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## Session 1: Presence

Being seen and  
known for  
doing good

# Session 1: Presence Being seen and known for doing good

## Key takeaways:

- The church is called to be present in and connected to our communities.
- There are different ways to be present: physically, relationally, online.
- It is important not only that the church is doing good, but also that it is known for the good it is doing.



**Opening question**  
[5 minutes]

**What do you want your church to be known for in your community?**



**Read aloud**  
[2 minutes]

These words of Jesus come from his Sermon on the Mount where he tells a large crowd of people what his kingdom is like. This is the first time Jesus taught in public according to St Matthew.

***You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

(Matthew 5:14–16)

Light is one of the Bible's key themes. 'Let there be light' is the very first creative act of God (Genesis 1:3). So when Jesus calls his followers to be 'the light of the world', he's asking us to be a creative force, bringing new life in the world, where our 'light' will point people to God.

Christ showed the way in his own life. Christians believe that Jesus is 'the light of the world'—that he shines into dark places, bringing life and love to all who walk with Him. He became a human being and lived with us, identifying with us and walking alongside us. So if we are to learn from Jesus and follow in his footsteps, we must be fully present with our neighbours.

Sometimes as Christians and churches we can be hesitant to let our light shine. We prefer to hide away; either keeping ourselves to ourselves or doing good but without people knowing we are Christians. Jesus says that the church should be visible in the world so that everyone might be drawn to the love and light of God.



**Discuss**  
[15 minutes]

- **How do you feel about Jesus calling his people to be 'the light of the world'?**
- **What do you think it means to 'glorify your Father in heaven'?**
- **In what ways is your church a light in your community?**
- **Where is there darkness in your community?**



**Watch film**  
[5 minutes]



**Group activity**  
[35 minutes]

Do a mapping exercise to identify where your church has a presence in your community.

To start, get a large map\* of your parish/local area and **mark with dots or stickers:**

- 1. The building where your church meets**
- 2. Where your church members live**
- 3. Local institutions and places where people gather such as pubs, schools, parks, community centres, sports clubs or arts venues**

Think together and have one person **take notes** on the things below. You might want to break into smaller groups, each taking one section to discuss, and then share back with the bigger group.

[Note: if using this Toolkit online, the first part of this activity could be skipped or could be done using screen share. If using screen share, the facilitator would need to take the lead on marking up the map.]

\*You can find CofE parish maps from [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)

For more information about your local area try [www.streetcheck.co.uk](http://www.streetcheck.co.uk)

An alternative would be asking people to draw their own map.

## ● **Your physical presence:**

- **Your geographical position.**  
Is your church in the heart of the village/town/neighbourhood, or on the edge? Is it somewhere people naturally pass by in daily life or is it more tucked away? Is the church the main community building in the area or one of many? Is it near where people live and work?
- **Your building.**  
Can it be seen? Does it look inviting? Are the doors open? Would a passer-by know from the outside that there is a thriving church community inside? How? What does the space convey to the community around? Is it welcoming or imposing? If appropriate, you might like to go for a walk around the exterior of the building and consider this. What can you learn from other buildings in your local area that are visible and inviting?
- **Your physical presence beyond your building.** Does your church have a visible presence at the village fete or local market or other space in your community?

## ● **Your relational presence:**

- **People in your church.**  
Where do they live? Are they local?
  - **Local places and organisations.**  
What are the main schools, pubs, community centres, arts venues, and other significant organisations in your local area? Are any members of your congregation part of these spaces?
  - **People in your community.**  
What kinds of people live in your local community? Think about different ages, cultures, ethnicities, and socioeconomic groups in your local area. Does your church congregation fully represent the people in your community?
- ## ● **Your online presence:**
- **Does your church have an up to date web presence?**  
What other online forums exist in your community (e.g. local Facebook pages, local WhatsApp groups)? How is your church present in these online spaces?





Pray  
[10 minutes]

Thank God for his presence which brings light and hope to everything it touches. Pray that he would help your church take steps to be more physically and relationally present in your parish/local area.



### Feedback

We would love to hear your feedback on the Growing Good Toolkit and how we can make it better. After you have used the material, please share your thoughts with us in this short survey.

[Provide feedback](#)



### After the session [Optional]

Take a walk or a drive in your local area. Visit a place you've never been to before or haven't been in a long time. Have a look around and chat to someone there to learn a bit about the place. Some churches have used this as an opportunity to organise a prayer walk - praying for the organisations and individuals that they pass on their walk.

Check out [CUF's Look Up Tool](#) to learn more about your parish demographics.