





Ignite

The Gospel in Action



How to share faith,
build community and
do church, differently



Patrick and
Debbie Ellisdon

Praise for Ignite

‘This is a great gift to our churches and communities today. Patrick and Debbie’s passion and experience shine through in this inspiring and practical step-by-step guide to Ignite, and how to build relational and lasting community, through a new and innovative approach to church. This book is a hugely valuable resource.’

The Revd Jonathon Arnold, executive director of The Social Justice Network, Diocese of Canterbury

‘Born in one of the most derived parishes in England, Ignite is much more than a way of doing outreach. People who would not normally come near a church – who might feel themselves to be imposters, even – are often adamant that this is their church. Patrick and Debbie Ellidson are the practitioners and visionaries who brought Ignite to birth. You will hear their down-to-earth and gentle voices through this book. Ignite is now planted and contextualised in various places around the Diocese of Canterbury, but all of them carry the essential Ignite DNA – a way of being church when “church ways” have sometimes got in the way, so that people who often assume they have no place know that they belong.’

Steve Coneys, mission and growth adviser, Diocese of Canterbury

‘This book is a wonderful testimony of how God can shape a church to minister to those around us; to reveal the love of Jesus to those we often fail to connect with. This book not only tells the story of Ignite but also its thinking, theology and process with lots of wonderful resources to use to share the gospel.’

The Revd Mike Resch, vicar of St Marks in Harrogate and part of the New Wine Leadership Community

‘This book is for our time. When I was archdeacon in Canterbury Diocese, I was on many an occasion moved to tears by the testimonies of those who have come to faith through Ignite services, as outlined in this book.’

The Revd Stephen Taylor, vicar of St Marys Battersea

'Ignite is not just a study guide as to how to make new Christians; it is the lived experience of those whose lives have been touched by the good news of Jesus Christ – touched through the hospitality of a welcoming community whose members have been willing to share their own experiences of meeting Jesus. The church owes a huge debt of gratitude to Patrick and Debbie Ellisdon, whose passion to share Jesus is evident on every page of this book.'

The Rt Revd Trevor Wilmott, bishop for the Channel Islands and former Bishop of Dover

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**How to share faith,
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do church, differently**

Patrick and Debbie Ellison



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CONTENTS

Foreword by Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin 7

Introduction 9

PART I IGNITE DNA

1 It's church... but not as most people know it! 13

2 Welcoming..... 18

3 Relational 21

4 Interactive..... 26

5 Belonging..... 29

6 Pursuing God 34

Tea break38

PART II IGNITE BUILDING BLOCKS

7 Building the team..... 41

8 Prayer..... 45

9 Building links with your community (no strings attached) 49

10 Social events 55

11 Planning an Ignite service 59

Tea break63

PART III PRACTICALITIES

12 Food	67
13 How do we measure success?	70
14 Ready, steady, go!	77
15 Ignite service running orders.....	81
<i>Mark's gospel (eight sessions)</i>	83
<i>Friendship (two sessions)</i>	109
<i>The Trinity (four sessions)</i>	117
<i>What about politics, peace, refugees, hope and war? (five sessions)....</i>	127
<i>Easter (three sessions)</i>	143
<i>Christmas (three sessions)</i>	155
Tea break	170

PART IV THE STORY

16 How it all began.....	175
17 Some thoughts from our Ignite guests	182
Conclusion.....	186
Acknowledgements	188

Introduction

Well done for at least opening this book and peeking inside! We are guessing that – like us – you probably love Jesus and would really like to help other people get to know him as well. If so, then you are in the right place. Nowadays, it seems that most people who don't go to church think that Christianity is irrelevant and has nothing to offer them. And in the unlikely event they do dare to cross our church threshold, many church services often don't deliver what people are looking for. It doesn't scratch where they are itching.

What we think is urgently needed is something different, something that tries to think outside the box. This, unsurprisingly, is where Ignite comes in.

Ignite was born out of our passion to introduce Jesus to people in a way that made sense, in a way that wasn't hemmed in by 'churchy' words or traditions. We wanted to be real with people and somehow have honest and open conversations with them. This made us realise that what we were talking about was being intentionally relational with people. Getting to know people, making friends with them and loving them because God first loved us. The more we thought about it, the more stupidly obvious this need for relationship-building became.

Now, before you get all excited, we are not suggesting that Ignite is like some comic book caped crusader, swooping in and solving all these issues at once. If only that were true! However, we do think that Ignite is one way that we can at least begin to address the problems we are facing.

The Bible teaches us that God is relational. Jesus – God the Son – loves people! He went to where they were, he befriended them and he loved them intentionally. As a result, many were drawn to seek him out and listen while he talked about God. And he did it without being boring or irrelevant! So, if it was good enough for Jesus to do mission in this way, then maybe we should follow his example.

Which is what we have tried to do. I (Patrick) am an Anglican vicar, and I (Debbie) am a university counsellor and a missionary employed by Canterbury

Diocese. Our parish was one of the poorest in England, and our heart has always been for those who are marginalised and live within disadvantaged communities. However, our experience is that Ignite also works well within other socio-economic situations and with many different types of people: families, young people, children and so on.

We have divided this book into four sections. First, the DNA – what makes Ignite, Ignite? Second, the building blocks – the essential stuff you’re going to need in place if you would like to set up an Ignite community. Third, the ‘how to’ bit – everything else you’ll need (and need to know) to set up your very own weekly Ignite session. And then finally, the story of how Ignite began.

So, if your appetite for trying to do mission differently has been whetted by this little introduction, and you are up for a new adventure, then read on.

8

Prayer

Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open.

EPHESIANS 6:18 (MSG)



‘We do not pray to tell God what he does not know, nor to remind him of things he has forgotten. He already cares for the things we pray about... He has simply been waiting for us to care about them with him.’

Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does it make any difference?* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2006)

Sadly, we couldn’t find any films that floated our boat about the importance of prayer from an Ignite perspective. However, we think that Philip Yancey’s quote is both helpful and accurate. It’s time to move out into our local community and start praying and caring about the stuff that God cares about.

If the first section of this book is all about the Ignite building blocks, then prayer is surely the foundation stone. It’s the essential, overarching ingredient that needs to be present in all that we do as we start engaging with the community where we would like to launch an Ignite service.

Before we write anything else, however, we will say that *we know that you know* that prayer is vital. We also know that many amazing people, far more capable than us, have written fantastic books about the importance of prayer: why, when, where and how to do it. We know that you are likely to have read much of that good stuff.

We also understand that you are probably as massively passionate about your relationship with God as you are about your love for your community. But we can't stress enough how crucial prayer is, especially at this early stage in building and launching an Ignite service. Which means that, while there's not much need for us to go on about prayer too much, we do want to mention a few things.

Psalm 127 reminds us that, 'Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain' (v. 1, NIV). We do nothing on our own. Indeed, if we do, we might as well pack up and go home, because we are not going to get anywhere.

We are partners with God, and through prayer we listen and talk to God. We share with God our hopes and our longings for our community. We allow ourselves to be guided to the places and people that God wants us to engage with.

What this looks like in real life is obviously going to vary from person to person, so we can only speak from our own experience. In our church, for example, there was a mid-week prayer meeting. When we knew we were going to try to replicate Ignite, we sort of hijacked the group (in a good way), in that a large part of the group's time was spent praying for anything to do with Ignite and with those who were doing the replication. Perhaps you have a similar group in your own church?

If we all accept that prayer is so important, please don't let it become just an afterthought. Don't stick it on at the end of a meeting because that's what you're supposed to do. Instead, pray like it's going out of fashion! Pray for Ignite individually, pray within a small group and pray as a church. Give the church regular updates about what's happening with the Ignite initiatives – be excited about what God is doing in your community and share your excitement with others. *Be excitement in your church – it's infectious!* Get Ignite put on your church leadership's agenda as a standing item, so it's prayed for every time they meet.

One of the most important things you can do is to pray while you're walking around the community where you believe God is calling you to establish an Ignite service. Our good friend the Revd Steve Coneys has often described this as being 'detectives of divinity'. We need to have our eyes and ears open to discern (detect) what God is doing in our local community or who he wants us to have an encounter with. And when we spot what God's doing, then if appropriate, we need to be brave and join in with it.

There's a great illustration of being a 'divinity detective' in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40). We've already agreed that part of partnering with God in prayer is listening to him, and that is exactly what Philip was doing. He's got his 'detective of divinity' hat on, and so he hears the Holy Spirit telling him to, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it' (v. 29). Philip obeys, and the rest is history.

By asking a simple question – 'Do you understand what you are reading?' (v. 30) – Philip is given the opportunity to share 'the good news about Jesus' (v. 35). This leads to the eunuch being baptised, who then goes on his way rejoicing. It's a fabulous story about how such divine encounters can change a person's life.

While we don't think that you are likely to encounter a chariot-riding Ethiopian eunuch yourself, we think that as you go about prayerfully within your local community, there will be plenty of opportunities to join in with the stuff that God is leading you to.

For example, maybe while you are prayer walking you encounter someone sat alone on a bench. You casually say hello, and then in true British style comment on the weather. At this point you will probably know if the person is happy to talk to you. Remember, you have asked God to take you where he wants you to go, so trust the process. If it feels right, continue to chat, follow their lead on what they want to talk about. It needs to be their agenda, not yours. Keep the conversation natural and be interested in them and what they are saying. This may just end up being a one-off conversation with someone from the community who you never meet again. You simply had a pleasant conversation with somebody, which is great. However, within the conversation, the person may share something personal or important to them, which may cause you to say that you are a Christian and offer to pray for them. If they say, 'No, thanks', be accepting of that and just see where the rest of the conversation goes. But, if they say, 'Yes', then keep the prayer very short, simple and without 'churchy' words. They just need to know that God loves them and cares for their needs.

At the end of the day, all that you have to do is pray that God leads you to the right people and into the right situations and that God would grant you favour as you do this. Pray that God's Spirit would be at work in the most unexpected of places. Pray for local community transformation.

Above all, keep going even after Ignite is launched in your community. Don't stop and don't give up!



Reflection

What needs within my local community am I already aware of, that I could be praying about?

How could I pray both differently and creatively for my community?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to be excited about the power of prayer and enable me to communicate that excitement to members of my church. Please fan into flame my desire to pray more passionately and frequently for my local community, so as I go about my daily life, I may become a better detective of divinity! Amen.

4 We are measured by the same measure that we use against others

MARK 4:24

Resources: name labels; ice-breaker PowerPoint questions; prayer labels and pens; drinks and cakes/doughnuts; video countdown timer; game resources; Smarties; bowls; different sized measures; Mark 4:24 sketch; A1 cards and craft materials



7.00 pm Doors open 30 min

Name labels given out, prayer labels and pens distributed around tables, drinks and cakes/doughnuts served, ice-breaker questions on screen.



7.25 pm Video countdown timer 5 min



7.30 pm Game 10 min



7.40 pm Notices and encouragements 5 min



7.45 pm Up-front activity 8 min

Three people are invited up to the front and are each given a bowl of Smarties. They choose from one of four different measures to give away sweets. Although they are not told what will happen, they are given some sweets themselves based on the measure that they have given.



7.53 pm Sketch 5 min

Sketch based on Mark 4:24 (see below).



7.58 pm Link talk 2 min

Explain that how we measure (judge, accept) people, affects how we ourselves are measured, judged and accepted by others.



8:00 pm Whole group activity 10 min

This activity is called the Yes, No, Maybe game. People have to choose one of those three answers to certain questions. The questions are: (1) Should we let refugees into the country? (2) If you found someone's wallet, filled with money and credit cards, would you hand it in to the police? (3) If you saw someone being bullied on the bus, would you say or do something? Use people's answers to facilitate a whole-group discussion.



8.10 pm Link talk 3 min

This is where we link the positive outworking of Mark 4:24 with John 15:12: 'Love each other as I have loved you' (NIV).



8.13 pm Table group activity 15 min

Four groups each decorate their own A1-sized piece of card, using the words of John 15:12 as their theme. However, we found that it was helpful to have a prayer card response available for those who either don't want to do the craft activity or for people to fill out while doing the craft activity. This enables people to pray for those who they have measured too harshly. *Note: you will need to create your own prayer card.*



8:28 pm Finish 2 min

Remember to mention that there are people available to pray with and chat to.



8.30 pm End

Mark 4:24 sketch

Characters: Mr Smith; Delivery man (DM); Bag; Narrator

Props: flat cap for the delivery driver; clipboard; three plain bags that look full (it doesn't matter with what, as the contents won't be seen) and loosely tied.

Notes: both the Bag and the Narrator's lines need to be said off-stage via a mic. These can be done by the same person.

DM Ding-dong!

Mr Smith Oh, hello.

DM Alright, mate? Got a special delivery. You Mr Smith?

Mr Smith Yes, that's me.

DM Right. Sign 'ere then, please.

Mr Smith Who's it from?

DM (*Looks at the clipboard.*) It says 'ere that it's from a Mister – can't quite make out the name – a Mister J. Hoover or Mister J. Hova, or something like that. Well, at least that's what it says 'ere!

Mr Smith But what is it?

DM Well I don't know, do I? Why don't you open one of them bags and found out?

Mr Smith Good idea. I'll open this one. Oh, look, it's got a label on it. It says, 'Judging' – that's a bit weird! Still, here goes!

Mr Smith begins to open the bag. From the bag comes a 'voice,' really criticising and judging Mr Smith.

Bag Can't you do anything right? You just make a mess of even the simplest thing! I can't even trust you to feed the dog without spilling dog biscuits everywhere! In fact, if I left the dog to feed himself there would be less mess. At least he'd clear up the stuff on the floor. You are as much use as a chocolate teapot!

Mr Smith quickly reties the bag.

DM Now that really *was* weird!

Mr Smith Not half! Do you suppose they're all like that?

DM I dunno mate. Try another one and find out.

Mr Smith Er... Okay... I suppose...

Mr Smith begins to untie another bag. This time the voice is scathing and unaccepting.

Bag You are rubbish! Do you know that? You are a menace to society, an absolute waste of space, an air thief! I don't know why I bother with you at all. You are nothing, and will always be nothing! I didn't like you when I met you, and I still don't like you!

Mr Smith That's horrible! Surely, they can't all be like this?

DM (*Picks up another bag and holds it up to his ear.*) Blimey, this one sounds really cross. (*Looks at the label.*) Oh, that explains it. It says 'Impatience'.

Mr Smith But... but... why have they been sent to me?

DM Let me look at me delivery notes for you. (*Consults his clipboard.*) Erm, it says... it's the same as what you've given out to lots of other people, so Mr Hova thought it was only fair that he gave the same amount back to you.

Mr Smith But what am I supposed to do with all of this?

DM Not my department, mate, sorry! I just do the deliveries... Anyway, give us a moment and I'll bring in the rest.

Mr Smith The rest?

DM Oh yeah, didn't I say? I've got another two thousand of these bags outside, waiting to be brought in.

Mr Smith Two thousand?!

DM Yeah, but don't worry; the others are coming tomorrow!

Narrator And God's word says, the way you treat others will be the way you will be treated – and even worse!

End



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God loves to bring people into community, into a knowledge of being loved and valued.

Many people, especially those living in marginalised and socially deprived communities, struggle with mainstream church. The Ignite café-church model, pioneered in Canterbury Diocese, is designed to build relationships and share faith with people where they are, in their own communities.

Through eating and exploring faith together, Ignite shares the gospel in both word and action, while also supporting people's essential needs.

This book sets out how to plan and run Ignite in your context. It covers building and supporting a team, how best to set up for Ignite and the style in which it should be delivered. Pre-planned 'running orders' provide a wealth of weekly material, including video clips, table discussions, quizzes, short talks, craft activities, drama and prayer responses.



Debbie Ellisdon leads the Canterbury Diocese Ignite project, where she helps to oversee, mentor and encourage Ignite communities across the diocese. She also works as a counsellor and uses this training to support her work with Ignite. Debbie is married to Patrick, has three grown-up children, a dog and never refuses an invite for afternoon tea with friends.



Patrick Ellisdon is priest in charge of All Saints parish in Canterbury. Through a grant from the Church Commissioners in 2018, he co-led the Ignite project, replicating Ignite in eight of the poorest communities across the diocese. He enjoys playing the guitar and reading trashy science fiction novels, and is pretty good at cooking Chinese food!

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