

SMALL GROUP SESSIONS



**What kind
of church?**

SESSION 1

Everything has changed

This study starts by giving the group an opportunity to acknowledge and address the changes that the church continues to face. It is important before this study begins that we're on the same page, to acknowledge together the role of the church today. From here we can begin to address our next steps regarding what kind of church we ought to be.



1. WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO CHANGE?

Reflect together on times when you have personally experienced change in some area of your life.

Describe your reactions and emotions, e.g. excitement and enthusiasm or anxiety and fear.



2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Everything has changed:
eauk.org/wkoc

“Christendom is over and we need to get over it.”

Mike Frost, Exiles



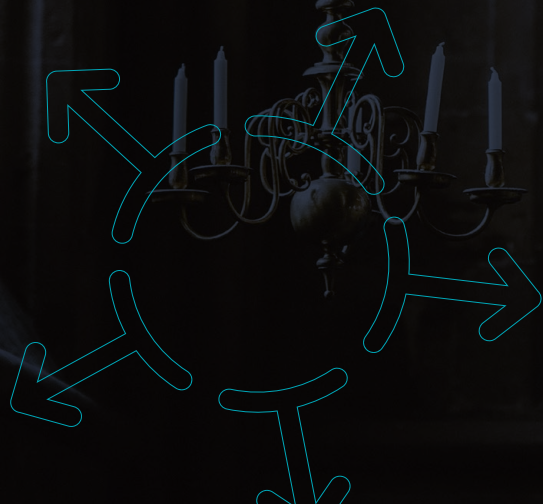
3. DISCUSS

- A. In what ways has the landscape been changing in our society since the turn of the millennium? Consider changes in areas such as health, education, community, morals, technology.
 - B. In what ways is wider society influencing the church's thinking and actions?
 - C. On page 20 of 'What kind of church?' we read "The landscape has changed. The strong historical links between state and church are rapidly declining. Christendom is dead in some places and terminally ill in others. Our place of influence with the state, for good or bad, has gone or is going."
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'What kind of church?' goes on to state that "We are being moved from the centre to the margins. We live in a rapidly secularising culture where the ideas of one complete story that shapes life, a clear moral code that applies to all people and sin, and the need for forgiveness are all treated with huge scepticism. At best, people will acknowledge the good churches do in their communities in terms of alleviating need. However, that is held almost in contradiction to any sense of a radical group of people who are talking about and living the Jesus lifestyle. So the state can still put up with the church, and occasionally wheel out its representatives, but does not like the idea of the church claiming the exclusivity of Jesus, the call to repentance, or the making of new believers. Essentially, the state can just about accept a domesticated, non-subversive church. A group of nice, mostly older people who will do its bidding at the opening of buildings or state funerals. I think it is going to be in for a shock. Alongside our change of position within society there is also the rapid declining numbers within the church. Several surveys both in England and Scotland have recently shown what we all know."

(p21)

What evidence is there for the truth of these statements? If you have a variety of age ranges in your group, ask the older generation what the role of the church used to be in society.



**“As church we were, and perhaps still are,
on a threshold of a new era and we were
paralysed by grief and fear. As church we
have lived so long in our position we got
stuck and lacked either the will or flexibility
to move to a new place.”**

What kind of church?, p21



4. WATCH VIDEO CLIP

Liminal: eauk.org/wkoc



5. DISCUSS

A. Here are two statements about this time of transition:

a) 'We are in a transitional and liminal time. This is making everything feel unsettled and awkward, and many of us are experiencing tremendous unrest and fear.'

b) 'We are in a transitional and liminal time. This is so exciting. The old rules have gone and we are free to dream new dreams and to become whatever we want to become.'

- Which group do you relate to more comfortably?
- How can we encourage one another to cross over the threshold into the new?

B. We heard in the video that we are called to be carriers of the culture of the knowledge of God for this generation, to be kingdom carriers for today.

- What does it mean to be someone who carries the kingdom of God for this generation?
- Consider the exhortation to be 'relevant', 'powerful' and 'transformational'. What ministries within or outwith your local church demonstrate these qualities?

C. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

*"Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the good news and share in its blessings."
(v22-23)*

- What might Paul's example look like in our lives and church?

D. *'Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.'* (Colossians 3:12)

- Discuss the circles in which you find yourselves e.g. at work, at the school playground, at home, at university, etc. How can you be a person who carries the kingdom of God into that environment?
- What practical ways can we as a church be faithful, full of grace and transformational? How can we be clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience?



SESSION 2

Encounter and engagement



1. STARTER QUESTION



When we are introduced to new people the question invariably arises, “What do you do?” So much of our identity is wrapped up in our job, in our activities, in our talents. In what ways can this also be true of our ‘church identity’?



2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Encountering the presence,
engaging in the mission:
eauk.org/wkoc

3. DISCUSS



- A. The dictionary definition of an encounter is ‘an unexpected or casual meeting’ or to ‘unexpectedly be faced with or experience’ Consider some Bible characters who had an encounter with Jesus. Jot down some notes to build up a picture of how the encounter changed them.

Scripture reference	Name	Before (What do we know about them?)	Encounter (Where? When? What happened?)	After (How did the encounter change them?)
Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus			
John 4:1-42	Samaritan woman			
John 20:24-29	Thomas			
Acts 9:1-31	Paul			

- B. Have you had an encounter with God? Share personal testimony in the group. In what ways can we encounter God as we go about our daily lives?

“The engagement of the disciples was based solely on their encounter with Jesus. They became agents of transformation out of their time in His presence and through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

C. Take a few minutes to do some self-assessment

- How many hours have I spent serving God through church activities/programmes this week?
- How many hours have I spent in encountering God through prayer, in His word, by abiding in His presence this week?
- Am I living in the power of the Holy Spirit or do I fall into the habit of operating in my own strength?
- Share what you have learned from this exercise.

D. Read John 15:1-8

“Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing”. (v5)


- What do you learn about the Christian life from Jesus’ picture of the vine and the branches? How does this help and challenge you?

E. We need to realise that everything we have rests on how we encounter the presence of God

- What is the outcome of ‘encounter with no engagement’?
- What is the outcome of ‘engagement without consistent Jesus encounters’?
- How can we help each other to avoid these pitfalls?
- Have you any suggestions about how we become more confident as we engage with others?

4. PRAY





“We need to have a holistic vision that sees everything in the context of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who calls us. He is the one who has lifted us and given us a hope. We are the people of Jesus. It is all about Jesus. He is both Lord and chief desire of the church and it is at His command, and in His name that we serve. We don’t get closer to Jesus because we want more power; we spend time with Him because we love Him and want to be in His presence. However, being in His presence begins to radically transform our lives and places them more fully at the disposal of the radical Saviour.”

What kind of church?, p7

SESSION 3

Back to front mission

1. WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD 'MISSION'?

In what areas of mission is your church currently involved/are you currently involved?



2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Back to front mission:
eauk.org/wkoc

“A church that flows out of the heart
of God to see people encounter
His presence”

3. DISCUSS



A. The video states that *“a church that flows out of the heart of God to see people encounter His presence”*

- What did St. Fillan see as his mission?
- How did he prepare for mission? In what ways would this preparation be similar/different to yours?

B. Read Matthew 28:18-20

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (v19-20)

- How does Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations make you feel?
- On a scale of 1-10 how intentional in following these commands
 - a. Is your church?
 - b. are you personally?

C. Read the verses again

- This time identify the two assurances that Jesus gives us.

heart
His



In Acts 17:26, Luke reminds us that God determines the times set for us and the exact places where we should live. We also see this in the book of Esther as Mordechai asks: “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” Throughout the Bible, God places people exactly where they need to be at the right time.

D. On page 24 ‘What kind of church?’ we read that *“all of us find ourselves as the scattered church sent into different places. Each one has an individual place of service and each a place where God has put us.”* It then goes on to mention four spheres that are common for most of us: family, community, workplace and the world.

- Consider where God has placed you and your sphere of influence as a result. Make a list of the different people groups you interact with, e.g. family, neighbours, colleagues, team-mates etc.
- How can we help each other to recognise these missional communities to which we are called? How can we become more intentional in reaching them with the gospel?
- How can we think more creatively about getting the church beyond the walls of our building?

E. Francis of Assisi is often quoted (rightly or wrongly) as having said, “Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

On page 23 of ‘What kind of church?’ we read: “Of course we will do it with actions, but let’s not shy away from doing it with words!”

- Which of these two statements best describes your current approach to mission?
- Can we preach the gospel without words? Use Romans 10:14-15 to help in your discussion.

F. ... *“we need to rediscover the power of our story and have a confidence both in our identity and the presence of God. We have to believe that this is God’s mission and He is involving us, that He goes before us and is with us, and that His passion and compassion are greater than ours.”* (WKOC p23)

In what ways could this renewed understanding of mission help us to become a church that changes a nation?

4. PRAY



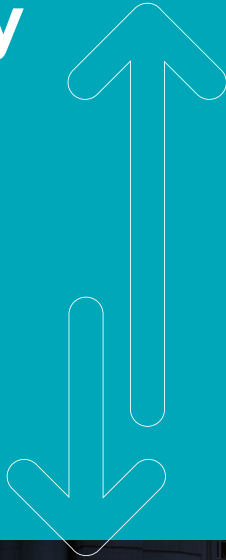


**“..this is God’s mission
and He is involving us.”**

What kind of church?, p23

SESSION 4

Holding lightly



1. WHAT MARKS THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER SOCIAL OR COMMUNITY GROUP?



2. WATCH VIDEO CLIP

Holding lightly:
eauk.org/wkoc



Culture

**The ideas, customs,
social behaviour of
a group of people**



3. DISCUSS

A. The dictionary definition of ‘a culture’ is *“the ideas, customs, social behaviour of a group of people.”*

We have identified that our culture is going through many changes in this age. In John 18:36 Jesus says, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”*

- How does today’s culture differ from the kingdom of God?
List the differences.

Our culture	The kingdom of God
e.g. Individualistic e.g. Self-promoting	e.g. Community e.g. God-glorifying

B. Read Acts 2:42-43

- On what did the early church focus when they gathered?
- Are these fundamental to your church life or are some emphasised more than others?

C. On page 9 of *What kind of church?* we read that *“we live in a fragmented world with lots of competing worldviews and narrative...with so many competing voices around us in the cultures we find ourselves in it is very difficult for the followers of Jesus to stay both faith-filled and faithful if they are not increasingly knowledgeable and confident in the biblical narrative.”* The early church was clearly passionate about the story the apostles were telling, *“They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching...”*

- How well do you know the word of God?
- How confident are you of its truth, relevance and power?

D. The early church was at its core a worshipping community. *“The church wanted to worship, praise and encounter the presence of Jesus. The church was, is and always will be about Jesus. It is lost in adoration of who Jesus is and what He has done. The early church was a group of people who were filled with love for Jesus. Praise was the aroma in which they gathered.”* (WKOC p11)

- What does a church that is passionate about worshipping Jesus look like?
- Does your church cultivate an aroma of praise?
- How can it ensure that the atmosphere, the language, the attitude is one of praise and all is for the glory of God?

E. Read Acts 4:32-37

“All the believers were one in heart and mind”. (v32)

- In what ways did the early church live sacrificially as kingdom people? What was the result of this way of living?
- In what ways does this challenge you to think about your relationship to possessions? What if we held our possessions lightly and used them to bless others?
- How would church be if we all recognised everything we have is God’s for His missional purposes?



4. PRAY

“The early church was a group of people who were filled with love for Jesus. Praise was the aroma in which they gathered.”



SESSION 5

Attitude of gratitude



1. STARTER QUESTION

Read the lyrics to the hymn

“Count your blessings, name them one by one”, written by

Johnson Oatman Jr. in 1897.

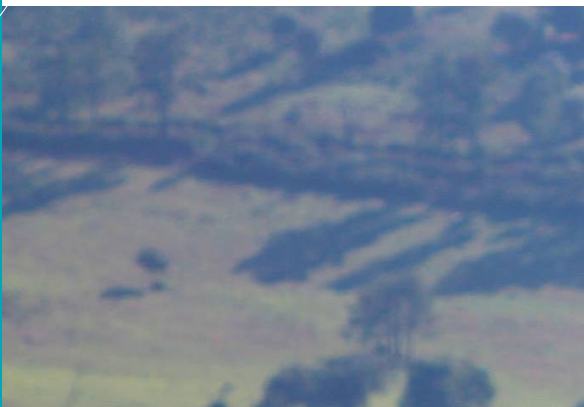
(see http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Count_Your_Blessings/ for full lyrics)

Gipsy Smith, a famous evangelist said of this hymn, *“Men sing it, boys whistle it and women rock their babies to sleep to it.”*

Why do you think this hymn has been loved by so many over the years? In what ways is this hymn relevant today?

2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Attitude of gratitude:
eauk.org/wkoc



3. DISCUSS

- A. For what should we be eternally grateful? Read Psalm 103 for what David calls “all his benefits”.
- B. Identify and share stories of people you may know who have an attitude of gratitude. What does it mean to be someone who carries the kingdom of God for this generation?
- What effect has their attitude had on you?
 - How practically can we encourage one another to cultivate thankful hearts?
 - What might the result of this practice be in our own lives, in the life of our families, in the church, and in the workplace and community?
- C. Identify the many ways in which we give thanks in our gatherings.
- Which do you find to be most effective in helping you to cultivate a thankful heart?

**“...who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”**

Psalms 103:4-5



D. *“In so much of what we do, it appears we are almost so cluttered with religious stuff that we have no space to allow people to tell of the mighty works that God is doing. Stories of how some people are only able to cope because of God’s grace, stories of mercy and love, stories of salvation and healing, of hope and comfort. When we gather as the people of God we should have a thousand stories to tell that all point to the wonders of God, real stories by real people in real situations.” (WKOC? p14-15)*

- How often do we make room in our gatherings to talk about and share about what God is doing?
- What might be the result if this were the norm?

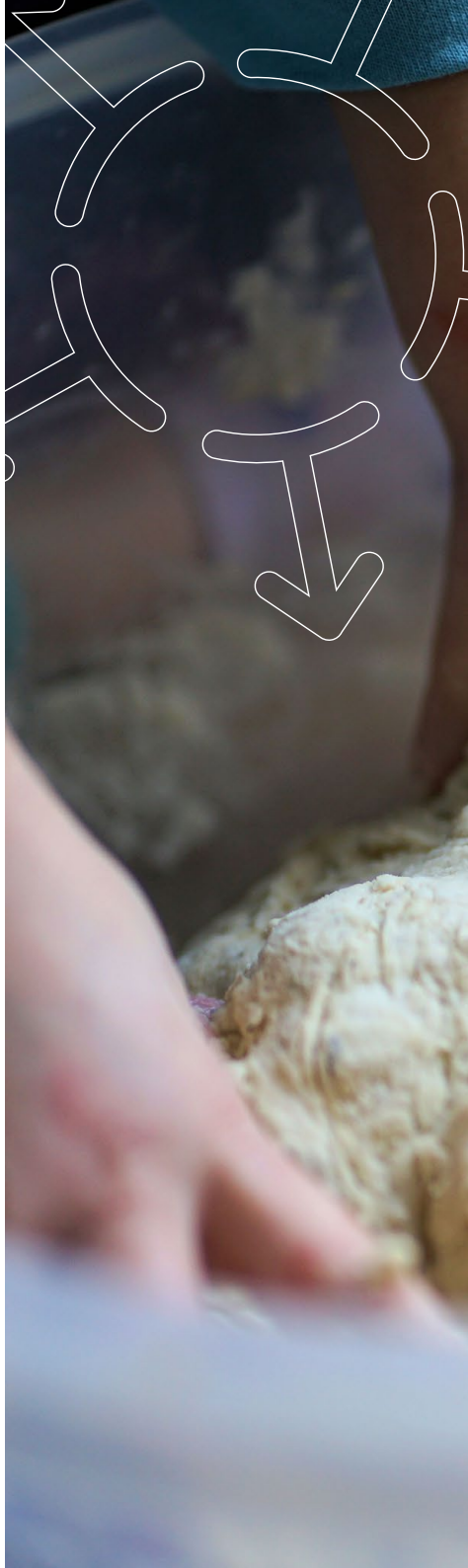
E. Read Psalm 95:1-7

- List reasons for which the Psalmist praises God. Choose one reason and write your own prayer of thanks on that theme. Pray these prayers in your group.

F. How can thanksgiving lead to favour from others and ultimately change our culture?

“Learn afresh to celebrate God’s goodness and be seen as a people who have an attitude of thanksgiving.”

4. PRAY





**“When upon life’s
billows you are
tempest-tossed,

When you are
discouraged,
thinking all is lost,

Count your many
blessings, name
them one by one,

And it will surprise
you what the Lord
has done. “**

Count Your Blessings, Name
them One By One,
Johnson Oatman

SESSION 6

Dare to dream



1. STARTER QUESTION



Proverbs 29:18 says

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV)

- Are you clear on the vision of your church and the part you play in it?

It has been said that vision without action is merely a dream, action without vision just passes the time, but vision with action can change the world.

- Can you identify any individuals or organisations who are living out/have lived out this truth?





2. WATCH THE VIDEO CLIP

Dare to dream:
eauk.org/wkoc

3. DISCUSS

A. *“To be what we are called to be it is crucial that what we do when we are gathered shapes what we do when we are scattered and vice versa. We are both worshipping missionaries and missionary worshippers. What we do when we gather and how that shapes what we do in the world determine what kind of church we will be.”*
(WKOC? p7)

- Read Acts 2:42-43.
- What evidence is there in this passage that the early church was both ‘worshipping missionaries and missionary worshippers’?
- In what ways do your church gatherings prepare you for the rest of the week as you are scattered into your local communities, workplaces, families, etc?
- Identify helpful ways to support one another in the places of mission to which God has scattered you.

B. The church is described on the video as *“a miracle of God’s grace”*

- What does this statement mean?
- What does God think of the church?

C. *‘I believe in the priesthood of all believers. Each one of us, called by God, has a part to play in the body of Christ. I believe that we are all uniquely given a gift mix by which to serve Christ in the world.’* (WKOC? p15)

- Do you agree with this statement?
- Make a list of your ‘gift mix’.
- Ask someone who knows you in the group to tell you what he/she thinks.
- Encourage one another and pray that God would ‘fan into flame’ (2 Timothy 1:6) the gifts He has given each one of you.



D. On page 16 of *What kind of church?* we read: *“From the start, the church has always had leaders. I believe that for a church to grow and move forward it requires God-given leadership. That leadership follows the model of Christ, is servant-hearted, humble, and is not interested in reputation. Leadership wants the best for the whole body of believers but is not afraid to take the tough decisions required to move the body forward. Leadership understands that we never stand still; we are either moving forward or backwards in our spiritual life. Leadership recognises the value in each person but also understands the call to make disciples of all nations.”*

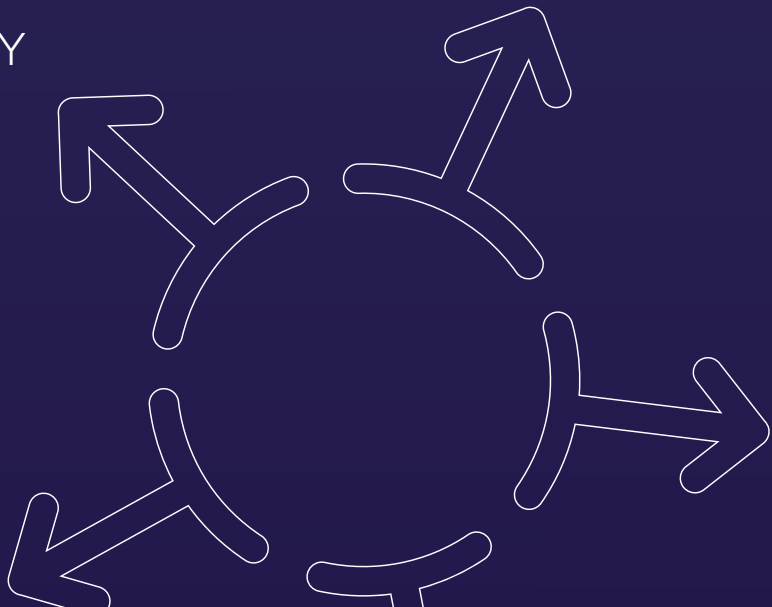
- What does a leadership that frees up its members look like?
- What risks might it face?
- How can we as a church body encourage our leaders?

E. *“The shape of things to come will not be as they were but the scope for creative engagement and prophetic imagination are endless.”* (WKOC? p22)

Listen quietly to the song ‘*Make Me Lord, A Dreamer for Your Kingdom*’ by Chris Bowater, available on <http://bit.ly/2RXiotg>

- What is your dream for the church and the UK?
- How can that dream encourage and add to the dream of the congregation?
- Are there things God has planted in your heart concerning being together which you would love to develop or reshape? Write them down.
- What holds you back?
- Identify one thing that you decide to go and change.

4. PRAY




**“Grant faith
that can say
‘Impossibilities
shall be’**

**And vision lest
a world should
perish not
knowing Thee”**

**Make me Lord a dreamer
for your kingdom,
Chris Bowater**





What kind of church?

evangelical alliance 
together making Jesus known

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Registered Charity No England and Wales: 212325, Scotland: SC040576.

Registered Office: 176 Copenhagen Street, London, N1 0ST