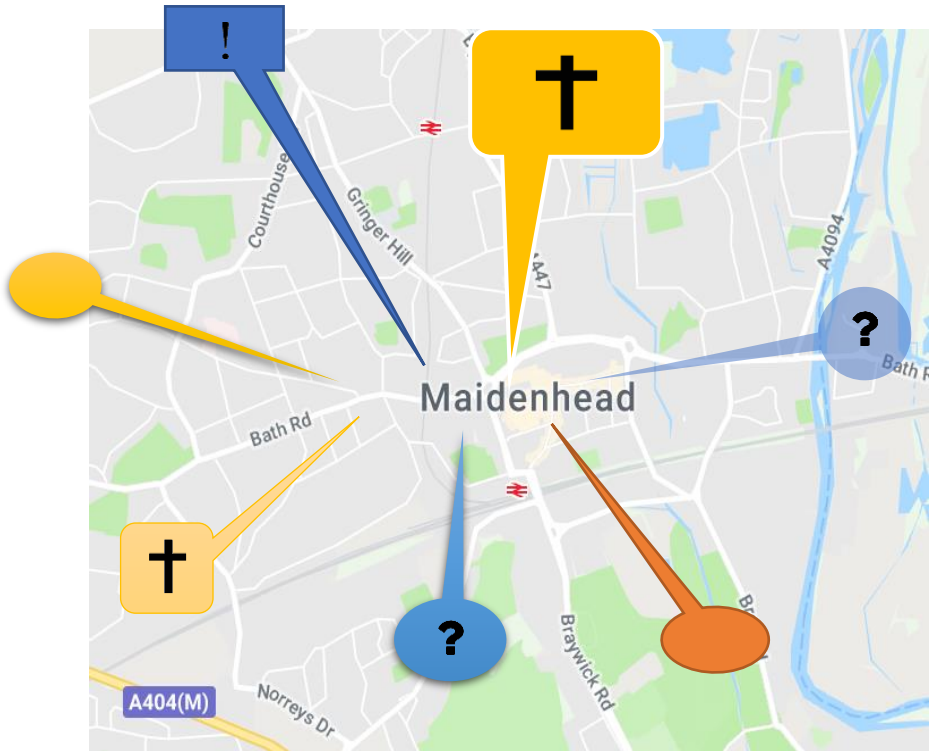


Dialogue Events



Engaging Maidenhead with the
gospel of Jesus

“...go and make disciples...” Matt 28:19

1. The challenge:

To put on a “dialogue event” to engage friends with the gospel. The idea is to get together with others from St Mary’s and to organise an event at which we will talk with our friends about the good news of Jesus.

2. What event?

There is no single format. The aim is to put on something which (1) you feel able to do and (2) will provide as helpful a context as possible for your friends to talk about Jesus. Here are some suggestions to get your creative juices going:

- **Dialogue supper** – a dinner party which includes a short talk and a discussion. This could be at home, in a restaurant or pub, at a summer BBQ or picnic etc.
- **Dialogue coffee morning/lunch/tea** - It doesn’t have to be a supper. You could host an event at any time of the day.
- **Film night** – watch a film and then have a short talk bridging the film and the gospel followed by discussion
- **Watch a sporting event** – with a talk bridging the sport/event with the gospel followed by discussion
- **Meet up at a brewery for a tour** and link with a talk and discussion (the Rebellion brewery has an obvious gospel theme and the Chiltern Brewery puts a verse from the Bible on every bottle)
- **Pamper party or spa at home** with related talk and discussion
- **Playing sport/game** (Golf? Board game? Tennis? Whatever your game is...) with linked talk and discussion
- **Grill a Vicar** - Invite a group of friends to meet and ‘interrogate’ a member of the clergy. No question is considered off limits or too hostile.

- **Historic walking tour** of somewhere (places around us ooze history which provides ways in to the gospel – Oxford, London...) with linked talk and discussion
- **Bake off evening** with linked talk and discussion

Give the friends you want to invite some options and ask them what they would like to do

Come up and go with your own idea. It is your own event!

3. Is a talk necessary?

This would be a good thing to have and there are plenty of staff/people at St Mary's who are able to present the gospel in a clear, faithful and engaging way and answer questions biblically. However you could choose a different format such as having a testimony, asking friends to read a short Christian book on suffering or parenting in advance and then discuss it or taking a Bible passage and reading, asking questions of it and having a discussion.

4. How do I invite?

Some will find this more difficult than others. You will have your own views and your own style. But if you need some ideas:

- You could say that your church is encouraging you to have discussions with friends about the heart of the Christian faith and you wondered whether they would like to do that over dinner, a film etc.
- You could say that your Christian faith has transformed your life and as friends, you would love to share with them the heart of it

Whatever you choose to say, it is important you tell your friends up front that the aim of the event is to have discussion about the heart of the Christian faith so that they don't feel deceived or treated unfairly.

5. Why do it?

If this is new to you and seems daunting, be encouraged: when we step out in faith and take what feels like an enormous risk, God is with us and we grow in our relationship with him.

Evangelism is a great expression of love for your neighbour and love of God. First, Jesus gives us life to the full now and life for eternity – if we care for our friends, why wouldn't we want them to know about and have it? Second, if we have taken the gospel to heart then our love for God will lead naturally to obedience to his command to “go and make disciples” and to a desire for his kingdom to come.

6. The worst that can happen?

A friend might say “no,” but in the process you will have honoured God and grown in your faith.

What now? Four things:

- Identify who at St Mary's you would like to do this with and talk to them about it
- Contact Ian Miller, who is at St Mary's now and will be starting as curate in June, so that we can co-ordinate prayer for your event. (ian.miller@stmarysmaidenhead.org)
- Pray
- Then start planning the event and who you will invite

7. Where might this lead?

God willing, your friends will want to know more and will be open to an invitation to:

- Christianity Explored which runs every term
- Evangelistic events we plan to put on this autumn
- The mission week which will take place in March 2020.

Step by step practical guidance*

How do I run a Dialogue Event/Supper?

This is guidance for putting on a dialogue supper but can be adapted for putting on any dialogue event.

The dialogue event is a pretty simple idea, but it can often lead to some great conversations that might not happen otherwise. So here are a few top tips on how to run a dialogue supper well.

Before the evening...

1. Use St Mary's staff/people

There are plenty of staff/people at St Mary's who are able to present the gospel in a clear, faithful and engaging way and answer questions biblically (and who are super keen to help out with evangelistic opportunities!). If you don't know who to ask, your growth group leader or congregational leader will be able to put you in contact with someone.

2. Invite personally where possible

It's really tempting to do a mass facebook/email invitation for this kind of thing, as it's a lot more comfortable for us. However, personal invitations are always much more likely to be effective. They are less easily ignored and a lot warmer than a mass message.

3. Have integrity

Make sure people know what they are coming to - i.e. you must tell them clearly that there will be a talk on a Christian theme and a chance for questions and discussion.

4. Pray for your friends

Self-explanatory really - pray for opportunities to invite people, that God would give you wisdom in what to say to them, and that they would respond well to the invitation.

5. Team up

Only have one or two friends interested in coming? Why not chat to someone in your growth group or other Christian friends and see whether you could run an event together?

6. Be flexible according to your friends

Plan the type of event you are going to run around what would be most suitable for the people you are going to invite. There are lots of different ways of doing a dialogue supper - cheese and wine evenings, going to a curry house or a café, or having a meal at home. Also, make sure your speaker knows what type of people are coming - that way they will be able to choose a passage of the Bible that will be appropriate for the specific issues that your friends have.

On the evening...

1. Cook something simple

The worst nightmare for a dialogue supper is to have food that takes ages to prepare, that gets in the way of you talking to your friends, and that has so many courses that by the time you get to the talk and discussion, people are about ready to go home or are too tired to think properly. Keep it simple! Don't offer seconds, don't get up to do the washing up. Don't think that people will be impressed by the gospel because they are impressed by your food.

2. Stick to your timings

Carefully plan out your timings realistically. An example might be:

7:30	Arrive
7:50	Main Course
8:30	Talk
8:35	Pudding/discussion
8:50	Coffee/discussion
9:45	End discussion

3. Introduce your speaker

It would be best to chat through with the speaker beforehand how you want to do this in a way that isn't awkward. Generally something along the lines of:

'Thanks for coming, everyone. As I said, part of the purpose of this evening was to give you a chance to hear a bit about what Christians believe and ask any questions you might have, so I've invited my friend Jonny who works for my church to talk for a few minutes, and then he/she is happy for you to grill him/her on anything he's said.'

4. Trust your speaker

Don't be tempted to help your speaker out by answering for them - trust them to know how to answer the questions, and let them take any flak.

5. Keep praying

Pray beforehand with the speaker, and pray for them while they are speaking or answering questions.

6. Cap the discussion after 1 hour

Even if your friends are asking really good questions - that way they'll be more likely to be keen to come back and find out more!

After the evening

Try to meet up as soon as possible afterwards with those who came and ask them what they thought. Be prepared to suggest something as a next step for them - that might be Christianity Explored, a St Mary's evangelistic event, the March 2020 mission week, reading John's gospel one-2-one with them, inviting them to another talk, or giving them a talk or CD to listen to.

Exciting!

** This is taken and adapted from St Helen's Bishopsgate website.*