

Priest Idol session 2

What is our church offering? Who wants it?

BEFORE VIEWING:

- Feed back from research at the end of session 1.

Start DVD at Priest Idol 1 – 29.15

Summary

Part 1: Lundwood now has a new vicar but no-one wants to come to church. James looks through the church register and sees that ten years ago there were 40-50 people attending. He visits the Bingo Hall and meets Toby Foster, a comedian from the Comedy Club. Propaganda, a marketing company based in Leeds start to plan a strategy with the archdeacon. James visits the local school and asks the children for their thoughts and ideas. Propaganda asks James who he wants to target.

Part 2: The marketing company ask teenagers what they think of church. James sets up a pizza club after school where children play games, have discussion and there's a chance to build relationships. James asks a pop choir from the local school to sing at a 4.00pm service on Christmas Eve. Some teenagers finally come to the church but walk out after being told off for their behaviour.

(25 minutes)

AFTER VIEWING:

Where are they now?

- Looking through the church registers, James discovers there were 40-50 people in the congregation at Lundwood ten years earlier. He wonders where they went. Looking back a decade, are there people your church has lost? Can you identify the reasons why people no longer attend?

Sermons

- Comedian Toby Foster identifies some similarities between his job and James'. "We both have the same audience every week. How do you entertain an audience week in week out without boring them?" he asks. Later Toby offers some sermon tips. What do you think of Toby's suggestions? How might they enhance sermons in your church?

Asking people what they want

- James wants to target young people and asks Toby what he thinks they would be interested in. Toby suggests asking them. Do we ask people inside our churches what they want? Do we ask people who don't come to church, but might, what they want? How might we do this in a way that is practical, feasible and sensible?

What does church offer?

- Jonathan (the Archdeacon) and Steve (from Propaganda) discuss what the church is offering. What do you think your church is basically offering or should be offering – hope? new life? something else?

Steve from the marketing company suggests the bigger the offer, the more it needs substantiating. Whatever it is our church is offering – how can we show it is real and true?

- Jesus said:
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” (Luke 4:18)

“I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness.” (John 10:10)

“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Are there any ways, as a church we can show these claims are real?

Golden Oldies

- Steve from Propaganda says “I think God is for greys”. The Church Life Survey, 2001 found 60% of UK churchgoers are 55 years or older, although the picture is very different in other parts of the world. Why do you think most churchgoers in Britain are over 50? How might it matter?

Young people

- Toby suggests James would have an easier time plaiting fog than getting young people to worship on a Sunday morning? Is this simply a question of timing? What does the church have to offer young people?

In Britain 77% of 18 year olds are said to have no religion, but James believes teenagers are key to the church’s future. Looking at the teenagers and children at the boxing club he asks, “How do I educate? How do I nurture? How do I get the message out? How? How do you do it?” How would you answer these questions? How might your church engage with this age group, or is this impossible?

Some teenagers come to the Christmas Eve service but keep their hats on and don’t stand. How much should newcomers be expected to change for the church, or should the church change for them?

Community leaders?

- At the end of the programme James describes his task as “the beginning of a process of hopefully leading the community rather than being victimised by the community”. In what ways does your church lead your local community?

He also describes his task as a spiritual battle. Do you think your church is engaged in a “spiritual battle”? If so, how?

REFLECT/RESEARCH:

What message would you like your church to be giving to your community?

Which of its current activities reflect that message? Bring your thoughts to the next meeting.

or Ask two people in your church, and two outside what they think church is for.