

Sunday 28th June – ‘Signs of Growth’



We asked our World Church Partners and Methodist Women in Britain:
“What does Kingdom Growth look like where you are?”

Our prayer is that as you read these stories of what God is doing, even through the challenges, you will be inspired in prayer and faith to step out in mission, be that across the street or across the world.

RETIRED AND REJUVINATED! – from Devon

In my own church, we had a congregation of 15–20 on Sunday mornings a year ago. Now (well, pre-Covid) it is 25–30. This has happened because we gathered in some people who had retired to our town.

The people who have joined us have brought their talents and skills, so that:

- The large and unloved church garden, which we have given over to a local homeless charity, has benefitted from extra interest within the church; more people are joining the garden work-team and engaging with the local community. As a side-issue, the garden is now looking lovely, and has productive crops and leisure areas, which a number of people in the area access – I particularly like that I sometimes chat to workers I find enjoying their lunch there.
- Our outreach to the local school has started up again, with one of our new members taking assemblies and forging links. We were also due to do an 'Easter Cracked' event (cancelled due to Covid-19) for the first time, with the children. This is something we wouldn't have had the man-power to stage in previous years – and the plan is to open the event to more schools in the future, to be a resource and a witness.
- One of our new members is a talented writer, so that our nativity last December was rather better than my own efforts previously! This event is a big deal for our little church, because we share it with 130 people from the community in the local YMCA. The YMCA are one of our main local partners, and we both take the nativity seriously as a way of forging links in the community (we have the local primary school choir there; we have provided costumes and craft areas for the children attending; we have had bell-ringers and an adult choir join us; and everyone joins us for carols and mince-pies after the Nativity, which gives us a chance to chat to people).

- Our church singing group is expanding, with new members, as is our bible study group.
- One of our new members has started making banners and displays which we hang in our windows for the community to see.
- Two other of our new members have taken on the job of putting bright posters outside the building, which they change regularly – a small thing, but people do notice them. The same couple are organising more modern signage for outside, which we need after years of tired and worn wooden sign-boards.
- We were planning a 'bbq service in the garden' which we hoped would pull in local residents – after Covid, maybe!

Has this resulted in more of our community coming into the church? Definitely – we welcomed people to our 'community carols round the tree', and our more traditional carol service, as well as people coming to Sunday worship.

Any fears for the future? Well, of course, we are all getting older and most of us are retired... but we go forward in faith for now.

KINGLY RULE – from Rev Dr. Mulambya Kabonde GENERAL SECRETARY, The United Church of Zambia

Kingdom growth is God's Kingly rule in the lives of people and everything seen or unseen, every event, every item, every matter, every thought is His pre-occupation. All these must be subject to that sovereignty. The rule extends and permeates every aspect of society; the whole world must eventually be touched by God's transforming power! As true Kingdom citizens, our obedience to God must touch every area of our lives. We must be actively spreading God's reign into every segment of society. Influencing the world by bringing God's love and grace to all, whether it be through the arts, business, politics, or our vocations.

The Kingdom must offer:

- ~ Liberty for those in bondage
- ~ Unconditional acceptance for the unacceptable
- ~ Healing for the sick
- ~ Joy for the sad
- ~ Hope for the hopeless
- ~ Voice for the voiceless
- ~ Strength for the weak
- ~ Conscience for the dead consciences

What does Kingdom growth look like where I am? The Kingdom of God is stunted by many factors. The growth of the Kingdom of God is mostly limited to the spiritual life and is not translated into the physical life due to poor national economies, lack of basic needs, poor democratic tenets and management of natural resources.