

Everyday Faith is an initiative across the Church of England to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday.

'The people of St Paul's are the real strength, the real ambassadors. It's about how they can take the message out into the week. I'm trying to make people more confident.'



Simon Couper has been the vicar at St Paul's Beckenham for nearly three years. Sporting pistachio trousers, a beard and a dog collar, he is an interesting blend of tradition and innovation.

'This is my first incumbency,' he says. 'My vision for my ministry is to "love God" and "love your neighbour".'

'The way that plays out is shaped by context, by the people you minister alongside and to. It's about encouraging everyone to think about the difference Jesus makes to their everyday life, and to be authentic.'

'I'm keen to encourage people to see that they're already really well connected – as much as you should see the church as family, it shouldn't be your only contact. I encourage people to pursue other interests. Be involved in music, in a book club, because of your genuine passion for piano or literature. No one is an island. They're already in the business of being an ambassador for Jesus, it's just a matter of being conscious of it.'

Man wearing sunglasses and standing in a tunnel

As well as playing in a brass band, David Charlesworth has chaired a local political party and owns two motorbikes. 'These give me opportunities to be open about being a Christian,' he says.

'My inspiration comes from the **Ethiopian eunuch**. The disciples had instructions to stand on the road. They were invited into the chariot. In our culture it's important that people can see you for what you are, then invite conversation.'

Keith Howick, a patent and trade mark attorney, agrees. 'I think it's very important that people make up their own minds. There has to be an opportunity for people to explore. Then they can have a think, learn more, decide for themselves. Look for conversations where there's an opening. Sometimes there's an opportunity to drop church into conversations, which sparks questions. If you drop something in, something might come back.

Man sitting on a bench and smiling

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'I was on the Board of Directors of the International Trademark Association. There was an event with 10,000 people. They held a reception for first-time attendees. It was quite daunting for people to come. I got talking to a young trade mark attorney. We finished up having had a very deep faith-based conversation. She said, "That's the last thing I expected at something like this!" '

Marion Blakely is an accomplished pianist. 'I think music is a way of expressing one's faith,' she says. 'I want to do it well, for God. I feel that it's a gift I've been given and therefore want to share it with others.

Woman standing in front of a piano and smiling

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As well as accompanying children and students for music exams and playing for church services, Marion plays for groups like the Red Cross and the Blind Club – familiar songs, with conversation in between. Afterwards, she says, people come up for a chat. ‘They say, “I feel so much better. I really enjoyed your playing and what you said.” It’s a combination of things, a love of people.

‘I think people respond if you’re smiley, happy. People will smile back. Sometimes people look worried, but then you smile at them and their whole face changes. It opens the way for a conversation.’

For Hazel Koungoue, conversation is a big part of both faith and life. ‘I work with elderly people,’ she says. ‘I offer care to the community. Everyone is within walking distance from where I live. It’s because of my faith that I started my job.



'I've sat with families as people pass away, when a granddaughter has passed her GCSEs, when a child is getting married. I feel incredibly privileged to be doing this. I talk to people about faith all the time, and to their families, because I sense that God has sent me there. They are under no illusions about who I am, or *whose* I am. I talk about how God orders my steps, how he makes the load a whole lot lighter.

'Evangelism is a big deal for me. Get to know Jesus! Get to know the man Jesus. What he did on the cross is for all of us. At least get to know something about him before writing him off. It's good to find out. People won't know unless we tell them.'

A green leaf outline with a brown stem used as the Renewal & Reform logo

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*Everyday Faith and Setting God's People Free are part of the Church of England's **Renewal and Reform** programme, aimed at creating a growing Church for all people and in all places.*

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