celebrating the diamond jubilee of our Queen, the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Sunshine Club here, and of course, the recent Olympic and Paralympic Games. Her majesty the Queen was called by God to serve the country and has not diverted from her

duty for over 60 years. She has always seen it as a way to serve Our Lord, and we all give thanks for her. As we came into church you heard the great anthem of C.H.Parry – “I was glad”. This was specially written for the coronation of our Queen, and it was also sung, by happy co-incidence in Southwark Cathedral on May 28 1982, as Pope John Paul 11 entered to celebrate the never-to-be forgotten anointing of the sick. It was in corridors of that same cathedral on that same day, that Fr.Frank said to Mary Forryan – “now that you’ve brought all your friends here for the day, why don’t you set up a group and meet regularly”, and thus, the Hinckley Sunshine Club was born. At the end of Mass today, we will sing the specially written song for her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee. In a few moments, a direct link with this year’s Olympic Games will be made as one of the 8,000 Olympic torches which was used in the relay will be brought in procession by Jack Marshall, from our Scunthorpe group, who carried it. Also Lyndon Pitt, one of the games volunteers, will accompany the flag to the sanctuary, dressed in his special uniform. Today and always, like those athletes from the Olympic Games, like her majesty the Queen, and like all those who have worked in our groups over so many years, we pledge ourselves once again to be ‘the best that we can be’ for Our Lord and for each other.

**Music:** Jon Vangelis- “Chariots of Fire”     *Nottingham Group*

*The five Olympic rings are situated in different parts of the church, carried by members from all of our groups, and are brought to the altar slowly during the music before being placed together.*

From all over the world we come, from the ends of the earth we gather, from countries rich and poor, representing all peoples everywhere on the planet, to come together for this time and be joined, united as one world in peace and friendship.

*The rings are assembled. The flag is now brought by six bearers*

The Olympic flag, which represents the handing on of the Olympic spirit from one games to the next is brought to be presented to our bishop who, as the direct successor of Jesus’ first apostles, represents in his office the handing on of the tradition of the Good News of Jesus Christ from the very first days of the church.

*The flag is presented to the bishop and then placed in the sanctuary. The torch is brought by Jack Marshall*

Eight thousand of these torches were carried from Greece and all over Britain to London to light the cauldron at the Olympic stadium at the start of the games. Jack Marshall was one of those bearers and now he brings his torch which symbolises light in the dark and here, among us, the light of Our Lord in our world.

*Jack holds up the torch*

Jesus said: “I am the light of the world”. Jesus says: “let your light shine before men so that they may give the glory to your Father in heaven”. At Pentecost, the Spirit came

down on the apostles 'like tongues of fire', so that they could bring Jesus the light to others. This is the light that is within each of us too, the light to be shared with everyone.

*The torch is displayed in the sanctuary and the paschal candle is lit. The music finishes.*

### **Rite of Penance**

**Bishop** Let us now tell Jesus that we are sorry for all the times we have not allowed him to be Good News for us or shared that news with others...  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our brother and our friend; Lord have mercy  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our healer and our redeemer; Christ have mercy  
Lord Jesus Christ, you are our Lord and our God; Lord have mercy

**Prayer** Dear Father in heaven, you have given us Jesus your Son, who is always Good News for us. Help us to honour him and not to be afraid to tell everyone about him. He is Lord for ever and ever

### **The Word of God**

**First Reading** *Scunthorpe group* A reading from the letter of St.Paul to the Philippians

I haven't yet got anywhere near being the kind of man I want to be; and I haven't become as mature as Jesus was - by a long way. But nothing's going to stop me now; I intend to be the kind of man Jesus wanted me to be when he called me on the road to Damascus City. I know I haven't got there yet; but I have set my heart on one thing – to forget the past and live for the future. I'm like a long distance runner. I see the tape ahead and I'm going to get there and win the prize. This is the Word of the Lord

**Psalm** God of my hopes, God of my dreams

**Gospel** *Loughborough Group – flash cards can be used at certain points:*

Our Loughborough group has a special reason to feel excited about the Olympics because many of the athletes train in our university, and sometimes we even see them running in the streets. Today let us think about one Olympic moment, one memory that we have and what it means to share it:

On the day before the end of the games, Mohammad Farah (Mo to his friends) won the second of his two gold medals in the 5,000 metres. To do so, he had to overcome hardship and difficulty and come to Britain when he was eight years old from Somalia where he was born, to practice and train for years, he had to hone his body so that it was in its very best shape, and he had to have the support of so many people helping him, as well as a massive crowd on the night, so that, like St.Paul says to us today, he could get

there and win the prize, and he succeeded. Let us think about what this might mean for you and me in our life with Jesus and the Father in heaven, using the words of Jesus from the gospels

Narrator 1 The stadium was full of people and the light from the Olympic flame was burning brightly

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark; he will have the light of life"

**CARD: "Light"**

Narrator 1 He had to be in perfect shape, the best shape of his life

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect

**CARD: "Perfect"**

Narrator 1 At that precise moment, all his dreams came true and he was living life to the full

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"

**CARD: "Live"**

Narrator 1 As soon as he won his race, he knelt down on the track and prayed to show that his achievement came not from himself but from God, who brought him to this moment

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "If I were to seek my own glory, that would be no glory at all. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit."

**CARD: "Glory"**

Narrator 1 Everyone in the crowd and millions sitting at home jumped out of their seats with joy and exhilaration with him

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete."

**CARD: "Joy"**

Narrator 1 Mo won his prize, his gold medals, and learned the message of true living

Narrator 2 Jesus says: "And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"

**CARD: "Life"**

Bishop This is the gospel of the Lord

**Homily** *Derby group – some mime could be used if possible*

- Narrator 1 Did you enjoy the Olympics and the paralympics? Can you think of one special moment that made you really excited? Did you actually get to see some of it for real? Today we are thinking about the Olympics and ourselves, and how we are to be “Jesus’ athletes”, who train and work and be the very best they can be for him and each other. So what about the Olympic and Paralympic athletes?
- Narrator 2 They are chosen by their countries because
- Narrator 3 they are good at what they do
- Narrator 4 someone spots their potential for greatness
- Narrator 3 often the people that do well are not the ones you might expect
- Narrator 4 they have to train and be trained and this can mean great efforts and sacrifices over long periods of time
- Narrator 3 they need encouragement and help to achieve their potential – coaching, kit, training facilities, doctors, nutritionists, and of course, their families
- Narrator 4 they compete to do as well as they can for themselves, their team and their country. And even if they don’t win a medal, just taking part in the Olympics is a great achievement. Everyone wants to do their best
- Narrator 1 So what, then about Jesus’ friends? They can sometimes achieve great things that are remembered for years
- Narrator 2 Jesus chose special ‘friends’ to be his apostles and followers:
- Narrator 3 he spotted their potential
- Narrator 4 often the people he chose were not the ones you might expect – dodgy characters!
- Narrator 3 this involved changing their whole lives and giving up their work
- Narrator 4 he trained them by being with them and ‘taking them away to a quiet place’ from time to time
- Narrator 3 they had to keep working to understand what Jesus was asking of them
- Narrator 4 they were never alone – Jesus was there to help them and even after he went back to the Father in heaven, he sent his Holy Spirit so that he could still be with them

- Narrator 3 he reminded them to look after each other and to remember that they were not following him for themselves but for others
- Narrator 4 sometimes they had to make great efforts and sacrifices for him; often those 'sacrifices' meant giving up their whole lives as martyrs
- Narrator 1 Now what about us?
- Narrator 2 how are we called and 'selected' for God's team?
- Narrator 3 how does Jesus train us and encourage us?
- Narrator 4 how does Jesus ask us to do things differently?
- Narrator 1 how should we support each other as a team?
- Narrator 2 how does the Holy Spirit help us today?
- Narrator 3 What could we achieve for Jesus and the Father?
- Narrator 4 What is 'the best that we can do'?
- Narrator 1 This is what we will be thinking about in our group meetings over the next few weeks

**Bidding Prayers** *Leicester group*

- Bishop Dear friends, let us pray to God our Father, who gave us life and love, family and friends, and who, above us all, gave us Jesus his Son, to show us how to live our lives to the full
- Reader We thank you for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and for all that they brought to us and our country this year
- Bishop Lord hear us
- Reader Help us to be inspired by what we have seen, especially in our lives of prayer and sacrifice for you
- Bishop Lord hear us
- Reader Show us how to be the best that we can be in your service
- Bishop Lord hear us

Reader Bless our Hinckley Sunshine Club on this their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and thank you for all the good that they have done for themselves and others

Bishop Lord hear us

Reader And now we light a candle for all of our friends who have died since we last met here for our Annual Mass: John McEnery, Peggy Gray, Audrey Wilbram, Maurice Needham, Mary Rdzanek, Arthur Hankey, Paul Muursepp, Pattie Wykes and Carla Knight. May they live in the Lord's peace for ever.

Bishop Lord hear us

Reader Dear Father, we give you thanks for the life and service of Elizabeth our Queen, by singing the national anthem together:

**Song** God save our gracious Queen; long live our noble Queen. God save the Queen.  
Send her victorious, happy and glorious, long to reign over us. God save the Queen

Serving for 60 year, sharing our joys and tears, there she has been;  
treating with equal grace, those of each creed and race;  
of all that's good she's been the face, God save our Queen.

**Hymn** We come to your feast *Hinckley group*

*Each verse will be mimed.. During the first verse a white cloth, flowers and candles are brought to the altar and placed on it. During each chorus, other group members come and stand round the altar, so that for the last verse, a whole circle is created around the altar.*

1. We place upon your table a gleaming cloth of white;  
the weaving of our stories, the fabric of our lives;  
the dreams of those before us, the ancient hopeful cries,  
the promise of our future, our needing and our nurture, lie here before our eyes.

Chorus: We come to your feast, we come to your feast;  
the young and the old, the frightened and bold, the greatest and the least.  
We come to your feast, we come to your feast,  
with the fruit of our lands and the work of our hands, we come to your feast.

*The bread is brought and put on the altar*

2. We place upon your table, a humble loaf of bread,  
the gift of field and hillside, the grain by which we're fed;

we come to taste the presence of him on whom we feed,  
to strengthen and connect us, to challenge and correct us, to love in word and deed.

*Wine is brought*

3. We place upon your table a simple cup of wine,  
the fruit of human labour, the gift of sun and vine.  
We come to taste the presence of him we claim as Lord,  
his dying and his living, his leading and his giving, his cup in love outpoured.

4. We gather round your table, we pause within our quest;  
we stand beside our neighbours, we name the stranger, 'guest'.  
The feast is spread before us, you bid us come and dine,  
in blessing we'll uncover, in sharing we'll discover your substance and your sign.

**Prayer over the gifts** Dear Father, we bring you this bread, we bring you this  
wine; we bring you ourselves, as we are today and all that  
we can be, with the help of Jesus, who is Lord for ever and  
ever. Amen

**Preface** God our Father, you are powerful and live for ever. Always and  
everywhere we want to thank you for all the Good News that you bring to  
us: it is good news that we all woke up this morning, ready to live the life  
that you have given us; it is good news that we have the family and friends  
you have given us to love us and look after us; it is good news that we are  
all here today to honour you and your Son; he is the good news we want to  
share and shout to others, the news about how to live splendidly and  
happily, to be the very best that we can be. And so we praise you with him  
and all your saints in heaven as we say: Holy, holy

**Eucharistic Prayer No.2**

**Our Father** said

**Communion Hymn** Take, O take me as I am

**After Communion** *Nottingham group*

Here is a special card, with our prayers and greetings from this Mass for her majesty the Queen. We will send it to her next week with our love and gratitude. You will also have been given a poem that was specially written for our celebration today by a wheelchair bound lady from Aspley.

And now we would like to acknowledge the very special birthday of our Hinckley Sunshine Club with this cake which we will ask our bishop to present to the group leaders in the hope that they will want to share it with all of us afterwards!

And now for the champions – so many people are champions without being athletes. They make great efforts and sacrifices for each other every day and we want to give them these gold medals as a sign of our admiration for them.

*Each group leader comes forward and tells us of the reason the medals are being awarded to three or four selected members. At the end, 'medals' are presented to everyone in the congregation.*

We would like to thank our champions, our priests, who look after us and make so many sacrifices for us every day, with the award of these medals of our gratitude and love.

*The priests are given their medals*

Finally, the special gold medal for effort, service and achievement, is presented to the champion of the diocese, our bishop, Malcolm

*The bishop is given his medal*

**Final prayer**            Dear Father, we have celebrated this Mass with joy and thanksgiving to you today. Help us always to be the best that we can be for you and each other, after the example of Jesus your Son, who is Lord, for ever and ever.

*Candles are given to each group leader, who wait at the foot of the altar*

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the glory of all who serve. Take these lights from our Mass today and be light-bearers in his name to all people everywhere.

*The group leaders dissemble the Olympic rings and, during the song, slowly take them back with their group members to where their group are sitting in church.*

**Reading**                *Leicester group*

To the ends of the earth we return, filled with the spirit of togetherness, peace, harmony and exhilaration. We will bring this spirit, not simply the spirit of the games, but more importantly, the spirit of the Lord and his light, to our own places, so that we can share in the joy that we have known and a vision of peace for the future of the world can be finally put into practice. This is the Good News of Jesus, our saviour, the Good News he has asked all

of us to proclaim wherever we are or may be. To do this for him and each other is truly the best that we can be.

**Song**

“Sing” (*Gary Barlow and Andrew Lloyd Webber*)

*(After verse 1 & 2)*

Sing it louder, sing it clearer, knowing everyone will hear you,  
make some noise, find your voice tonight.

Sing it stronger, sing together, make this moment last for ever,  
Old and young shouting love tonight.

*(After verse 3)*

Just sing, just sing, just sing, just sing.

Sing it louder, etc.

**Blessing**

**Final Hymn**

Come and follow me

**Recessional Music**

Repeat “Sing”

## **Session 10**

## **Come and follow me**

*In this session we examine how Jesus called his first friends and what his call might mean for us.*

### ***Jesus calls us to a life with him***

Narrator 1      This is the story of how Jesus began his work. When John the Baptist had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and preached the good news from God.

*Jesus enters*

Jesus            The time has come, and God's kingdom is near. Repent and believe the good news.

*Simon and Andrew enter*

Narrator 2      As he was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two men fishing - Simon and his brother, Andrew. Jesus called them:

Jesus            Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of people.

Narrator 1      And at once, they left their nets and followed him.

*They drop their nets and come after him. James, John and Zebedee enter*

Narrator 2      Further along the shore, he saw James and his brother John, working in their boat with their father, Zebedee. He called them, and at once they left their father and their work and followed him.

*They do the same, look back at their father, who is puzzled, and follow Jesus*

Narrator 1      Now isn't that an amazing story - Jesus called his disciples who left everything at once and followed him

Narrator 2      They left their homes, their families, their work, all their possessions, everything they cared about, at once, just as soon as he called them, and followed him

Narrator 1      Were they silly, irresponsible, reckless to do that, just because someone they didn't know told them to?

Narrator 2      Would you do it, if Jesus called you?

Narrator 1      Of course you wouldn't leave everything and walk out on your home if a complete stranger called you

Narrator 2      But Jesus should not be a stranger to us; he is our friend.

Narrator 1      And he doesn't want all of us to leave home today and wander off

Narrator 2      What he wants us to leave behind is our attachment to things and our pre-occupation with ourselves, so that we can do what he wants us to do

***Sometimes we like the idea of following Jesus but not if we have to change or give things away***

Narrator 1      Jesus was setting out on a journey when a young man came to him and asked

Man              Good master, what must I do to live for ever?

Jesus             Have you kept God's commandments?

Man              Yes *(a bit cocky)*

Jesus             You love God first?

Man              Yes

Jesus             Honour your parents?

Man              Yes

Jesus             No killing, lying or cheating?

Man              No

Jesus             You have kept all God's commandments always?

Man              Always

Jesus             OK, I'll tell you what you must do. You must go and sell everything you have, and give the money away to the poor. Then come back and follow me

Man              Everything?

Jesus             Everything

Narrator 1     The man went all quiet and backed away; he knew he couldn't do it, because what he had meant too much to him. He just couldn't give it away; what Jesus asked was too much. Then Jesus said to his friends:

Jesus            If you love what you have too much, you will not be able to enter God's kingdom. It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone who had too much to get into God's kingdom.

Narrator 1     Here is a modern version of the story:

Narrator 2     Would you like to be rich? To win the lottery, to be successful?

*Enter rich man and wife*

Rich Man        I'm rich; I've got loads of money, loads and loads and loads of money! I've got a yacht - have you got a yacht?

Narrator 2     Er, no

Rich Man        Well, I have; how many houses have you got?

Narrator 2     Just the one

Rich Man        I've got three; one in London, one in the country and one in the south of France. What sort of car've you got?

Narrator 2     A Ford Focus, why?

Rich Man        A Ford Focus, what sort of motor's that? Look mate / darlin', I've got four - a Roller, Merc, BMW and a nice little sporty number for the wife

*He pinches his wife's bottom and there is no reaction*

See her, see her, that gear is pure Coco Chanel, straight off the cat walk in Paris. And here, look at this (*he pinches her cheek*) - she's had all the lifts, tucks, nips you could think of - half of her's plastic, and she'll never look old. Trouble is, she can't smile, can you love?

*His wife tries to smile but can't*

I am seriously rich; I've got loads of money

*Jesus enters, goes up to the man and gives him something*

Here, what's that?

Jesus            It's a present, for you

Rich Man        Present? I don't need a present. I've got all I need mate

Jesus            Well, you need this one, for sure

Rich Man        Need it? Nah, what is it anyway?

Jesus            It's a needle

***What do you need to follow Jesus?***

*This could be mimed*

Narrator 1      A reading from the holy gospel according to St.Mark

Jesus called together his twelve special friends and sent them out, two by two. He told them to take nothing for the journey, no food, no haversack, no money in their wallets; not even a spare tunic; they were to wear sandals on their feet. Jesus said to them:

Jesus            Stay in any house where you are made welcome. If you're not made welcome, and people refuse to listen to you, walk away from them and shake the dust from your feet.

Narrator        So they set out, two by two, as Jesus had instructed them, teaching, preaching, helping the people and healing the sick. Jesus calls us to be his followers too. Today he tells us what we need to do to follow him:

Jesus            You can leave behind your pride, greed, anger, selfishness, and anything really, that will get in the way of giving your whole self to me and my work. It'll cost you more than money, but it'll be worth it, believe me.

## **Session 11**

### **“Go out and proclaim the Good News”**

*In this final session we are going to think about telling people the “Good News” and how Jesus’ first friends, particularly St.Paul, did it. St.Luke wrote a beautiful story about the days and months and years after Jesus sent his Holy Spirit on the apostles called the Acts of the Apostles and here is some of it:*

Narrator        St.Luke tells us that they preached every day both in the temple and in private houses, and their proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ was never interrupted. They were full of Jesus’ Spirit and his life and couldn’t help but tell everyone.

*Enter various people shouting “Here’s some Good News”, “Listen to this Good News” or just “good news”*

But not everyone thought this was good news, especially a man called Saul

*Enter Saul*

He was a tentmaker by trade and very religious and very serious. He was Jewish through and through and believed that God would send a messiah to save his people from the Romans just as he had promised in the holy scriptures. Then he heard about a teacher called Jesus of Nazareth, who had claimed that he was God’s chosen one, and that he had gone around telling people what he said was God’s good news. He had healed people who were sick and even brought someone back from the dead, but the Jewish leaders hated him and thought he was a fraud because he told them that they were only interested in making life difficult for people, so they had him arrested on a trumped up charge and made the Romans crucify him as a public criminal. Saul thought that this was no more than this Jesus deserved. But...but that was not the end of the story. There was a rumour that this Jesus was now alive, that in fact he had risen from the dead. Certainly, the tomb in which he was buried was empty, but someone could have stolen the body and made the story up. Some people claimed they had actually seen him walking about with his friends, alive and well. This was ridiculous. How could a man rise from the dead? A period of time had passed and his friends seemed to have gone into hiding when all of a sudden they appeared everywhere, talking in public, trying to get people’s attention and, strangely, being able to talk in some of the many languages of the people who lived in Jerusalem city. They were saying that this Jesus was in fact the Son of God and that the only way to be saved was to believe in him and commit your life to him as a so-called “Christian”. So they were going about telling everyone what they called “the good news of Jesus Christ” and enlisting followers by the hundred.

Saul could not cope with this...no this was wrong. This was not what his God had told him, this was not what he had believed all his life. A fire was burning within him of hatred of these people and this Jesus. They had to be got rid of as soon as possible before they could do more damage. So Saul gave up his job and went about capturing the Christians and putting them in jail for inciting public disorder. He couldn't believe that they weren't one bit frightened. He went everywhere he heard that Christians had been preaching and caused havoc. He was so intense and serious that everyone else was afraid of him except the Christians. They had got to be got rid of as soon as possible. Saul heard that there were a large group of Christians in Damascus in Syria, so he decided to go there and put them in jail. But as he was walking on the road, something happened to him, something so marvellous and amazing that it was to change his life. Suddenly, he saw a bright light in the sky and heard a voice speaking to him, and was shaken to the core. "Saul, Saul," it said, "why are you persecuting me?" Saul was completely frightened and could hardly speak but he managed to say, "who are you, Lord?". The voice replied, "I am Jesus and you are persecuting me." Then it all dawned on Saul. All the time he had been so wrong. This Jesus really was the Son of God and he really was alive. All that his friends claimed was the good news, was in fact true. Jesus told Saul that to prove he was really speaking, Saul would be blinded, and that he would have to go to Damascus to meet a man called Ananias. Paul's friends did not know what had happened to him. He was blind and it was as if he was in a sort of trance. He told them to find Ananias and take him there. When they got to Damascus, they found Ananias, who put his hands on Saul's head and said "Brother, Saul, receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Saul could see immediately and rejoiced. He was as happy as he could possibly be and all the hatred for Jesus and his friends disappeared at that instant. He wasted no time and after only a few days, he went out to all the local Jewish prayer houses and began to preach the good news: "Jesus is the Son of God". He changed his name to Paul for the new life that awaited him and Paul would spend the rest of his life travelling all over the world as they knew it then, with some special friends to help him like Barnabas. In Antioch he said:

Paul                    We have come here to tell you the good news. The promise made to your father is fulfilled in the rising of Jesus from the dead.

Narrator            Paul and Barnabas, stayed on in Antioch, and there with many others, he taught and proclaimed the good news, the word of the Lord. Then he went to a place called Derbe (no, not Derby!) and then to what we now call Greece because he was convinced, as he said, that God had called us to bring them the good news. He said:

- Paul           Life to me is not a thing to waste words on, provided that when I finish my race, I have carried out the mission the Lord gave me – and that was to bear witness to the good news of God’s grace”
- Narrator       Once he had visited a place and got a group of friends for Jesus together, Paul would go somewhere else, but he wrote many letters to people and these tell us what he was thinking. They usually began with the same words:
- Paul           From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, who has been called to be an apostle and specially chosen to preach the good news that God promised long ago through his prophets in the scriptures.”
- Narrator       Sometimes people did not believe that he came as a messenger from God because they knew him before and how he had persecuted Jesus’ friends. But Paul stood up for himself:
- Paul           We had, as you know, been given rough treatment and been grossly insulted at Philippi and it was our God who gave us the courage to proclaim his good news to you in the face of great opposition...it was God who decided that we were fit to be entrusted with the good news, and when we are speaking, we are not only trying to please men but God, who can read our inmost thoughts.
- Narrator       Clearly some of his hearers thought he was doing this for himself and so he got cross with them:
- Paul           The fact is brothers...that the good news preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learnt only from God...God called me through his grace and chose to reveal his son in me, so that I might preach the good news about him to those who had never heard it before. I am not ashamed of the good news – it is the power of God saving all who have faith, Jews first but Greeks as well
- Narrator       Often Paul had to tell the new believers again what he had actually said to them, as they seemed to have forgotten what it meant:
- Paul           Brothers, I want to remind you of the good news that I preached to you, that Christ died for us all according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised to life on the third day
- Narrator       And to those who managed to keep believing in Jesus, Paul wrote you thank them:

- Paul            Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the good news I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus Christ. Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped the spread the good news from the day you first heard it right up to the present...I am glad to tell you, brothers, that the things that happened to me have actually been a help to the good news. The good news, which has reached you, is spreading all over the world and producing the same results as it has among you ever since the day when you heard about God's grace and understood what it really is.
- Narrator       Always, always, Paul proclaimed the good news, right up to the end of his life:
- Paul            Remember the good news that I carry: Jesus Christ, risen from the dead
- Narrator       He was the greatest preacher of the good news there has ever been. Can you think of any others since then.....? How would you feel if we said to you that Jesus had chosen you, and indeed all of us, to tell the Good News to everyone? And if this is true, how might we tell the Good News to others?

#### **Liturgy 4: Advent Mass at St.John Bosco Centre, Leicester – December 2 2012**

**“Go out and proclaim the Good News to all creation”**

**Entry Hymn** Though the mountains may fall

**Introduction** *Leicester group*

Good afternoon everyone and welcome once again to Leicester for our SPANNED Advent Mass. We have forgotten how many times we have been here together, but we always look forward to this occasion as our ‘special day’ here in Leicester, and it’s lovely to see you all. This year, as you know, we have been thinking about “Have I got Good News for you?” in our group work and our Masses and wasn’t that a wonderful celebration of the Olympic Games in Hinckley? As you know, the Pope has asked the coming year be called a “Year of Faith” in which we all think about our life with Our Lord and how we can share it with others. This of course is what we have been doing all year anyway! We have thought about Jesus as the “Good News”, showing us that if we want to find our lives we have to give them away, and today we are going to think about how we can tell others the Good News – “Have I got Good News for you?” Jesus is calling all of us to do just that wherever we are or may be, so let’s begin our Mass by hearing how Jesus called his first friends and what did they do:

*Nottingham Group*

Narrator 1 This is the story of how Jesus began his work. When John the Baptist had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and preached the good news from God.

*Jesus enters*

Jesus The time has come, and God's kingdom is near. Repent and believe the good news.

*Simon and Andrew enter*

Narrator 2 As he was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two men fishing - Simon and his brother, Andrew. Jesus called them:

Jesus Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of people.

Narrator 1 And at once, they left their nets and followed him.

*They drop their nets and come after him. James, John and Zebedee enter*

Narrator 2 Further along the shore, he saw James and his brother John, working in their boat with their father, Zebedee. He called them, and at once they left their father and their work and followed him.

*They do the same, look back at their father, who is puzzled, and follow Jesus*

Narrator 1 Now isn't that an amazing story - Jesus called his disciples who left everything at once and followed him

Narrator 2 They left their homes, their families, their work, all their possessions, everything they cared about, at once, just as soon as he called them, and followed him

Narrator 1 Were they silly, irresponsible, reckless to do that, just because someone they didn't know told them to?

Narrator 2 Would you do it, if Jesus called you?

Narrator 1 Of course you wouldn't leave everything and walk out on your home if a complete stranger called you

Narrator 2 But Jesus should not be a stranger to us; he is our friend.

Narrator 1 And he doesn't want all of us to leave home today and wander off

Narrator 2      What he wants us to leave behind is our attachment to things and our pre-occupation with ourselves, so that we can do what he wants us to do

Narrator 1      Sometimes we like the idea of following Jesus but not if we have to change or give things away

Narrator 2      Here is one of Jesus' stories about someone who couldn't do it

Narrator 1      Jesus was setting out on a journey when a young man came to him and asked

Man              Good master, what must I do to live for ever?

Jesus             Have you kept God's commandments?

Man              Yes (*a bit cocky*)

Jesus             You love God first?

Man              Yes

Jesus             Honour your parents?

Man              Yes

Jesus             No killing, lying or cheating?

Man              No

Jesus             You have kept all God's commandments always?

Man              Always

Jesus             OK, I'll tell you what you must do. You must go and sell everything you have, and give the money away to the poor. Then come back and follow me

Man              Everything?

Jesus             Everything

Narrator 1      The man went all quiet and backed away; he knew he couldn't do it, because what he had meant too much to him. He just couldn't give it away; what Jesus asked was too much. Then Jesus said to his friends:

Jesus            If you love what you have too much, you will not be able to enter God's kingdom. It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone who had too much to get into God's kingdom.

Narrator 1      Here is a modern version of the story:

Narrator 2      Would you like to be rich? To win the lottery, to be successful?

*Enter rich man and wife*

Rich Man        I'm rich; I've got loads of money, loads and loads and loads of money!  
I've got a yacht - have you got a yacht?

Narrator 2      Er, no

Rich Man        Well, I have; how many houses have you got?

Narrator 2      Just the one

Rich Man        I've got three; one in London, one in the country and one in the south of France. What sort of car've you got?

Narrator 2      A Ford Focus, why?

Rich Man        A Ford Focus, what sort of motor's that? Look darlin', I've got four - a Roller, Merc, BMW and a nice little sporty number for the wife

*He pinches his wife's bottom and there is no reaction*

See her, see her, that gear is pure Coco Chanel, straight off the cat walk in Paris. And here, look at this (*he pinches her cheek*) - she's had all the lifts, tucks, nips you could think of - half of her's plastic, and she'll never look old. Trouble is, she can't smile, can you love?

*His wife tries to smile but can't*

I am seriously rich; I've got loads of money

*Jesus enters, goes up to the man and gives him something*

Here, what's that?

Jesus            It's a present, for you

Rich Man        Present? I don't need a present. I've got all I need mate

Jesus Well, you need this one, for sure

Rich Man Need it? Nah, what is it anyway?

Jesus It's a needle

Narrator 1 Jesus says to us that if we want to follow him we must leave behind our pride, greed, anger, selfishness, and anything really, that will get in the way of giving our whole selves to him and his work. It'll cost us more than money, but it'll be worth it

Narrator 2 So let's tell Jesus that we are sorry for all the times we have failed him:

Priest Lord Jesus Christ, you call us all to follow you and be your friends, Lord have mercy  
 Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes we don't want to follow you because it might mean giving up too much, Christ have mercy  
 Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us for all the times we have refused to be the people you would like us to be, Lord have mercy.

## **Prayer**

### **The Word of God** *Hinckley group*

Narrator 1 Now we are going to tell you a beautiful story about telling people the "Good News" and how Jesus' first friends, particularly St.Paul, did it. St.Luke wrote a beautiful story about the days and months and years after Jesus sent his Holy Spirit on the apostles called the Acts of the Apostles and here is some of it:

Narrator 2 St.Luke tells us that they preached every day both in the temple and in private houses. They were full of Jesus' Spirit and his life and couldn't help but tell everyone.

*Enter various people shouting "Here's some Good News", "Listen to this Good News" or just "good news"*

But not everyone thought this was good news, especially a man called Saul

*Enter Saul*

Narrator 1 He was a tentmaker by trade and very religious and very serious. He was Jewish through and through and believed that God would send a messiah to save his people from the Romans just as he had promised in the holy scriptures. Then he heard about a teacher called Jesus of Nazareth, who had claimed that he was God's chosen one, and that he had gone around

telling people what he said was God's good news. He had healed people who were sick and even brought someone back from the dead, but the Jewish leaders hated him and thought he was a fraud because he told them that they were only interested in making life difficult for people, so they had him arrested on a trumped up charge and made the Romans crucify him as a public criminal. Saul thought that this was no more than this Jesus deserved. But...but that was not the end of the story. There was a rumour that this Jesus was now alive, that in fact he had risen from the dead. Certainly, the tomb in which he was buried was empty, but someone could have stolen the body and made the story up. Some people claimed they had actually seen him walking about with his friends, alive and well.

Narrator 2 This was ridiculous. How could a man rise from the dead? A period of time had passed and his friends seemed to have gone into hiding when all of a sudden they appeared everywhere, talking in public, trying to get people's attention and, strangely, being able to talk in some of the many languages of the people who lived in Jerusalem city. They were saying that this Jesus was in fact the Son of God and that the only way to be saved was to believe in him and commit your life to him as a so-called "Christian". So they were going about telling everyone what they called "the good news of Jesus Christ" and enlisting followers by the hundred. Saul could not cope with this...no this was wrong. This was not what his God had told him, this was not what he had believed all his life.

Narrator 1 A fire was burning within him of hatred of these people and this Jesus. They had to be got rid of as soon as possible before they could do more damage. So Saul gave up his job and went about capturing the Christians and putting them in jail for inciting public disorder. He couldn't believe that they weren't one bit frightened. He went everywhere he heard that Christians had been preaching and caused havoc. He was so intense and serious that everyone else was afraid of him except the Christians. They had got to be got rid of as soon as possible. Saul heard that there were a large group of Christians in Damascus in Syria, so he decided to go there and put them in jail.

Narrator 2 But as he was walking on the road, something happened to him, something so marvellous and amazing that it was to change his life. Suddenly, he saw a bright light in the sky and heard a voice speaking to him, and was shaken to the core.

Voice Saul, Saul, "why are you persecuting me?"

Narrator 1 Saul was completely frightened and could hardly speak but he managed to say:

Saul Who are you, Lord?.

Voice	I am Jesus and you are persecuting me.
Narrator 2	Then it all dawned on Saul. All the time he had been so wrong. This Jesus really was the Son of God and he really was alive. All that his friends claimed was the good news, was in fact true. Jesus told Saul that to prove he was really speaking, Saul would be blinded, and that he would have to go to Damascus to meet a man called Ananias.
Narrator 1	Paul's friends did not know what had happened to him. He was blind and it was as if he was in a sort of trance. He told them to find Ananias and take him there. When they got to Damascus, they found Ananias, who put his hands on Saul's head and said:
Ananias	Brother, Saul, receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
Narrator 2	Saul could see immediately and rejoiced. He was as happy as he could possibly be and all the hatred for Jesus and his friends disappeared at that instant. He wasted no time and after only a few days, he went out to all the local Jewish prayer houses and began to preach the good news:
Saul	Jesus is the Son of God.
Narrator 1	He changed his name to Paul for the new life that awaited him and Paul would spend the rest of his life travelling all over the world as they knew it then, with some special friends to help him like Barnabas, to tell everyone the Good News about Jesus Christ
Narrator 2	Sometimes, after Paul had been to a place, he wrote letters to the community there to encourage them and help them:
Narrator 1	They usually began with the same words: From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, who has been called to be an apostle and specially chosen to preach the good news.
Narrator 2	Always, always, Paul proclaimed the good news, right up to the end of his life:
Paul	Remember the good news that I carry: Jesus Christ, risen from the dead
<b>Hymn</b>	God of my hopes, God of my dreams
<b>Homily</b>	<i>Derby group. These questions are asked slowly:</i>  St.Paul was the greatest preacher of the Good News there has ever been. Can you think of any others since then.....? How would you feel if we said

to you that Jesus had chosen you, and indeed all of us, to tell the Good News to everyone? .....And if this is true, how might we tell the Good News to others?..... This is what we will be thinking about in our groups early in the New Year, and some of us will be going out to other places to tell people the Good News of Jesus, like our Nottingham group did recently in their visit to Keyworth

**Bidding Prayers**      *Scunthorpe Group*

- Priest            Dear friends, we are all happy to be here today thinking about the Good News that Jesus asks us to tell others; let us place our prayers before the Father through him
- Reader 1        Show us how to tell other people the Good News about Jesus in what we say and do. Lord hear us
- Reader 2        Please help us to be good news to other people so that they are always pleased when they see us. Lord hear us
- Reader 3        We pray for peace in the world and especially in the land of our Saviour's birth. Lord hear us
- Reader 4        We pray for all members of SPANNED and thank you for the friendship we are able to give to each other. Lord hear us
- Reader 5        We pray for all those people who have no friends and no one to help them. Lord hear us
- Reader 6        We pray for those who are hungry and cold that they may be warmed and fed. Lord hear us
- Reader 7        We ask Mary our mother to pray with us and for us as we sing:

1. My soul will glorify the Lord'  
my spirit will rejoice;  
He's done such wondrous things for me,  
His praises sing my voice.
2. His mercy is for evermore  
on those he calls his friends;  
his strength it scatters all the proud,  
his goodness never ends.
3. The strong and mighty he casts down,  
the humble lifts up high;  
he feeds the hungry with good things

the greedy passes by.

4. His people he protects in love  
as promised long ago;  
His word he kept all through the years,  
his power and grace to show.

5. I'll be your servant from now on,  
to do your holy will;  
whate'er you ask I will accept,  
your purpose to fulfil.

Reader 8      We pray for all who have died and in particular today for Gordon Eades  
and Sylvia Lowe from Derby, who have died since we last met. May they  
live with you in peace and happiness for ever. Lord hear us

Priest          Dear Father, help us to accept the challenge of your Son to go out and tell  
the Good News to everyone and to be the best people we can be. We ask  
this through Christ our Lord.

**Offertory Procession**    *Loughborough Group*

**Offertory Hymn**      Will you come and follow me?

**Communion Hymn**    "Sing"

**After Communion**    *Leicester Group* - The prayer of Cardinal Newman

Narrator 1    God has created me to do him some definite service.

Narrator 2    He has committed some work to me which he has not committed  
to another.

Narrator 1    I have my mission. I may never know it in this life but I shall be  
told it in the next.

Narrator 2    I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

Narrator 1    He has not created me for nothing.

Narrator 2    I shall do good. I shall do his work.

Narrator 1    I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place  
while not intending it – if I do but keep his commandments.

Narrator 2     Therefore I will trust him. Whatever, wherever I am; I can never be thrown away.

Narrator 1     If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him.

Narrator 2     If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him.

Narrator 2     He does nothing in vain; he knows what he is about.

Narrator 1     He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers.

Narrator 2     He make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me

Both             Still, he knows what he is about.

**Thank you and Happy Christmas**     *Simon Brittle*

**Hymn** – How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news

## **Session 12 - Summing up and moving on**

In this session before Christmas, we sum up the year's work, consider the proposal for next year to "go out and proclaim the 'Good News' and think about where and how we might do it.

**The "Year of Faith" – a proposal** You will all be aware that the Pope has designated this year as a year of faith, to promote and preserve what we have received as Christians in the midst of a world which seems to have rejected God and anything to do with Him. SPANNED has always been a bit 'ahead of the game' in these matters. Some years ago, when the bishops proposed a project called "Home is a Holy Place" to promote family and home life, very few parishes and organisations in the country did anything significant about it, except ourselves, who spent a year working on it and produced what our bishop called an 'excellent piece of pedagogy'. The same applied with CAFOD's "LiveSimply project" and their proposals for education on global warming and its implications – we were the ones who actually got down and did something concrete about it. When there was talk about what we have come to call the "New Evangelisation", many agencies got themselves lost in plans and strategies but so far have produced nothing of any substance, except ourselves, who have been doing it for the past year. All this is a pity but also a great tribute to our agency and the groups within it. The end of our "Good News" project is really something of a beginning – "go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News". So how are we to do that in a meaningful way? We have done so already and now started to take our message out to other places. In the Year of Faith, when we might want to think about Jesus as the "Good News", perhaps schools and parishes do not know quite how to present this, and so here is our proposal. We have unique gifts and a unique

approach to the preaching of the gospel and have been doing so for well over 30 years; we have an individual way of making known the Word of God to people that has always been appreciated, and so we would like to offer our services to you. If your parish or school is in reasonable proximity to one of our SPANNED groups, and arrangements can be made, we would like to offer you our gifts in a presentation of our faith and the gospel of the Lord, In this way, more people can come to know of our work, receive the very special message we have to offer, and hopefully, think more carefully about their lives of faith as a consequence. We will be happy to come to your church or centre at a mutually convenient time during the year. You can contact Fr.Frank or your local group leader, and we hope that you will take us up on our offer, so that the Year of Faith will not just be another of those 'years', but something that makes a lasting difference to the way we live our lives with the Lord today.