



The London Institute for
Contemporary Christianity

St Peter's · Vere Street
London · W1G 0DQ

(t) 020 7399 9555

(f) 020 7399 9556

(e) mail@licc.org.uk

(w) www.licc.org.uk

Living as a Gift...

And so it is a few weeks before Passover... and he, who will change everything for all time, will soon make his way to Jerusalem.

Yes, the Father sends him but Jesus chooses to go. Indeed, when he breaks bread in the upper room, he says, "this is my body *given* for you." (Luke 22:19). Others will crucify him but Jesus allows them to do so. Ultimately, Jesus comes not as a victim but as a sacrificial gift to the world.

Sometimes, however, I wonder if my missional imagination is too much shaped by military models and fictional heroes – as if we were all called to be Gandalfs galloping in on Shadowfax to rescue the people of Rohan from the might of the Uruk-Hai. Jesus, although myriad angels are at his call, enters Jerusalem on a donkey, not a stallion.

Our mission as Christians is not to gain power but to find ways to let his love flow freely through us and shape *every* interaction, *every* piece of work, negotiation, essay, Act of Parliament, every word ... that *his* will might indeed be done on earth as it is in heaven and many would delight in calling him 'Saviour and Lord'.

And so we, in imitation of him, might ponder what it might mean to see ourselves not so much as soldiers tasked with taking territory for Jesus, a holy SAS sent in to win souls and bring schools and offices and streets into line, but rather as one of God's gifts to our school, our office, our street.

Maybe he wants me to pause, look around with his eyes and ask him: What might I give in sacrificial love to the people you have called me to? A prayer? An enhancing change to a work process? An extra effort to make that piece of work something to thrill a customer or a boss? A smidgen of time to listen to someone? A story of God's action in my life? A direct communication of Gospel truth?

Testimonies of Change

In front of me, I have the testimony of a pastor whose people have been changed in just such ways through LICC's *Imagine* pilot project. His is not the only one.

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'Before all this (the Imagine process), one of the most common things that people were saying was "I hate what I do out there and I'm pretty sure I'm not where God wants me to be... And in the last year I've not had one conversation like that... Actually the reverse has happened, and they're coming to say to me: "This is exactly where I'm meant to be..."'

Ordinary life has been opened up as an arena for love and service.

More broadly at LICC, these last months have seen much progress. Our partnerships with the Baptist Union and with Elim continue to flourish and, in the last month alone, we've engaged with one further denomination, an Anglican Diocese, three theological colleges, a major Irish conference, a Dublin apprentice programme, a number of churches... as well as working amongst young people and directly with people on the front line of work. Our goal, however, is not to be busy or to grow our team to meet increasing demand but to discern prayerfully how God would have LICC contribute to making whole-life missionary discipleship an unavoidable and central part of church culture.

Please pray that we would hear God's will for LICC and obey him as it unfolds.

Still, some things are clear. Amongst other projects, this year we will:

- ❖ Publish the learnings from the *Imagine* pilot project
- ❖ Launch a leadership toolkit and a group resource to help churches make disciples
- ❖ Develop and test a new product for cultural engagement

It is also clear that we will need to increase LICC's capacity. Learning how to impact 60 churches is one thing but helping 600 or 6,000 or 60,000 will require more investment. So I hope that you will consider supporting us financially.

The economic crisis has hit many of our supporters and, as I write, with seven weeks left of our financial year, we cannot 'see' where the £48,000 needed for us to break even will come from. And next year's budget will be higher with increased rent and with the appointment of a Chief Operating Officer to help us maximise our impact, build the organisation for the task ahead and release some of my time to listen to God's perspectives on our culture. It may seem a curious moment to expand but given the strategic opportunities before us and the hunger from others, our Board and advisors are agreed that it's right and necessary. If you can, a one-off gift or a standing order would be very much appreciated.

*This day, may God's gifts to you,
lavish and abundant,
bring you joy and peace,
and all you need to show and share
his love for those around you.*



Mark Greene

*Please do consider making a gift – it really will
help us make a difference to many lives.*