

Acting out Acts: Post Vision4Life



Introduction

AIM

Here you will find an introduction to the post vision4life material: Acting out Acts, which is in five parts and also downloadable from this site.

INTRODUCTION

Although Vision4life has come to the end of the agreed three year time span, churches have asked for more material on our themes of Bible, Prayer and Evangelism to continue to be available. On this website you will find a series of sessions which have been prepared with the aim to help all Vision4Life churches reflect on the process and determine their next move. It could also be used by those churches who started the process late or for some other reasons are continuing with it. There are five documents that are based on the themes emerging from feedback about Vision4Life:

- Session 1 Recapping the story
- Session 2 Developing confidence
- Session 3 Bringing different perspectives together
- Session 4 The implications of change
- Session 5 A total commitment

Each session includes biblical material based on the book of Acts. This material can be used in different ways including through Bibliodrama, which is described on the next page.

At the end of this document, you will also find a summary of findings from the evaluation.

We hope that you will continue to send your stories of how your churches are being transformed for mission to the mission office at mission@urc.org.uk .

Vision4Life resources will continue to be available on the website at www.vision4life.org.uk.

Our prayer is that the process we have begun will continue to enrich the church in the coming years as we go on engaging with the Bible, exploring new depths of prayer and finding creative ways to reach out with the Good News.

EXPLORING THE BOOK OF ACTS THROUGH DRAMA

The book of Acts is rich with stories which can be dramatised. They may be used as a way of exploring the issues facing the early church in its earliest days and reflecting on the connection with our life today.

Two methods are suggested in these documents. Firstly a short play intended to bring the story to life. Secondly, Bibliodrama, which invites the play to become more spontaneous and unpredictable. Using this approach it is possible to connect the experience of the early Christians with our own in sometimes quite personal ways.

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Introduction

WHAT IS BIBLIODRAMA?

Bibliodrama engages people with the text of the Bible using their whole selves. It is a group activity in which spontaneity and improvisation play a central part. Sessions begin with physical warm up which often have a connection with the theme of the text. They then go on to invite people to explore the text using improvised drama and other creative media. The group shares together its experience in connecting the text to their lives and new understandings they have gained about the text itself. It is an approach that can both challenge and enrich the wider faith experience.

As a discipline it developed largely in continental Europe in the early 1970's when theologians, dramatists and psychodramatists began to work together. The European Bibliodrama Network links together various national associations and churches. For further information about Bibliodrama in the UK visit the website of UK Bibliodrama: ukbibliodrama.com.

Bibliodrama sessions are normally led by a facilitator. Here some brief extensions are suggested for each session rather than a full Bibliodrama. When using them it is important to recognise that personal experiences can influence the way in which a session develops. For example, an acted argument which is improvised rather than scripted could turn into a real argument. Extensions should be kept fairly brief, no more than ten minutes. People playing a role should be helped to come out of that role after playing by saying, 'I was....(Peter, for example) but now I am...(their own name)'. This is called de-roleing. It helps people to let go of feelings and attitudes that they may have picked up while they were in the role. The whole experience of the session should be fully discussed. Any individual who may have been affected by their experience should be offered appropriate support. Although not every group may want to do this, please give it a try if you can and see what you learn.

GROUND RULES

As with all our Vision4Life material we suggest that the group agrees ground rules before setting out together. Some important ground rules from our previous themes of Bible, prayer and evangelism are just as important here. They are:

- 1 respectful listening; not interrupting the person speaking, and listening attentively;
- 2 speaking for ourselves and letting others speak for themselves: owning our own experiences and not dismissing the experiences of others.

Make sure the group is clear about the ground rules and remind the group about them if necessary during the sessions.

SOME FEEDBACK ABOUT VISION4LIFE

You may want to share some of the feedback about Vision4life with your group. This could be in the form of a short report, a display or perhaps a powerpoint presentation.

Twenty three percent (23%) of those invited to take part in the Vision4Life survey (which was an online survey) responded. This may seem a low figure but is actually quite good for a survey of this kind. These comments are based on those responses.

Introduction

Altogether over three years nine Synods signed up in order to encourage the churches in their Synod: West Midlands, Wales, Yorkshire, Mersey, Eastern, Wessex, East Midlands, South Western and Southern.

The pattern of churches signing up across Synods was:

East Midlands	72
Eastern	72
Mersey	58
North Western	84
Northern	31
Scotland	16
South Western	45
Southern	66
Thames North	54
Wales	20
Wessex	68
West Midlands	50
Yorkshire	54

Around three quarters of the sign-ups came before the Bible Year started. This suggests we had got our message out well. A further quarter of sign ups joined during the Bible Year, with less than 1% signing up during the Prayer or Evangelism Year. This also helps explain why most churches (over 75%) will have completed the three years of Vision4Life by November 2011 or soon after. Although some churches did start late, it was a small number.

Ninety one percent (91%) of respondents used one or more Vision4Life booklets with 63% using material from the website at some stage. Twenty eight percent (28%) designed their own materials and 14% used named material from somewhere else.

The top two places where the materials were used were usual church services (49% of respondents) and house groups (46%). One percent (2 respondents) used the materials with community groups.

Over 80% described the material as useful or very useful. Only 11% used the neutral category and none used a category below this to rate the material. Over 80% also said the material was accessible, with 12% using neutral or difficult to describe the accessibility. These figures suggest that we had hit the spot with the material. Those who replied found it useful and accessible, with only a minority not having this experience.

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Introduction

The main group of people used to support Vision4Life by local churches were the Synod Training and Development Officers.

Although three quarters of correspondents had not attended a Vision4Life event outside of the local church, half of those responding had organised Vision4Life events in their churches. These ranged from prayer vigils of different kinds, evening discussion sessions and study groups, themed weeks and evangelistic events. A third of these churches had taken part in the 24/7 prayer event in Holy Week 2010.

The top two changes resulting from Vision4Life were said to be to Bible study and prayer, again suggesting that we had got that right. Only 8% said evangelistic activities but that year was not over when the survey went out and some events or activities might still be in the planning stage.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourselves:

1. What was the most helpful thing about Vision4life and why?
2. What was the least helpful thing and why?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

There are five sessions of material based on the book of Acts available on the website.

Acknowledgements

The material has been prepared by the Vision4life Steering Group.

HOW TO FEEDBACK ABOUT VISION4LIFE?

Please continue to send your stories and feedback to the mission office: mission@urc.org.uk