

Inspirational People Of Faith

What makes someone inspirational?

“A person who has the ability to make someone feel that they want to do something and that they can achieve something great.”

All of the people we look at in this unit are people who had a strong faith. Their faith caused them to see the world differently from other people and they believed that they had a mission from God. For Oscar-Romero, Martin Luther King and Malala, that mission was to speak out against the unfairness in society that oppressed the poorest people.

We too can find inspiration from the way that these people lived their lives. We can celebrate diversity and we can show love and respect to people from all backgrounds. We can treasure the opportunity to learn so that we can improve our own lives and the lives of others. We can give a voice to those people who feel rejected, hurt and ignored.

KEYWORDS

Inspirational—Encouraging another person to make a positive change in what they believe and do.

Faith—Acting in a way which might be risky because you don't know the outcome.

Segregation—A racist law which stopped black people having the same freedoms as white people in America.

Missionary—A person who is sent to another country to do religious work.

Inclusive—Allowing and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (for example, because of their race,

Martin Luther King Jr.

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”

I have a dream today!”

Martin Luther King Jr. is inspirational because he stood against racism in the United States. In the Southern States, black people were prevented from voting and that they were segregated (separated from white people). They were made to live lives that were worse than those of white Americans. King was a Christian Baptist minister who delivered great speeches such as the ‘I have a dream speech’. He led marches and protests. His family was threatened and he was put in jail. However, he always taught that you should never use violence to change society and despite beatings and threats he always taught that you should show love to everyone and treat people equally. Martin Luther King was shot dead for his beliefs but he achieved greater equality for black people in the United States and across the world.

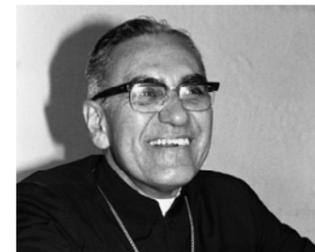


Oscar Romero

“The word of God is like the light of the sun. It illuminates beautiful things, but also things which we would rather not see.”

Oscar Romero was a Catholic priest who lived in El Salvador (Central America). He is inspirational because he spoke up for millions of disenfranchised people who were being unfairly treated by the government. He challenged the way the government stole people's land and killed people who stood up to them by using the radio to tell people that it was unfair and unjust.

Romero was shot dead by an assassin whilst giving Mass in a hospital. As he was dying he prayed for the assassin to be forgiven.



Malala Yousafzai

“Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons .”

Malala Yousafzai is a young Muslim woman who stood up to gunmen who wanted to stop girls from going to school and tried to use force to control people. She lived in the Swat valley in Northern Pakistan and her home town was taken over by the Taliban. She was shot in the head for criticising the Taliban publicly but survived and was taken to Birmingham (UK). As she recovered, she kept on making speeches criticising the Taliban and promoting education for girls. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and works for the UN helping to give girls education around the world. She did all this while still a teenager but still managed to complete her school studies and went on to Oxford University where she achieved the highest grades in her exams.



Jackie Pullinger

“God wants us to have soft hearts and hard feet. The trouble with so many of us is that we have hard hearts and soft feet.”

Jackie Pullinger is a British missionary based in Hong Kong. Since the 1960s, she has been working with addicts and homeless people and established a youth centre to continue her work.

In 1981, Jackie Pullinger started a charity called the St Stephen's Society which provided rehabilitation homes for recovering drug addicts, prostitutes, and gang members. By December 2007 it housed 200 people. The work of the charity has now expanded to other countries, including the Philippines.

When Jackie Pullinger first arrived in Hong Kong, she knew no one there and had only £10 in her hands.



Catherine and William Booth

“You are not here in the world for yourself. You have been sent here for others. The world is waiting for you!”

- Catherine Booth

Catherine Booth was born in Derbyshire. William Booth came from Nottingham. They are now both known as the founders of the Salvation Army, a Christian Church and charitable organisation that has done an enormous amount of work to help homeless people, in the UK as well as provide disaster relief and development aid all over the world. When it was founded, in 1865, the Salvation Army was remarkable in that its officers were all seen as equals, regardless of whether they were male or female. The Church of England, on the other hand, did not ordain women as ministers until 1994.

Catherine Booth was a particularly powerful speaker and used her abilities to convince many wealthy people to help those who were not so fortunate.



Mahdia Lynn

“By all rights I should not be alive today. There are only two reasons I'm not dead or in prison, and that first reason is because of the grace and will of Allah.”

The truth is that many faith communities have not been at the forefront of the movement for LGBTQ+ rights. Fortunately, today, that is changing. Mahdia Lynn is a disabled transgender Shi'a Muslim woman. She is the co-founder of Masjid al-Rabia, a mosque in Chicago (USA) that commits to being LGBTQ+ affirming, pluralist, anti-racist, accessible and woman centred. She is a passionate advocate of inclusive spaces for worship.

Mahdia has also helped to create Black and Pink Crescent, a prison ministry and outreach program for LGBTQ+ Muslims. This program provides a pen-pal service, library resources, religious resources, and legal help for LGBTQ+ people who are incarcerated and detained LGBTQ Muslims.

“Faith is a practice, and love is action. I follow the divine voice that calls me to help others.”

