

The One Oasis Statement

Oasis is a movement of Christ-centred communities around the world. A Christ-centred community is a local place of activity where we bring together the resources that we and others have, whether locally, nationally, regionally or globally, in order to benefit the whole community. As we do this we are seeking to re-imagine what it is to be church. This is underpinned by our understanding of inclusive theology, which is reflected in our theological distinctives that are set out in paragraph 3 below, and outworked as described in paragraph 4 below.

We have one model of Christ-centred community development, which we refer to as an Oasis Hub. However, we recognise that, especially for Outcome 2 in section 1.3 below, we work with people who are excluded from communities, within which they have difficulty to find belonging (because of their situation, e.g. sex workers). In these cases, we work to achieve Outcome 2 within whichever community that they find belonging. We call this model of work 'Inclusion'.

1. Vision, Mission & Outcomes

1.1 Vision (what we are working towards)

Our vision is for community - a place where everyone is included, making a contribution and reaching their God-given potential.

1.2 Mission (what we are doing now to fulfil our vision)

Oasis is committed to working in an inclusive, integrated, empowering and comprehensive way so that all people experience wholeness and fullness of life.

1.3 Outcomes (What we hope will be the results of the work we do)

1. Local communities that are characterised by high levels of trust, safety, cohesion, mutual support, vibrancy, health and opportunity, and have increasing capacity to address their own issues.
2. The prevention of people being excluded from community and those that are, brought back into community finding wholeness and fullness of life
3. The replication of models that effectively contribute to community transformation or bring the excluded into community.

2. Ethos Beliefs and Behaviours

2.1 Ethos (Who we are as an organisation and the way we achieve our vision and deliver our mission. Ethos is our identity or personality, derived from our beliefs, that is demonstrated by how we behave).

In Oasis we are Christ-centred; inspired by the life, message and example of Jesus Christ through whom God's unconditional love for all people is expressed. We are called to love God, and love others as we love ourselves. We therefore seek to work together to extend Jesus' model of the Kingdom of God on earth by living out a lifestyle according to this inspiration.

Oasis considers belief and behaviour integral to one another. Oasis approaches what we do, from an understanding of what we believe, which also informs how we do it. Our beliefs cannot have their full validity if they are not lived out. Equally, our behaviours cannot fully represent Oasis without an understanding that they demonstrate the Christian faith.

2.2 Beliefs

- Each individual is made in the image of God ^{Note 1}. We are different yet equal and all have a God-given purpose.
- God created us all to live in positive, dynamic, inter-dependent relationship with him, others and the rest of creation.
- God is love. Love is not simply one of God's attributes, but rather the very essence of his nature. This love pervades the universe and is unconditional rather than earned.
- God became human in the person of Jesus Christ. He came to where we are. He shared our experience of life. He felt joy and pain. He engages with us and understands us.
- Jesus served others rather than expecting to be served and willingly sacrificed his life through the cross.
- Jesus rose from the dead. Death is not the end. There is resurrection and hope that things can change and people and situations be transformed ^{Note 2}.

2.3 Behaviours

Oasis is a place where there is:

- Equality. Differences in personality, culture, background, experience and worldview are respected.
- Inclusion. Those on the fringes who are in some way excluded are deliberately sought out and included.
- Inter-dependence. We live and work in a way that recognizes that people, community and creation are inter-dependent.
- Open Relationships. Healthy, transparent and open relationships among all those we interact with, including a willingness to forgive and be forgiven, are fostered.
- Integration. The needs of the whole person and whole community within their environment are considered.
- Sacrifice. Doing what it takes to serve both individuals and the communities with whom we work.
- Hope and Perseverance. Despite circumstances that exist, an atmosphere of hope and an attitude of perseverance is pervasive.
- Innovation. New ideas, and approaches are welcome and risk taking is common.
- Excellence. Whatever we do, we do it to the best of our ability.

3. Theological Distinctives

The following 5 distinctives express some of the foundations of our Vision, Mission and Ethos.

3.1 The Christ-centred nature of our lives and work

In the work we do among those who are excluded and in our community hubs everything we do is centred around Jesus. He is our inspiration and his life, death and resurrection provide us with the mandate to express his love for the world in all we do and say. In addition, His Spirit empowers us in this mission to see the 'Kingdom of God' increasingly come in the world today. Our hubs are Christ-centred places of activity and discussion, where we encourage each other and all those who join us to follow Jesus and his agenda for lives together.

3.2 A focus on community

Our vision is that all those we work amongst find a place within a vibrant, healthy and wholesome community that is centred around Christ. More than that, we know it is God's agenda for us too, that stems from an understanding of what it means to be human and reflects the Trinitarian nature of God. Therefore within Oasis we seek to be community rather than just hold it as an organizational goal for others for as we read the Bible we see community as foundational to God's purposes for all humanity.

3.3 An understanding of the multi-dimensional Good News

In the work we do in communities we view people as integrated and whole for to be human is to be whole. Our understanding of the gospel is that it is Jesus announcement of a new era that has dawned where God's Kingdom has begun and where people can begin to experience in some measure what God's original purpose was – life in all its fullness. This is expressed most clearly in the concept of 'Shalom' in the OT and the use of the word 'Eirene' in the New Testament. Both of these speak of the multi-dimensional nature of God's purposes for us, and all people.

Salvation begins now and is for the whole of life.

3.4 Our Inclusive approach to all

In our work we positively engage without judgment with people irrespective of caste, creed, colour, gender or sexuality and seek to be inclusive of all. This is built on an understanding that God does not discriminate but views all of us as different but equal. It is also built on an understanding that at its heart poverty is about exclusion.

On occasion, even today, the Bible is used to promote exclusion but we find any form of exclusion to be inconsistent with an overall understanding of the Biblical text.

3.5 Holding belief in an open way

Whatever our beliefs we know that the way we hold them is important. Holding belief in a way that does not force dogmatic views on others is a part of our culture and stems from the way God has chosen to communicate with us; the way that God does not force himself upon us but gives us freedom to choose. Jesus is gentle in his communication with others. Indeed his way of communication was so non-forceful and so empowering that he left those he taught with the difficult task of trying to work things out for themselves. That's what happens when we tell stories rather than preach dogma.

4. Our Hub Approach to Community Transformation

In seeking to achieve our outcomes, Oasis takes an integrated and relational approach. This approach means that high quality and diverse activities are developed to benefit the whole person and the whole community. In some cases these activities are specific services that we provide, in other cases they are initiatives within the community that we have helped birth or strengthen. In all cases they are community-identified priorities.

We build and nurture long-term, lasting relationships within the communities in which we work.

We know that lasting change only occurs as people own change for themselves. We continually strive for those who live in the community to feel empowered to take initiative and to hold ownership of all that happens.

We believe that ongoing transformation is best secured within the context of accountability. For us this is achieved through accountable relationships to the wider Oasis community.

Note 1: We believe in a triune God. A God of Trinity: The ancient creeds of the Church speak of the mystery of the Trinity; one God in three persons – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They describe the relationship between these three ‘persons’ who are all part of the one God.

‘We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth...’

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father...

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.’ⁱ

‘God is love’ is perhaps the most profound theological statement in the whole Bible.ⁱⁱ Love is not a quality that God possesses, it is God’s very essence. Love is not one of the attributes of God, it is the very heart of God. Love is not a component part of God, it is God’s very nature. Love is God’s essential being.

Yet if God had been a single being – if God were ‘one’ rather than ‘three in one’ – this profound reality would be impossible. As theologian Stanley Grenz puts it:

‘Self-love cannot be true charity; supreme love requires another, equal to the lover, who is the recipient of that love, and because supreme love is received as well as given, it must be a shared love, in which each person loves and is loved by the other.’

What the Church calls ‘the doctrine of the Trinity’ tells us that God is a community. Three persons – Father, Son and Spirit, but one in essence – who are defined by their loving relationships with one another.

God exists as a ‘tri-unity’ of persons in constant internal relationship. God is a divine society. Yet, although three in one, God always lives in absolute unity and acts as one, without competition or individualism.

Since God is a Trinity – a community – this brings new depth to our understanding of what it means for humans to be made in ‘the image of God’ⁱⁱⁱ. It means that we only ever realize our full potential as human beings in community with God and with others.

The human capacity for relationships is an integral part of what it means to be made in the image of God. But more than this, if God exists as a community, then any individual can never become their true self in isolation. Humanity is designed not simply with the capacity but also with the *need* for community. In a very real sense, we can only find our true selves in relationship with others. We are made in the image of the God who is Trinity.

Note 2: We believe in the resurrection. Jesus Christ died, but on the third day after his death, he physically rose to life again. Death is not the end. This gives us hope that all lives can be restored and made whole now and we look forward to the day when all people will rise to new life in a completely restored world.

ⁱ From the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 AD), the most widely accepted creed in the Christian Church. Since its original formulation, it continues to be used in the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Assyrian, Roman Catholic, Anglican and most Protestant churches.

ⁱⁱ 1 John 4:8

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 1:27