



Reimagining Mission Post-COVID-19

Research and Development Unit

Introduction

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The Research and Development Unit carried out a territorial-wide piece of research in 2020 to look into how COVID-19 affected missional practice and thinking in various expressions of mission and church life within The Salvation Army in the UK and Ireland [2]. The aim of this research was to provide insights into the question: How are we doing / will we do / will we reimagine mission as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? In order to answer this question, a literature review which identified missional trends that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as well as phone survey interviews and online surveys,

were undertaken with 404 frontline church leaders and staff to understand their experience and thinking during lockdown. They were asked to articulate their understanding of mission and what they felt God was saying to them about the future of The Salvation Army mission. The Salvation Army recognises mission through five priorities. These are: nurture disciples of Jesus, seek justice and reconciliation, care for creation, serve others without discrimination and share the good news. These mission priorities overlap and support each other and are not hierarchical.

In response to the research, senior leaders requested that this booklet be produced. This booklet is designed to enable corps and individuals to reflect on how they will reimagine mission in their contexts as they deal with changing circumstances brought about by the pandemic. It is also meant to help us think about our life with God, our life together and our life in the world. The booklet is based on key themes that were identified in the COVID-19 research, which are:



COVID as a Spur to Prayer and Lament

Why lament?

How can we integrate lament into our life together?

COVID as Trauma

How can we promote trauma-informed congregations which acknowledge the trauma congregants may have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

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[2] This was commissioned by the Secretary for Mission and the Secretary for Communication

COVID and Discipleship

How will we reimagine discipleship?
How will we highlight some of the gaps in discipleship which have been emphasised by the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID and Sharing the Good News

How will we explore what evangelism should look like post-COVID-19?

COVID and Inequalities (Part 1)

How can we better understand the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental and Spiritual (PESTLE[S]) inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic?
How we can be good news at the margins considering the PESTLES inequalities?

COVID and Inequalities (Part 2)

How can we be equipped to respond to and challenge Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental and Spiritual (PESTLE[S]) inequalities and 'Wicked Issues'[3] (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p169).

Theological reflection is required in order to fully engage with the themes outlined above. This is because they directly relate to faith and mission. The Four Theological Voices Model and Faith-Based Facilitation are two guides supported by The Salvation Army which can be used to guide theological reflection.

Models to Guide Theological Reflection

Four Theological Voices model



The methodology that guided the COVID-19 research was The Four Theological Voices model developed by the Action Research Church and Society team (ARCS). This model serves as a working tool for theological reflection and practice. According to this model, the Church lives out its theology and practice through the interplay of these four voices, these voices being:

[3] Wicked Issues are complex problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise.

Normative Theology:

‘Scriptures, the creeds, official church teaching, liturgies’: this includes The Salvation Army’s traditions, mission, vision, doctrinal statements.

Formal Theology:

‘the theology of theologians and dialogue with other disciplines’.

Operant Theology:

‘the theology embedded within the actual practices of a group’: the theology/missiology that is being practised in various Salvation Army contexts.

Espoused Theology:

‘the theology embedded within a group’s articulation of its beliefs’: for example, the beliefs articulated by The Salvation Army at the frontline (Cameron et al, 2010, p54).

Therefore, corps and individuals can work through the chapters of this booklet by interrogating the Four Theological Voices to understand how their theology and practice are intertwined, subsequently guiding their reimagining of mission and practice. This exercise can also help to sharpen the understanding of each voice leading to deeper comprehension of mission in a given context.

The Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF) model

Faith-Based Facilitation (FBF) is a way of working that has been adopted by The Salvation Army having been considered fit to help build deeper relationships. FBF is a model which ‘helps people think, talk, explore and respond to their issues in the light of faith’. (The Salvation Army, 2010, p3) The diagram below shows the process that is followed during FBF.

The FBF process can be used as groups attempt to grapple with the issues raised by the COVID-19 research as expressed in the different themes. In addition to enabling better comprehension of issues being discussed, FBF helps groups build ‘deeper and healthier relationships’ (The Salvation Army, 2010, p6), facilitating unity as particular contexts attempt to reimagine mission. FBF can also be used as a tool to guide conversations relating to the Four Theological Voices Model.

FBF follows the following process:

Step 1 - Event or Issue: start with the issue which needs to be addressed.

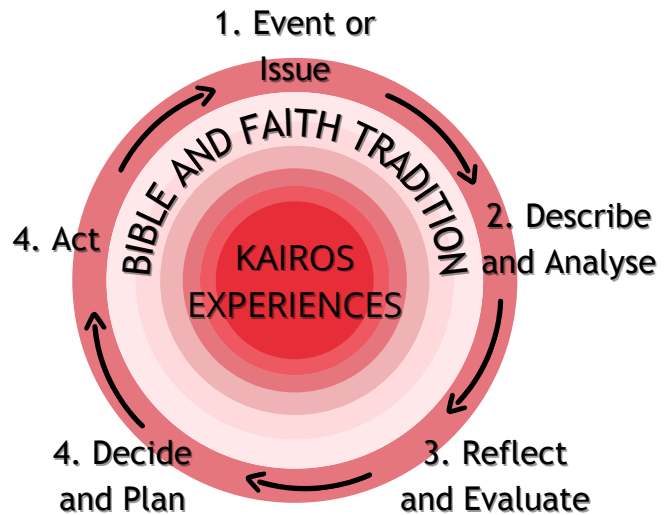
Step 2 - Describe and Analyse: describe and analyse the issue in detail.

Step 3 - Reflect and Evaluate: think through, raise and answer questions pertaining to the issue, look out for Kairos moments [4] and make time for prayer (The Salvation Army, 2010, p7).

Step 4 - Decide and Plan: think about decisions that the group can own and put into practice, create action points.

Step 5 - Act: act on decisions by referencing action points.

The completion of step five leads to a new cycle. Continuous evaluation is required even when step five is complete.



The chapters that follow create opportunities which foster reflection by encouraging readers to consider their wider context, eg how society has changed due to COVID-19 and how we remain intentionally missional in light of those changes. They also involve seeking God for direction as we work together as ‘one Army’ in reimagining mission post-COVID-19. The chapters will be structured using an FBF outline, with questions for reflection. Note that all Scripture references unless otherwise stated are from the New International Version (2011).

[4] Questions could include ‘How far does this project/activity remain true to its original aims and values? What insights or events or teaching from the Bible connect with this situation? What needs to be changed to make this situation better and of greater value for all concerned?’

Bibliography

Cameron, Helen et al (2010), *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology*. Norfolk: SCM Press.

The Salvation Army (2010), *Building Deeper Relationships Using Faith-Based Facilitation*. London: The Salvation Army IHQ.

Rittel, Horst WJ, and Webber, MM (1973), 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', *Policy Sciences* 4 (2), pp155-169.