

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

### Discipleship happens where God places us

Do we believe this statement and what do we mean by it? The discussions we held included people who were running Zoom church, YouTube live church, pre-recorded YouTube church, Facebook live church, telephone conferencing church and newsletter church. In each of these situations the common theme was that God was at work in a new way. Different people were logging on, listening in or asking to receive the newsletter, each of whom had never set foot inside the church in question. The gathered community of church was not just the community of a Sunday morning, but people from the Toddler group or coffee morning, or the neighbour who had been chatted to at the local shop or even somebody from Florida. Each of these people were part of the discipleship of these churches. Whatever church is currently looking like, God is calling us to be disciple-making disciples for our viewers, our listeners and our readers. Simon Goddard has recently asked the question: 'Are we called to be a distributed Church?' He writes: "We know from Acts 8 that the scattering of the early disciples caused the growth of the church, so why aren't we more intentional about creating a distributed church? A church in which mission and ministry are distributed, leadership and power is distributed, and where ordinary disciples are equipped and released to engage in the extraordinary mission of God." One minister shared that as a result of lockdown, God has been bringing about what they had been thinking pre-pandemic into sharper focus, that is the need to move out and invest in relationship. In order to do any of this we need to recognise more clearly that God uses everyone where they are placed because they are unique and called to be in that context. The work of mission doesn't just lie with the pastor. Therefore, mission and ministry are distributed and released. Will this time be a catalyst for change or merely a pause before returning to 'normal'? One person shared that they felt that there were three possible responses following lockdown: 'remain faithful to the past and plod on; have a hardware reset and redefine church; pack up and leave' <https://www.easternbaptist.org.uk/news/what-might-god-be-saying-collation-of-zoom-discussions/>



### Biblical Reflection

In Acts chapter 8 we read that severe persecution had begun against the church in Jerusalem, with one of the main protagonists being Saul, who we read was ravaging the church. Therefore they were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. The key player in this chapter is Philip. When they were scattered they and he went from place to place proclaiming the word (vs4) and oh my did Philip go from place to place, have a look at it on a map! Jerusalem to Samaria, from Samaria on the road to Gaza, albeit taken there miraculously and then at the end of the chapter he is at Azotus over on the coast travelling up the coast to Caesarea. Each place he went, the people he connected with, he proclaims the good news. In chapter 6 Philip was appointed as a deacon, we recall that this was one appointed for the practical tasks, however this soon changes and he ends up described as an evangelist with four daughters who prophesy (ch21:8-9). All of this seems to have occurred because they were scattered and he didn't just move house, he travelled wherever the Spirit took him and proclaimed the good news to the people of Samaria, who were their traditional enemies; to Simon the sorcerer; to an Ethiopian eunuch, who then took the good news to Ethiopia and a host of others besides. For me the mark of Philip is his passion for the gospel, his obedience and tireless service for Jesus. As Peter says in Acts 4:20 'As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard' this is so true for Philip.

### Questions for Reflection

When you consider all of the disciples that we meet in Acts, who inspires you most and why?

Philip, Peter and the others could not help but speak about what they had seen or heard, what are the barriers which cause us to be more hesitant?

Where has God placed you? Who are the people you meet, either virtually or online, on a day to day basis?

Make a list and ask God to reveal who he wants you to speak to about Jesus.

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Pray for the Holy Spirit's confidence and guidance to speak about what you know about Jesus in the situations where he has placed you.

Interview with Simon Goddard on 'Distributed church'

<https://youtu.be/7t1-Bi3r9pY>

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/MQ\\_jS6AMYfc-](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/MQ_jS6AMYfc-)

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