

Voices from the Wilderness: Studies from Graih

Introduction

These studies have been drawn from stories taken from Graih's experience of working with the poor of the Isle of Man over the years. Although Graih accepts help from people of all faith perspectives we are an explicitly Christian charity. Our experiences engaging with vulnerable people have been both shaped by our faith and have challenged our understanding of that faith.

Graih has been and continues to be the recipient of great generosity and support by the island's Christian community. These studies have been written in part to bless that same community, and in this sense they are a gift to the Manx church. The voices on the margins of our churches and society have an important role to play in reminding us of God's priorities regarding the poor and needy, and inviting us to question and challenge our lives and faith in the light of these.

It is Graih's belief that, although the problems that we see on a daily basis are complex and entrenched, the solutions to these problems are simple. Simple is not the same as easy. Relationships of love and support are the only way that wounds – be they individual or communal – will be healed. Such simple, community-building activities such as a common house(s), common work and common prayer lie near the heart of Graih's vision for renewal. The importance of relationships characterised by love is a common thread throughout these studies, and Graih invites churches and individuals to share its vision of an intentional community on the island welcoming the vulnerable. Please get in touch with us if you think this is something you could be involved in.

What are they and who are they for?

There are ten studies covering four broad areas (welcome, justice, government and poverty). Each study contains scripture, stories from Graih, questions for discussion, ideas for further action and prayers.

These studies are ideally used in the context of a Christian small group (such as a homegroup). Individuals and churches are welcome to use them. Although explicitly Christian in much of their content the stories from Graih, questions and ideas for further action could be applicable to any group seeking a deeper engagement with these matters. The studies can also be used alongside material from our DVD.

The studies are focussed on the Manx context and, while perhaps yielding insights applicable to wider contexts, will be most useful for people familiar with the Isle of Man. It is precisely this opportunity to engage theologically with local life on the island where the value of these studies is to be found. Hence the themes mentioned above are brought to bear on specific problems on the island.

The use of scripture in the studies is deliberately broad, seeking to draw out a common theme from the variety of genres in the bible. It may be that groups only want to read a few verses rather than all those listed. The use of 'f' following a reference indicates that the following verse is to be included also. As the themes and topics overlap to some extent there are verses found in a few studies.

The studies are intentionally brief and are designed to serve as a stimulus to discussion and action rather than an exhaustive analysis. Use the questions, ideas and prayers creatively and add your own! Group leaders will benefit from reading through the material beforehand.

Graih are more than happy to help facilitate use of these studies. Please contact us if desired.