

LOVE IS _____ ●

2024 Summer Ideas

The **Methodist** Church 
Northampton District

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

What is Love Is ?

02

Love Is = Using your building

03

Love Is = Prayer Walking

04

Love Is = Telling

05

Love Is = Going Online

06

Love Is = Acting Justly

07

Love Is = FEAST

08

Love Is = Net Zero

09

Love Is = Margins

10

Love Is = Summer

11

Love Is = Having a go!

Resources

What is Love Is_?

Welcome to the Northampton District's Summer Love Is_ 2024 offering.

Dating back to 2022, Love Is_ is an invitation to engage in a practical way of showing the love of God in the context you find yourself in. This invitation can be taken up as a Circuit, local congregation or indeed as an individual. With summer fast approaching, we recognise this season's potential for all of us. Whether it be engaging with the summer of sport, helping those on the economic margins or utilising the British weather, there will be opportunities a plenty.

To help you take up this initiation we have created a variety of resources. We hope these inspire, stir your imagination and help you to clarify what it is in your context that you want to share about the love of God with the communities that you serve and seek to engage with. We are convinced that speaking of love, acting in love, and becoming more loving are our principal tasks as Christians. This year's offering weaves the Methodist Way of Life stations to help us see that Love Is_ is a part of our discipleship journey.

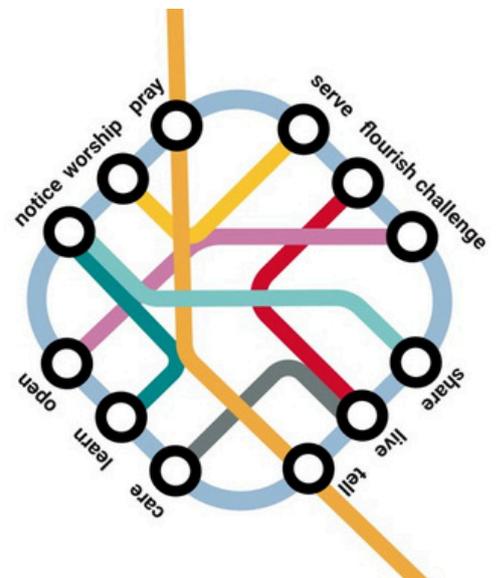
A confident Christian witness emerges from us being clear as Christian disciples and as a Church about the love of God, which can be shared generously with others. If we are confident in loving ourselves, our neighbours, and our communities, then much else will follow.

Love Is_ is an open invitation, so are these resources - feel free to use the helpful parts and leave the rest where it is. Adapt, tweak, and edit to use in church, outside, online, or wherever you find yourself.



Matthew Forsyth

Matthew Forsyth
District Mission Team Leader



Love Is_ = Using your building

Everything we have comes from God, including our buildings, and so we want to use them for God's mission. A Methodist building that is welcoming, eye-catching and that acts as a focal point for a community can speak powerfully of God's love.

So the question is how can we use our buildings to show God's love?



Ideas for your building

1. Could you open your building to become a cool space? With temperatures in our District hitting high 30's last year, could you open your building to offer a space that is cool and safe on a hot day.
2. Could the building become a reflective space for prayer?
3. Could the building welcome a community group to partake in Love Is_ activity?

Note that it is important before you proceed with any idea that you consider the risk assessments needed and safeguarding implications.

Contact-
safeguarding@northampton
methodistdistrict.org.uk if you
have any questions.

Your Story

“I have found love, hope, and acceptance in this church”
(member of Rothwell Methodist Church)

After Rothwell Methodist Church began a warm space they established several groups like a weekly toddler group and a messy church. By opening the building to a number of identified groups in their local community the response has been significant.

The above quote goes to show how using your building is just one of the ways to communicate God's love. How could you use your building this summer?

Love Is_ = Prayer walking

Are you struggling to think of where to begin for Love Is_? Could you start by prayer walking? Here's a step-by-step guide to getting started.

1

Be attentive throughout your prayer walk. Look up, look around, look down.

2

What do you see? What do you have? How do you feel?

3

Practise 'double listening' Listen to your surroundings, listen to the Spirit.

4

Any places you feel uplifted?
Any places you feel troubled?

5

Pray a blessing on the people you pass and over the specific areas which have taken and at which you pause.

6

Stay in a group, but walk in pairs or threes.

7

Share insights with each other at the places where you pause and reflect those to God.

Unable to go for a prayer walk?

If you're unable to physically walk, consider using Google Maps with the street view feature to virtually stroll through your context.



The Methodist Way of Life encourages us that “praying is a bit like breathing: like the air around you, every second of every day you are in God’s presence.”

It is also good to make a space in your day when you focus on praying. You can share what’s on your heart, pray for others, and listen to God.

Love Is = Telling

'Tell' might feel like quite a brash and strong word. However, think about the last time something amazing happened to you. Maybe a new job, new grandchild or passing an exam. Its only natural that you wanted to tell others or those close to you this news.

The truth is, you've got a story to share about how God's love has affected you, a story that might make all the difference to another person.

Why not intentionally converse with a friend, whether in person or over the phone/online?

Thirty-six percent of practicing Christians say conversing with a Christian was a key influence in their coming to faith. Jesus shows us the healing, transformational



power of discussion in the Gospels. This is encouraging; you don't need special techniques – just a conversation that flows naturally from who you are and whom you're talking to. Here are some ways to integrate faith into conversations:

Top tips

1

When somebody asks, "How was your weekend?", why not tell them what happened at church on Sunday?

2

Ask a question such as 'What do you think Love Is?'

3

Why not take a moment to write down and pray for the person you wish to share the love of God with.

“

To evangelise does not mean to win converts ... But simply to announce the good news, irrespective of the results.”

John Sott

”

Love Is_ = Going online

There's no doubt that we are online and on our phones more than we have ever been. This provides us with a brilliant opportunity to share God's love online.

A few ideas to consider...

- Download one of the Love Is_ templates from the District website and use that on your own church or personal social media page.
- Host an online Love Is_ prayer zoom gathering.
- Host a virtual Love Is_ quiz night. Who remembers the virtual quizzes during lockdown? Why not bring them back for one night only during the Love Is_ period?
- Join your community's local Facebook group - listen to what's going on in your community.
- Could you film a series of short videos of people talking about what love is to them?

- Follow and like the Northampton Methodist District Facebook page and share the content to help your capacity.
- Take a listen to and share the Hope and Anchor podcast (from the Methodist Church). Find out more at:
<https://apple.co/3QbVX3y> or scan the code.



Naomi, our District Digital Enabler is available to support and help you with your digital presence and ideas. Get in contact with Naomi below!



Love Is = Acting Justly

God is a liberator. God always takes the side of people experiencing poverty and injustice and we are called to do the same. So we are called to challenge injustice but also to serve others. In serving others, God invites us to see God in one another.

We long for God's justice in the world. Around the globe and in their own local communities, Methodists are working for justice through responding to needs and campaigning for change.

Challenging injustice is never easy – it is rare for a challenge to be welcome. This can be something you do as an individual, but it can be better to work together as a small group or a congregation.



Ideas for Justice

1

Host a fundraiser for a Methodist connected charity e.g. All We Can, Action for Children or Christian Aid.



2

Go to- letsendpoverty.co.uk to join the UK movement seeking to end poverty now.

3

Support your local foodbank when you next do your grocery shopping.

4

Use your vote and help prepare your church and its users for the general election- jpit.uk/elections

5

Research what injustices are happening in your area and look at what actions you could take to help.

Love Is_ = FEAST

Participating in Love Is_ involves listening to and noticing God together. One way to notice is to engage in the District's FEAST project.

FEAST is all about:

**Friends
Exploring
And
Sharing
Together**



The project invites those who may be curious about faith to join others, together with FEAST facilitators, using their common interests to build relationships and further conversations about how faith issues surface in the culture of today, and perhaps even how arts and culture speak into theology and into daily our Way of Life as the people called Methodists.



FEAST groups will look different from Sunday models of church in that their location will, but not always, be a new place of gathering.

Their focus, especially in the gathering stages, will be on a common interest or issue which acts as the starting point for faith exploration.



Our District FEAST Enabler Revd Kim Shorley is available to support and help you this Summer and beyond. Get in contact with Kim below to receive support.



01539 265716
07843 893998



kim.shorley@northamptonmethodistdistrict.org.uk

Love Is_ = Net Zero

Love Is_ is caring for creation and all God's gifts. So what does it look like for us to do that this summer and beyond? How could you, your Circuit and Church be involved in this? How can we enable this world to flourish for both current generations and for those to come in the future?

The universe is an expression of God's loving, creative nature.

We are currently in a climate emergency requiring urgent action, but the good news is that by learning about God's love for creation and our place within it, we can learn to take care of the world we live in.



Ideas for Net-Zero

1

Explore becoming an Eco Church-
ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/

2

Look at the products you use in the kitchen, around your house or indeed Church. Could these be fairtrade?

3

Is there a space in your church grounds to plant flowers? Why not do this as a community?!

4

Are there any easy wins you could do in your building? LED lightbulbs or switching to a renewable energy supplier?

5

Could you change the way you travel e.g. walk or cycle instead of driving?

6

Could you sign this petition?
www.tearfund.org/campaigns/rubbish-campaign

7

Take some time to journal your carbon impact and see what improvements you could make.



Love Is = Margins

“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” – Cornel West

The cost of living crisis has resulted in there being more foodbanks than McDonald’s in the UK currently. The pressure placed upon the margins of our society has increased significantly.

When speaking of the margins we will use the Methodist definition:

*People can be marginalised in many, often interconnected ways related, for example, to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, physical impairment or illness, mental ill health, and poverty. Marginalisation caused by **economic poverty** can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals and communities. We will focus on people who are **economically impoverished** or **vulnerable to economic poverty** due to their circumstances.*



We learn more about our faith.

You can become like Jesus. You are not stuck where you are.

Jesus calls us to be disciples, which is like being an apprentice. We need to learn, grow, change, and be surprised by God.

For some people this might be formal theological education, but we also learn through our day-to-day lives and encounters with other people.

There are lots of things that can block learning. We might be over-nostalgic and sceptical of the unknown. Or get stuck in an ideology that limits curiosity. Or just get distracted.

But, by definition, disciples are learners, so stay open-minded!

One thing we learn about as we reflect and look to Jesus is the love He had for the margins. So what does it look like for you to learn more about the margins?

Love Is = Summer



God gives unbounded love and grace to us, and worship is one way of responding and celebrating this. Consequently, we are transformed by the grace and power of God, receiving forgiveness and mercy.

Worshipping God with others also helps to knit us together into a faith community, with mission as “the natural, even inevitable, consequence”.

We also worship God through our everyday activities – at work, at home, and wherever we live our daily lives.

So why not make this summer one filled with worship in more ways than one?

Could you worship together as a Circuit? Maybe with an ecumenical friend down the road?

Or maybe you could worship in the park or do something completely different!

1

Could you host a summer BBQ or fun day event for the local community?

2

Could you host a summer Messy Church?
www.messychurch.brf.org.uk/

3

How about hosting a bubble church event?
www.bubblechurch.org

4

Worship done differently? In the park or in a outside space suitable with permissions.

5

Summer is the season of garage sales. Why not host your very own?

6

Offer a cool space. With hotter temperatures likely, could you offer a cooler space for people this summer?

7

Holding a school supply drive is a way to bless families in need in your community.

Love Is_ = Having a go!

Love Is_ is all about having a go and doing something. We live in a way that draws people to Jesus.

You be you.

So, whether you use one of the ideas from this pack, or develop your own ideas; we hope that through this initiative, you can share God's love.

Lastly, we would love to hear how Love Is_ has gone for you. Why not share your stories on social media via our Facebook page (Northampton Methodist District)? Or email them to matt.forsyth@northamptonmethodistdistrict.org.uk.

Have fun!



Resources

After all the ideas and creativity, sometimes the major hurdle is, in fact, the finances. To help you out in your Circuit or Church, the District has a grant that is designed to help you.

The Missional start-up grants allow you to access up to £5,000 to help make your dreams a reality.

More details of these grants can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3UizdS7>
Or scan the QR code below!



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