

VISION STUDY GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

Warmest New Year's greetings to you all, in the name of Emmanuel, who brings new life in all its abundance.

I have heard and seen great enthusiasm over the launch of our Diocesan vision in many communities. This is exciting and I am thankful for your excitement. As promised, this study guide aims to give all faith communities and ministries in the Diocese an opportunity to explore more fully how the vision might take shape in your context.

The guide is organized into 8 chapters corresponding to the 8 goals of our vision:

1. A Clear Vision
2. A Distinctive Community
3. Rooted Discipleship
4. Authentic Worship
5. Children, Youth and Young Adults
6. Missional Leadership
7. Sharing Good News
8. Seeking the Common Good

As with the vision process itself, each chapter begins in opening prayer. Pause for a moment before you begin your work; take time to still yourselves, open yourselves up to hear God, and then say the prayer before reading the chapter.

Read through each contribution and respond to the questions for reflection. Please, note down your answers. It will be very helpful to receive a copy of your reflections with the signed Covenant that is included at the end of this Study Guide.

Each chapter is written with a different voice. The chapters are not meant to be definitive teachings of the Church, but an offering from different vantage points in keeping with our desire to broaden participation in all our work. I am most grateful for the work and prayer that each of the authors invested in these contributions and I pray that their words will illuminate your own exploration. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Courtney Buterbaugh for her creative prowess in presenting this guide and to The Reverend Doctor Christian Brady, who served as our editor.

Remember, our diocesan vision is meant to be like an evergreen tree used at Christmas. The evergreen is a tree with a familiar look, but when it is decorated in our homes, each tree turns into a unique expression of that family. So too our collective work. We have agreed to follow our common vision as a guide, but it will look very different in each of our faith communities. Nonetheless, everyone will know it is a Christmas tree.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel make us to Be the Church and shape us to Be the Change that brings light and life to our neighborhoods.

Enjoy your studies. We look forward to seeing the results and sharing together.

+Mark



WHAT YOU'LL FIND

A
CLEAR VISION
PAGE 1

ROOTED
DISCIPLESHIP
PAGE 9

DISTINCTIVE
COMMUNITY
PAGE 5

AUTHENTIC
WORSHIP
PAGE 13

CHILDREN
YOUTH
YOUNG ADULTS
PAGE 17

SHARE
GOOD NEWS
PAGE 24

MISSIONAL
LEADERSHIP
PAGE 20

SEEKING THE
COMMON GOOD
PAGE 27

COVENANT
PAGE 30



BE THE CHURCH
BE THE CHANGE

A CLEAR VISION

by +Mark Van Koevering

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY
AND EVERLASTING FATHER,
SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN
OUR EYES AND MINDS TO BE THE
CHURCH THAT CAN BE THE
CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH
YOUR VISION TO RESTORE ALL
LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND
EACH OTHER,
IN CHRIST JESUS.
AMEN.

EVERY MEMBER OF EVERY FAITH COMMUNITY IN OUR CHURCH
JOINS IN THE JESUS MOVEMENT TO RESTORE ALL LIFE
TO UNITY WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER IN CHRIST JESUS

What's your Why?

Noted leadership expert Simon Sinek suggests that the key to success for any organization is not “what you do, but why you do it”.^[1] The ‘what you do’, simply proves what you already believe. So, if you really want to make a difference, you need to dig deeper into the reason that lies underneath what you do – the why. Sinek contends that there are only two ways to influence human behavior, you can either manipulate it through status, wealth or power or you can inspire it.

A vision inspires. The absence of vision leads to chaos and confusion: “Where there is no prophetic vision the people perish.”^[2] Our why comes from the catechism, which says that the “mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”^[3] We have expanded this confession to clarify that we are joining in with God’s Spirit who is already at work in the world and that the restoration we seek is for all of creation, not just humanity. We make this vision happen by Praising God, Making disciples and Sharing the Good News – by being God’s people and making a difference. After a year-long process of prayer and conversation, we ratified our Diocesan Vision: Be the Church – Be the Change, on November 1, 2019.

A vision should act like a compass – pointing the way for our common life together as we seek to be God’s people in this place. Our vision is about dreaming dreams, looking from the mountain-top with a view to becoming the Church God wants us to be – our future destination.

Our common vision aims to motivate and inspire us, guide our decisions, keep us going even in the face of obstacles, prevent us from being distracted by other worthy goals, and give meaning and purpose to our common life.

So, what do we mean by joining in with the Spirit to restore all life to unity with God and each other in Christ Jesus:

First, we say **restore** because in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all that lives in them, and it was good. We human beings are part of God's creation, made in the very image of God; free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with

God. But we have rebelled against God by misusing our freedom

and making wrong choices that have broken our relationships. The Bible calls this sin, and it is the reality of our fallen human nature. God's purpose is to restore us to unity with God, each other, and all of creation.

Unity means living in right relationships, free from the power of evil, sin and death. And healthy relationships begin in and with God - the source of all that is good, true and beautiful. When our relationship with God is healthy, we can develop quality relationships with each other that lead to peace and harmony. This is what it means to live in unity.

This can happen only in **Christ**. We take on a new identity when we turn to God in Christ. Jesus, by his death and resurrection, frees us from the power of sin and death, and restores us to unity with God, ourselves, our neighbors, and all of creation. He is the way, the truth and the life.

God calls a people to represent this new life in Christ as the Church - not an organization, club, business or social service provider, but a distinctive community of people living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to proclaim the whole faith to all peoples everywhere. This is Good News, not good advice. God has already acted, so that the Church can be the Change that gives hope to a world living in darkness.

Over 100 years ago, an American missionary, Rolland Allen, asked why missional churches like the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church, which had planted congregations all around the world, left so few mature, local followers of Jesus. He noticed, that while we spend years and tens of thousands of dollars to plant a single faith community, St Paul would invest only 18 months and then move on leaving the new faith community in the hands of local leaders. Allen discovered that St Paul used a holistic approach that invited the people to make a full and radical commitment to follow Jesus in every aspect of their lives. This decision transformed a people to a Church that changed individuals and communities. Such a church exhibits similar characteristics[1].

A CLEAR VISION

Transformational Characteristics

1

Energized by faith rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive;

2

Has an outward-looking focus with a 'whole life' view rather than a 'church life' concern;

3

Seeks to find out what God wants by discerning the Spirit rather than trying to please everyone;

4

Faces the cost of change and growth rather than resisting it and avoiding failure;

5

Operates as a community rather than functioning as a club or religious organization;

6

Makes room for all by being welcoming rather than elitist; and

7

Does a few things and does them well so that is focused rather than frenetic.

This is hard work. All of us have seen noble strategic plans that excite for a time and then are left on shelves as our attention is drawn elsewhere. That's why we have purposely kept the framework lean and flexible. We know that circumstances will change, and new opportunities and challenges will arise; we need to be nimble to respond. But our purpose, our WHY, does not change.

Each faith community must contextualize our common vision to make it lifegiving for all. Look for ways that your community can begin to live into this vision. If you already have a mission plan, see how it fits into the language and purpose of our common vision.

As you pray and reflect on God's call, engage as many people as you can, identify and release their unique gifts for the common good. Take risks and experiment; hold each other accountable in the Lord. This is God's work, God's Mission, God's World – and you are called to Be the Church – Be the Change.



[1] Sinek, Simon TED Talk, May 7, 2013.

[2] Proverbs 29:18.

[3] The Book of Common Prayer, Catechism, p.855.

[4] Warren, Robert. *The Healthy Churches' Handbook: A Process for Revitalizing Your Church*, (Church House Publishing, 2004.)

How is God already at work in your faith community? Name a few good things that are happening already. Where do they fit in our diocesan vision?

Do we already have a clear vision in our faith community? Do our people know what it is? Does it need to be updated?

If you have a vision, how does it relate to the diocesan vision? If you do not have a clear vision, would you like some support to describe it?

REFLECTION



AND

RESPONSE

CLOSING PRAYER

THE LORD BE WITH YOU
AND ALSO WITH YOU
LET US, PRAY

GRACIOUS FATHER,
YOUR SPIRIT CONNECTS AND RESTORES ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND EACH OTHER IN CHRIST JESUS. ENERGIZE OUR FAITH SO THAT WE MAY COURAGEOUSLY LIVE INTO OUR CALLING TO BE THE CHURCH BY PRAISING YOUR HOLY NAME, MAKING DISCIPLES AND DISCOVERING YOUR PRESENCE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. SHAPE US TO BE THE CHANGE THAT BRINGS HOPE AND JOY TO AN ACHING WORLD; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, FOREVER AND EVER.
AMEN.

DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY

by Helen Van Koevinger+

OPENING PRAYER

"ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING FATHER, YOUR WILL FOR ALL PEOPLE IS TO BE TRULY HUMAN IN THE HEALTH AND SALVATION, HOPE, PEACE, JOY AND LOVE OF YOUR KINGDOM. MAY WE CONTINUE ALWAYS TO LIVE AND WORK FOR YOUR KINGDOM COME.

OUR CHURCH EMBRACES THE ENORMITY OF GOD'S LOVE AND IS KNOWN BY OUR EXPECTANT JOY

What makes the Church distinctive?

Simply, when the Church, as a community of faith, is a sign of the way God's Kingdom comes in the world. The foundation of the Anglican way of being the church is in the signs of God's grace offered in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. Rowan Williams, calling the church "God's project for the human race" in *Being Christian* (2015), writes that baptism puts us where God can speak, sets us free, and brings us into the neighborhood of all the baptized. It is through baptism that we are members of the Church in the world; it is through baptism that the Church is distinct from the world. The Eucharist offers us a vision to see all as Christ's reflection in this world.[1] We the Church are being made into a Eucharistic people, called individually and collectively to make sense of the world through the presence of the risen Christ at the communal Table.

This vision of the distinctiveness of the Church came home to me a few years ago when I watched my urban Mozambican faith community come forward to kneel together at the altar rail, hands extended to receive the bread and the cup. The Provincial Director of Education, dressed in a suit, knelt next to a raggedly dressed orphan. The meaning of the grace-filled moment struck me with the thought: This.Is.It. The Church becomes a distinctive community, a people set apart from the world and yet within the world, as mutual regard is made possible, the potential for change is visualized, and all are welcome.

Is our Church being a distinctive community?

Part of the path of my vocation has involved visiting uncountable faith communities, all sizes and shapes, in widely varying contexts. Sometimes, in my mind, I ask myself certain questions when I visit - questions to do with discovering what makes that particular faith community tick. The deeper questions can be boiled down to two. What is God in Christ doing in this faith community? How does this faith community perceive what God is doing? They are questions that go beyond the readily measurable facts of annual reports, and clues might be glimpsed on noticeboards, gleaned from bulletins, or gathered from coffeetime conversations. Mostly, my questions are framed by what I see and feel - and by ideas of good practice I think I could take back to my own faith community and ministry. My questions point to what makes a faith community distinct, questions worth considering now.

[1] Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in 10,000 Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (2008) a reflection on a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins.



BIBLE STUDY

READ

LUKE 4:18-22

Some call this passage the Manifesto of Nazareth. Jesus proclaims the purpose and magnitude of his coming as the promise of liberated life.

What is the need around us to live into and make visible this Manifesto in both our daily lives and communal worship?

Does what we do and pray focus on 'liberated life' in our communities?

Mary recognizes her part in God's plan within this song, the Magnificat.

READ

LUKE 1:46-55

Consider what, within your faith community (whether that be our diocese, a congregation, a mission, a small group), reflects God's hope, peace, joy and love for the world.

The Magnificat can be read as Mary's 'why': the understanding of her part in God's redemption, reconciliation and salvation. What is the 'why' of the life of your faith community?

What is your 'why'?



REFLECTION & RESPONSE

How does our community live out our faith in Christ?

Is it seen in hospitality, shared in news of wider connections, collaboration and partnerships with others, heard when together? Is there unity - whether as southern Africa's ubuntu ("I am because we are") or as joyful hope of ongoing fellowship, being one and stickability when issues arise?

Why does our community engage in ministry?

As God's Beloved Community, do we find energy in reflecting God's love for the world outside the Church and/or God's welcoming love into the Church? Are we going out and inviting in - or are we mostly in maintenance mode? Does our community have the distinctive "now and not yet" mark of God's Kingdom? Are we, as Matthew 5 lays out in the Beatitudes, a comforting, growing, hopeful, caring, including, changing community?

What kind of leadership does our community have?

How do the lay and ordained, volunteers and paid leaders energize the community to serve God and one another: with missional ideas, passion for prophetic action around justice & peace with local and global interest? With quiet and discerning spiritual giftedness? By listening and exploring the community's gifts and strengths? Are the leaders to be found amidst the community, on the edge, or blazing ahead?

Why are people attracted to worship in our faith community?

Why are people attracted to worship in our faith community? Is the worship experience beautiful, prayerful, thoughtful, hopeful, and somehow connecting faith and daily living? In short, does worship in our community move people to know the love of God and the friendship of Jesus and one another, and then to meaningfully join in with the commissioning words, "let us go forth in the Name of Christ?" Going forth in the Name of Christ is to go forth to be the Church in the world.

A wise leader once told me, when I was wondering whether a certain presentation we had given together had “hit home,” that if it has been spoken and heard, we can imagine it. If we can imagine it, we can be and do it. A strategic plan helps all of our faith communities look at ourselves with new language, form our common framework with meaning, be energized and discover who we can be to the glory of God. In brief, our questions are about following Jesus, being the Church and being the change.

**CLOSING
PRAYER**

**THE LORD BE
WITH YOU
AND ALSO
WITH YOU
LET US,
PRAY**

**ALMIGHTY FATHER,
WHOSE BLESSED SON BEFORE HIS PASSION PRAYED
FOR HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY MIGHT BE ONE, AS YOU
AND HE ARE ONE:
GRANT THAT YOUR CHURCH, BEING BOUND TOGETHER
IN LOVE AND OBEDIENCE TO YOU, MAY BE UNITED IN
ONE BODY BY THE ONE SPIRIT, THAT THE WORLD MAY
BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM YOU HAVE SENT, YOUR SON
JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD;
WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU, IN THE UNITY OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER.
AMEN.**

ROOTED DISCIPLESHIP

by Gary Stewart

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND MINDS TO BE THE CHURCH THAT SEEKS TO DEEPEN OUR WALK WITH JESUS AND GIVE US THE COURAGE TO BE THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND EACH OTHER, IN CHRIST JESUS.
AMEN.

THE PEOPLE OF OUR CHURCH ARE DEEPENING THEIR WALK WITH JESUS

God said, "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

Genesis 17:7

Discipleship is about relationship. God invites us into a deep and abiding relationship and longs for us to discover the life God created for us to live here on Earth, and forever in Eternity. God sent His beloved Son to us to bear witness of this love. The Son in turn invited his followers, the disciples, to "come and see" to get to know him and see what a close relationship with God is like, to see how He cares for others and the world. We are all called to be disciples of Christ and it is by responding to Christ Jesus's invitation that we to enter into this deep relationship that God intended for us. It is how we enter into a family of love and become part of an intentional community.

“
DISCIPLESHIP
IS ABOUT
RELATIONSHIP
”

A disciple makes a decision to follow Jesus. In responding to Christ Jesus's invitation, our lives and spirit become connected with his and we enter into relationship with him and others, following him in restoring all relationships and life to unity with God. If you respond to his invitation to be a disciple of Christ, he will open your eyes and offer to teach you all you need to know to live abundantly, Jesus will offer you water to drink that will become like a spring of water gushing up in you to eternal life, Jesus will offer you rest when you are weary, and he will accept you "just as you are."

Being a disciple of Christ means accepting God's promise to change you and your life into his likeness. God promises to be with you always, to provide you with continual guidance from the Holy Spirit and equip you to Be the Change and Be the Church that brings hope and joy to the world.

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13

AND

RESPONSE

REFLECTION



How deeply do you yearn for the deep abiding relationship that God yearns for you – how much do you desire to deepen your walk with God?

How much space in your life are you willing to make for God?

Are you willing to do what he God asks: "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself?" Luke 10:27

Share your reflection with others.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:21.

Consider the meaning of this. What we yearn after, what we set our hearts on, what we most deeply desire, will influence the type of person we will become. Our desires shape our choices, and our choices shape our character. In deepening our relationship with God, we experience a "living presence" within us. If we are to become like Christ, we must respond to the urgings and teachings of the Spirit to follow Christ's example.

The urgings of prayer are upward, inward, and outward. Upward, to give thanks, “I will give thanks to God with all my heart” (Psalm 9:1). Inward, to the Spirit of God within us, “Come Holy Spirit – kindle in us the fire of your love...grant that we may be truly wise.” And outward, “Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee.” The deepening of our walk necessitates the guidance of God’s Spirit, the same Spirit that guided Jesus. So how can we be in touch with the Spirit that guided Jesus and allow ourselves to be guided?

The key to developing our discipleship are spiritual practices. These practices connect us with God’s Spirit who guides us. They give us space and opportunity to look deeply within ourselves, to discover and name our deepest desires, to examine our true priorities, and to determine which choices are congruent with the person God wants us to become. Here are 5 simple practices that can lead to a rule of life for growing disciples. Each practice has an individual and a collective component.

Pray without ceasing, but at least 5 times daily: at each meal and in the morning and at night. Short prayers are heard as well as long prayers. If you need guidance, ask. Aspire to worship weekly with other followers of Jesus.

At least 5 time a week, chose to speak and act with kindness. In your church do anything that is needed. Help your neighbor, engage in acts of lovingkindness, share some kindness to a stranger, stand up for justice, get involved in community change.

Share your faith with at least 5 others who do not know Jesus each year and invite them to worship with you.

PRAY

SERVE

SHARE



STUDY

GIVE

Aspire to read scripture daily. There are many resources available, the “daily word” from the Society of Saint John the Evangelist, daily readings from Forward Day by Day, the podcasts and courses from the Way of Love, Living Compass, or Renewal Works. You can join a bible study group or take a course in spirituality offered at your church or on-line.

Give of your time and talent at least 5 times each month; share your resources, be generous with words of encouragement, and pledge with an aim to tithe.

Practice being guided by God, who will draw you into an entirely new and flourishing way of being a disciple of Jesus.

“... A God shaped life is a flourishing tree.” Proverbs 11:28

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

What does this teaching of Christ Jesus mean to you?

What are the ways shown above of taking his yoke and learning are you willing to aspire to and deepen your walk with him and let your life be shaped by him?

Share your aspiration with others.



REFLECTION

AND

RESPONSE

CLOSING PRAYER

**THE LORD BE WITH YOU
AND ALSO WITH YOU
LET US, PRAY**

GRANT, LORD GOD,
TO ALL WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED
INTO THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF YOUR SON
JESUS CHRIST, THAT, AS WE HAVE PUT
AWAY THE OLD LIFE OF SIN, SO WE MAY BE RENEWED
IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR MINDS, AND LIVE IN
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUE HOLINESS;
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD,
WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU, IN THE UNITY OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND FOREVER.
AMEN.

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

by Elise Johnstone+

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY
AND EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND
YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES
AND MINDS TO BE THE
CHURCH THAT THROUGH OUR
VARIED WORSHIP IS ENGAGED,
INSPIRED AND TRANSFORMED TO
BE THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN
WITH YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE
ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH
YOU AND EACH OTHER, IN
CHRIST JESUS. AMEN.

THE VARIED WORSHIP OF OUR CHURCH
ENGAGES, INSPIRES, AND TRANSFORMS

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2

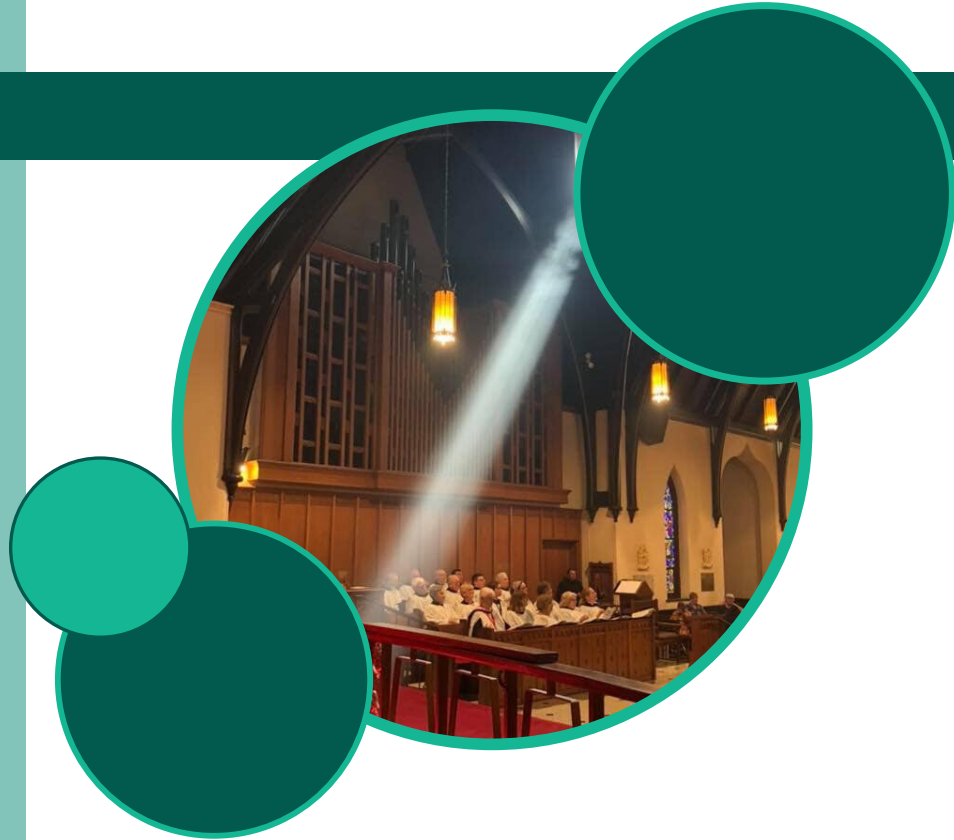
In our worship of the living God, we are striving for excellence, not perfection. God indeed meets us where we are, imperfect, and even in our imperfection, we can still strive to bring our finest to God in worship. The excellences we can strive for takes many forms. We offer our best selves, our best gifts—whether they be in singing hymns, praying corporately, praying quietly, giving our attention, listening for how God is speaking to us through scripture or through the words of our liturgy.

AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

As a young person, I remember so many Sundays where I would be listening to our priest lead us in prayer or praying aloud with all the members of the community, and a word or a phrase would strike me. It would stay with me over the course of the next few days. I allowed those words to wash over me, and I listened for how God was speaking to me and how I was speaking to God through worship. It helped me to realize that worship is not just the priest, and not just the choir—it is all of us offering our gifts, our prayers, our thoughts, our selves to God, even as God is working in and through us. In offering our best selves, we realize more fully how God is alive in our community, and we are empowered to go out into the world to serve those around us.

"And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee."[1]

These words from Rite I, Eucharistic Prayer I resonate as we consider this idea of striving for excellence in worship. As we come to God in worship, we are presenting all of our selves. Being open to God in worship allows us more easily to be transformed by God both in worship, and in the various moments of our lives.



We are blessed to be in a Christian tradition that highly values worship, a tradition that says what it is that we pray; it is what we believe. We are also blessed to be in a Church where every faith community is different. Some faith communities are rural, some urban, some with hundreds of people every Sunday, some with five people every Sunday, and some are in between. And each one of our faith communities can have worship that engages, inspires, and transforms the community.

"And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives..."[2]

[1] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), page 336.

[2] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), page 101.

Our Book of Common Prayer[3] offers us a common language with which to approach God in worship. Several years ago, The Episcopal Church declared that Holy Eucharist[4] would be the principal service on Sunday, the Lord's Day. The good intentions of that action, however, did not fully take into account the diversity of settings where we find Episcopal faith communities; being able to worship weekly with Holy Eucharist is not feasible in a considerable number of our faith communities for various reasons. Worshipping together using Morning Prayer with hymns, simple sung canticles, and a sermon that invites us to consider how God is active in the Scriptures and active in our lives and in our world can and should be engaging and transformative.

Our prayer book offers us the opportunity to engage in worship that is contextual to our community's situations. Each faith community offers different gifts and those gifts can and should be considered when planning worship. Our diocese has at least one faith community that engages weekly in the vibrant worship of God with music led by a piano, guitar, and sometimes a flute[5]. And there are other times and ways that a faith community might be drawn into God's presence through an evening service of meditative Taizé music, prayer, and scripture or possibly a service of light using the Order of Worship for the Evening, found in our Book of Common Prayer.[6] In making these suggestions, we have the knowledge that music led by an organ, or an organ and choir continues to be a beautiful and transformative way to meet God in worship.

“We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”[7]

[3] And other authorized worship texts such as *Enriching Our Worship*, or for the season of Advent 2019, the expansive language versions of Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Prayers A, B, and D.

[4] Also known as Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Mass.

[5] If your faith community is looking for guidance on how you can engage in music that best suits the gifts of your people, our diocesan office is glad to connect you with resources.

[6] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), page 109.

[7] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), page 369.

[8] *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), page 366.



AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

When we come to worship and share the gift of our selves, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, God shares with us the gift of Christ's Body and Blood, that we might be transformed, empowered to be Christ's Body in the world, we are sent out, "to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord." [8]

We are inspired to be the Church, to be the change in our world, and much of what empowers us to do this is the coming to God in worship in our local faith communities. When we offer up the best of ourselves in worship each week, when we strive for excellence, we can better see that God has been, is, and will continue to offer to us the best: God's wisdom, God's love, God's kindness, and we, too, are transformed to be God's people in the world, Christ's Body, as we are empowered by God to be Kingdom people.

CLOSING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY GOD,
TO WHOSE GLORY WE CELEBRATE.
WE GIVE YOU THANKS FOR THE
FELLOWSHIP OF THOSE WHO WORSHIP
IN THIS PLACE, AND WE PRAY THAT ALL
WHO SEEK YOU HERE MAY FIND YOU,
AND BE FILLED WITH YOUR JOY AND PEACE;
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD,
WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU,
IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
ONE GOD, NOW AND FOR EVER.
AMEN.

THE LORD BE
WITH YOU
AND ALSO
WITH YOU
LET US,
PRAY



Recall a time when you felt God present and active in worship. What was the context? How did you feel? In what ways might you have been transformed?

Share with your group.

Consider the gifts for worship in your local faith community (musicians, those who are serving as readers and other leaders in worship). What are some you are currently experiencing? What are others that you might not yet have experienced, or haven't experienced in a while? Consider whether you might like to consult with other faith communities in your region, or with diocesan resource people as you consider how worship in your context can be more deeply engaging, inspiring, and transformative.

Please note: Departing from the BCP (including the lectionary) for the primary service in your faith community, unless there is a blanket permission, such as the Bishop shared for using *Enriching Our Worship*, or the expansive language rites for Advent 2019, requires permission of the Bishop of our Diocese.

Additional Resources

Admirable Simplicity by George Wayne Smith, Church Publishing, 1996.

The Liturgy Explained by James Farwell, Morehouse Publishing, 2017.

Liturgical Sense by Louis Weil, Seabury Press, 2013.

Pastoral and Occasional Liturgies by Leonel Mitchell, Rowman and Littlefield, 1998 (includes chapter on offering Morning or Evening Prayer as a corporate Sunday service).

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS

by Elizabeth Conrad

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND MINDS TO BE THE CHURCH THAT NURTURES CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS TO BELONG AND FULLY PARTICIPATE; GRANT US COURAGE TO BE THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND EACH OTHER, IN CHRIST JESUS. AMEN.

OUR CHURCH NURTURES CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS TO BELONG AND FULLY PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S MISSION

“Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage and will to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen” BCP Holy Baptism, p. 308.

Through baptism, God is forming individuals and communities that are distinctive, counter cultural. Those of us witnessing baptisms promise to support these persons in their life in Christ. How do we do that and how does it differ for persons of different ages? We, members of the Church, are called in baptism to empower children, youth, and young adults to be full and equal members of the body of Christ and to participate fully in the life of our faith community. We are all created to make meaning of life yet we each have different ways of thinking and our own questions to ask. In the Church, all must be empowered to have a voice in our faith communities so we might all dig deep into our own questions. Everyone, regardless of age, needs to be supported and provided opportunities to live out this faith in the wider community.

Children come into the world connected to God. We are called to continue to nurture that relationship and give the children language and a safe place in which to talk about God and explore what it means to be a Christian.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS

The Acronym **SPiRiT** which was developed by Dr. Rebecca Nye can guide us in ways to nurture the child's gift of spirituality. Dr. Rosemary Beales has helped to unpack these principles. They can apply to children, youth and adults.

SPACE

Our physical environment has a great influence on our psyche. Spaces for children need to be beautiful, orderly and clean. Are there things that provoke questions? What kind of spaces do your youth and young adults spend time in? What do they teach? As an adult what kind of space helps you to pray? How do you create space in your own life for God? What in a space blocks your time in prayer?

PROCESS

Spirituality is a slow process. We do not look for an end product. Children, youth and young adults need to discover the answers on their own – help them to wonder. Are doubts allowed and listened to in safety? Are there ways provided to help children, youth, and young adults explore what is going on inside of them without judgment?

IMAGINATION

This is a natural place for children to be. The imagination is born from a very deep place inside of us which is also a spiritual place. We have to imagine what the unseen world may look like. We use imagination in prayer. It should not be shut down. Never say “that is only your imagination.” Try wondering instead. Do we encourage and listen to the imagination with all ages? Do we honor dreams and visions?

RELATIONSHIP

We are created for relationship. Children, youth, and young adults need a safe place to connect with the divine and explore that relationship. The relationships with peers and adults if nurtured can last a lifetime. These relationships form the body of Christ. As the body we are then empowered to make relationships with those outside of our walls and be the change the world needs. How we listen and are with the children, youth, and young adults in our presence teaches more than any words that come out of our mouth. It could make all of the difference. Are the voices of children, youth, and young adults valued? Do you believe that God speaks through them and might teach you something? Do you remember someone who had a profound effect on your spiritual growth? Do you remember a time as a child of connection with the divine? What do you remember about that? What was needed to make those things happen?

INTIMACY

The safeguarding guidelines that the church enforces allow children, youth and young adults to be safe. It allows them to risk coming close to someone. What made you feel safe as a child, youth, or young adult? What threatened that sense of safety? How can we protect that with our work with all ages?

TRUST

Children have a natural tendency to trust in things that they cannot see. They are comfortable in the unseen world. Adults squash this natural trust when they start giving them answers that must be believed or when they tell them their imagination is not real. Often this comes from the adult's lack of trust in God. Do we really believe that God is connecting with the children? We also can do a disservice to children when we think that we need to water down the traditional scripture story to make it more “fun.” We can naturally move into the story as it is given. How can we create greater trust for God and the child, youth or young adult in any process of faith formation? Can we trust in the stories of scripture? Can we trust that God is speaking even if we do not hear or see? Can we value where they are in these relationships without judgment?

CHILDREN, YOUTH, & YOUNG ADULTS

Clearly children come into the world close to God. There are however many forces which compete to wipe away that relationship. I have had an older elementary aged boy recently tell me how he loved this church – was so glad that his family had come here. He said that he thought he would be kicked out of most churches. This boy questions everything. He says that he is not sure that he believes any of it. We have given him the safe space to voice this which has enabled him to explore the questions under his doubts. He is involved in many aspects of this faith community.

Our job is to nurture the child of any age wherever they are on their journey. If we have done our job, as they grow and develop, their foundation will be strong enough to wrestle with the questions that will be a natural part of the spiritual maturing process.



“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

Matthew 18: 3-5

CLOSING PRAYER

**THE LORD BE WITH YOU
AND ALSO WITH YOU
LET US, PRAY**

**GOD OUR FATHER,
YOU SEE YOUR CHILDREN GROWING UP IN AN
UNSTEADY AND CONFUSING WORLD:
SHOW THEM THAT YOUR WAYS GIVE MORE LIFE THAN
THE WAYS OF THE WORLD, AND THAT FOLLOWING YOU
IS BETTER THAN CHASING AFTER SELFISH GOALS.
HELP THEM TO TAKE FAILURE,
NOT AS A MEASURE OF THEIR WORTH, BUT AS A
CHANCE FOR A NEW START.
GIVE THEM STRENGTH TO HOLD THEIR FAITH IN YOU,
AND TO KEEP ALIVE THEIR JOY IN YOUR CREATION;
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.
AMEN.**

MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

by Laurie Brock+



OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND
EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND
YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND
MINDS TO BE THE CHURCH THAT IS LED
BY PEOPLE WHO DISCERN YOUR WILL,
MODEL CHRIST-LIKE LIVES, AND
SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH CONTAGIOUS
EXCITEMENT; GRANT US COURAGE TO BE
THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH
YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE ALL LIFE TO
UNITY WITH YOU
AND EACH OTHER, IN CHRIST
JESUS. AMEN

OUR CHURCH IS LED BY PEOPLE WHO DISCERN THE WILL
OF GOD, MODEL A CHRIST-LIKE LIFE, AND SHARE
THE GOSPEL WITH CONTAGIOUS EXCITEMENT

Missional Leadership

I wonder if Jesus ever thought, as he watched the twelve disciples stumble, blunder, and argue their way through their years with him, “This would just be easier if I did it.”

He did the things only Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, could do, and he also shared his ministry. Teaching, preaching, healing, contributing, praying, and so much more – Jesus shared with his disciples, not just the Twelve, but all who followed him. He entrusted them to share the most important message in the world – the message of the Good News of our loving God having rescued us from peril and inviting us into a new and abundant life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yes, it would have been easier if Jesus had done it himself, but he did not choose that model. Jesus shared his ministry, every part he could share, with those who followed him, even charging them (and us) to go and make more disciples, to baptize and teach them to also share this Good News with the world. Love, as modeled by Jesus, doesn’t always take the easy way. The love of God follows the daring path that invites us all to be part of the journey, its successes and its failures.

The model of missional leadership the Church must follow is that of Jesus himself, leadership that recognizes **everyone** has a job to do in the Kingdom of God. Leadership, for Jesus, is the capacity to energize people to address the great needs and problems of their community, themselves, and the world with love. Jesus shared leadership, empowering his disciples across the ages to share the Good News, to pray, to form bonds with those in our communities, to teach, and to serve.

MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Being the Church means we change the model of leadership from the authoritative leadership of our culture to the missional leadership of our Lord. This missional leadership pays attention to how our faith communities lead. Is power centralized in a few people (the clergy or a few key lay leaders, for example) or broadly shared, with everyone serving as leaders and followers? Jesus reminds us we all are called to be active - to go into our neighborhoods and communities to share the Good News, to explore why we follow Jesus and how we follow Jesus and why we are so excited to invite others to this way of love, to befriend the lonely, to feed the hungry, to welcome the outcast and visit the imprisoned, to teach, and to create a welcoming space in our faith communities - not just seeing people as potential new members (and pledgers) but as fellow beloved children of God who will bring their own ideas, voices, and dreams of God to our faith communities.

Missional leadership is concerned not only with listening inside our faith communities, but also to the voices we haven't yet invited to the table.



Missional leadership is about understanding we all have experiences that shape how we are disciples, and we as communities of faith gather in prayer to invite the Spirit of God to transform our experiences into treasures that shape our ministries. We are called to lead by listening to God, asking God to strip us of our agendas and egos and to fill us with a willingness to do the work of God, even when that work may not be what we want to do, even when that work may be a complete shift from the way we've always done it.

This understanding isn't limited to those present in our faith communities regularly. Missional leadership is concerned not only with listening inside our faith communities, but also to the voices we haven't yet invited to the table. A walk around our neighborhoods may show us demographics of people who have different stories, different needs than ours. Missional leadership doesn't assume to know what others need; it asks first, and listens to the response, even when the response is challenging to us.

MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Missional leadership is a partnership between Jesus, ourselves, and each other to act, to intervene in the world with love. It is the courage behind the statement, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” When we offer ourselves and our faith communities for outreach, service, and evangelism, we realize we ALL have gifts in these areas, and we may need formation to best use these gifts. The language, “Oh, the priest or deacon or bishop can do that,” becomes, “God is calling all of us to do this!” And we are all willing to prepare ourselves for ministry in prayer and in learning, so we are prepared to go into the world with this radical, exciting message of Christ’s saving love.

Missional leadership is a partnership between Jesus, ourselves, and each other . . .

When Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples are left standing, looking. Maybe the gravity of the trust, the responsibility, and the love Jesus had in them – and has in us – to be witnesses to the transforming life of Jesus was finally dawning on them. “... Suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?’”

The enormity of Jesus’ invitation to missional leadership, one not based on authority but on energizing and empowering us all to address the great needs of our neighborhoods, ourselves, and the world is one that calls us to humility, to prayer, and to each other. Jesus has called us to go into the world in peace to love and serve the Lord.

REFLECTION

AND

RESPONSE

Leadership is often considered an act of authority and power.

Read the account of Pentecost in Acts (2:1-21) and reflect on the following questions:

READ

ACTS
2:1-21

Which group was perceived as powerful and which group was perceived as powerless?

Which miracle happened to the powerful group and which miracle happened to the powerless group?

Where does power/authority reside in your faith community (the clergy, the senior warden, a group of members, etc.)? How does this expression of leadership help your ministry and hinder your ministry?

How can a reading of Pentecost inform and perhaps change how your faith community leads each other from solely an activity of authority and power to one that embraces the entire community?



REFLECTION

Paul reminds us that we all have gifts to share as disciples – ALL of us.

What are the opportunities for people to share their gifts within your faith community?

How do these opportunities for ministry respond to the needs within your local community, both within the church community and within the wider civic community?

What areas of ministry does your faith community have energy with which to engage, but you think you need appropriate formation or assistance from the Diocese or other organization?

Which ministries of your church would end if the person leading them ended their leadership of the ministry? What insight does this offer your faith community?

AND

RESPONSE

DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MINDS, SO THAT YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD—WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT.

ROMANS 12:2

CLOSING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, BY WHOSE SPIRIT THE WHOLE BODY OF YOUR FAITHFUL PEOPLE IS GOVERNED AND SANCTIFIED: RECEIVE OUR SUPPLICATIONS AND PRAYERS, WHICH WE OFFER BEFORE YOU FOR ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR HOLY CHURCH, THAT IN THEIR VOCATION AND MINISTRY THEY MAY TRULY AND DEVOUTLY SERVE YOU; THROUGH OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU, IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND FOR EVER. AMEN.

THE LORD BE WITH YOU AND ALSO WITH YOU LET US, PRAY

SHARING GOOD NEWS

by TJ Azar+

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND MINDS TO BE THE CHURCH THAT ENCOURAGES, EQUIPS AND SENDS YOUR PEOPLE OUT INTO THE WORLD; GRANT US THE COURAGE TO BE THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND EACH OTHER, IN CHRIST JESUS. AMEN.

OUR CHURCH ENCOURAGES, EQUIPS, AND SENDS GOD'S PEOPLE OUT TO MAKE DISCIPLES

What do you do when something excites or inspires wonder in you – I mean, when you're fairly bursting with it? Many people I know head for Facebook to post about it: photos of cute grandchildren, beloved pets, or the Grand Canyon; or maybe excited messages about a wedding or a graduation. We want to share what we love with others. We want to run out and say, "Look at this!" or Listen to this! Isn't this amazing?"

Consider that Christians have the best, most awe-inspiring, exciting, urgent, beautiful news in all of history and in every place: **God loves us so much that he came to be with us in the flesh, rescued us from our own folly, is present with us even now, and prepares to gather us to him again in joy for all of eternity, healed and whole.** That is Good News indeed! The early church grew exponentially because of their joyous reports of Jesus in their lives; they couldn't wait to share how their lives had been transformed! This is evangelism, literally "proclaiming the Good News."

Most Episcopalians I know sheepishly admit their reluctance to do or even talk about evangelism. We know we ought to do it, some have tried to do it, but the bottom line is that many Christians just find it darned uncomfortable! Recently deceased theologian Michael Green wrote, "Evangelism does not enjoy good press.... It conjures up images of strident, perspiring preachers, of smooth-talking televangelists, or of strange characters at street corners urging the passersby to repent and meet their God." [1] It feels out of character for us; there's a sense that it is simply impolite, even confrontational and certainly ungracious, to evangelize.

SHARING GOOD NEWS

Yet we know that Jesus tells us, as he told his apostles, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He tells us, as he told his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21b). He tells us, as he told the Eleven, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20a). Sharing the Good News is one of our primary responsibilities as Christians and, when we consider the love and grace God has given us, should flow naturally and eagerly from our relationship with God.

We find this in The Book of Common Prayer, in the words of our baptismal covenant.

Celebrant

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People

I will, with God’s help.

BCP, p. 304



**So I send
you**

**make
disciples of
all nations**

**You will be
my witnesses**

This is the calling of all Christians. As we enter into the Church, we promise to proclaim by word the Good News! To say it out loud! Further, our catechism teaches us this:

Q.

How does the Church pursue its mission?

A.

The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love ... through the ministry of all its members. (BCP, p. 855)

[1] Michael Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to All Aspects of Evangelism*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Pub., 2012), 3.

So, there we have it: Jesus says we need to do it, The Episcopal Church agrees, and our baptismal covenant binds us to it – to talk about our faith with others as an invitation to life in Christ. There has been no shortage of initiatives in The Episcopal Church (TEC) to encourage us to embrace evangelism as a principal act of discipleship, but God is always calling the Church to renewal. Now, with a presiding bishop who calls himself our “Chief Evangelism Officer,” we have the opportunity and support to renew our commitment to proclaim the Gospel, to explore what it might look like for Episcopalians to be evangelists. Finally, our diocesan vision commits us to embrace evangelism as one of our principle goals.

Proclaiming the Good News in “word and deed” means being disciples of Christ, following his example, and loving others as he has loved us. We may do this by talking with others about what we believe, what we do in church, how we worship, and inviting them to join our faith communities. We might tell our own stories about the work of God in our lives and pray for others to enter into a living relationship with Jesus. Sharing requires listening as well, hearing their needs and concerns and responding openly and honestly. Evangelism is possible for Episcopalians, and we have amazing stories to tell!



What evangelism is already going on in your church? Who does it really well?

How can Episcopalians do evangelism in ways that reflect their character as people of God? (In other words, how can they do it without so much discomfort?)

What’s unclear to you about evangelism? What do you need to get started doing it?

CLOSING PRAYER

THE LORD BE WITH YOU AND ALSO WITH YOU LET US, PRAY

O GOD,
YOU HAVE MADE OF ONE BLOOD ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH, AND SENT YOUR BLESSED SON TO PREACH PEACE TO THOSE WHO ARE FAR OFF AND TO THOSE WHO ARE NEAR: GRANT THAT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE MAY SEEK AFTER YOU AND FIND YOU, BRING THE NATIONS INTO YOUR FOLD, POUR OUT YOUR SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH, AND HASTEN THE COMING OF YOUR KINGDOM;
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
OUR LORD, WHO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD,
NOW AND FOR EVER. AMEN.

SEEKING THE COMMON GOOD

by Bryant Kibler+

OPENING PRAYER

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING FATHER, SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO OPEN OUR EYES AND MINDS TO BE THE CHURCH THAT SEES YOU AT WORK IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND GIVE US THE COURAGE TO BE THE CHANGE AS WE JOIN IN WITH YOUR MISSION TO RESTORE ALL LIFE TO UNITY WITH YOU AND EACH OTHER, IN CHRIST JESUS. AMEN.

IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT, OUR CHURCH SEEKS TO BE THE CHANGE THAT BRINGS HOPE TO OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

We read in the second chapter of Acts how the first Christians “had all things in common.” Beginning with individual invitations by Jesus, a community grew around him, one that carried on and grew even after his resurrection and ascension to heaven. While we see Jesus occasionally go off by himself to pray, he always returned to those around him. When Jesus first stood in the synagogue he read from the scroll of Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” He would go on to say, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” His teaching would change the world. Those who came to believe in Jesus were themselves changed, caring for others more than self.

From Genesis we learn that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and it was good. Plants, animals, birds and fishes even humankind, all was good. I have often read that in the mid-to late eighteen-hundreds our Appalachian Mountains had more biodiversity than any other location in the world, the streams and rivers ran sure and clean teeming with life. The pioneer could make his way through the dense forests, build a cabin and live self-sufficiently off the land. Many viewed it as the new Eden. As time has passed, much of this beauty has been sacrificed for individual and corporate profit. Where once neighbor was eager to help neighbor, a front porch fit for company on a new house is a thing of the past. Wasn’t it Jesus who, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, taught the young lawyer that our neighbors include even those viewed as unclean, that we all are created in the image of God?

Saint Paul would say it this way: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” This was a radical and transformative idea in Jesus’ time.

Our vision, “Be the Church Be the Change,” calls us to discover God at work in our neighborhoods and to participate in it. Seeking the common good means allowing the Spirit to work through us to bring God’s transforming and life-changing love into the world. Consider, for example, three areas where our faith communities could become transforming agents within our neighborhoods.

Stewards of God's Creation

We hear much of climate change and the need to care for God’s creation. The church speaks often of our role as stewards of what God has given us, time talent and treasure. We celebrate “this fragile earth, our island home” but do we live it? Yes, the enormity of the work can overwhelm us, but the God who created this world will redeem it as well and he calls us to be active agents in that transformation. As stewards, we do not own the land, we care for it for those who will come after us. If we understand this creation as God’s gift to us, should we not value it and treat it with respect?

Reconciliation

A second place where we can begin to transform our faith communities is in the realm of reconciliation. Our nation and our Church have often failed in our understanding that all humanity is made in the image of God. We say in our catechism that the ministry of the Church is to “restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” This includes bringing all people into unity with one another and God, regardless of ethnicity or nationality. That also includes reconciling the poor, educated and uneducated, immigrants and refugees, all people with everyone. So, who are the people who need reconciliation within our faith community? What steps can we take? What help do we need to do more?

Community Transformation

Finally, we should foster “Community Transformation.” In some ways I think this may be the hardest step to take. It has been said that the last words of the Episcopal Church will be “but we’ve never done it this way before.” The early Church began by transforming the world, by acting as Jesus acted, putting others before self, bringing the Good News to the poor, the deaf, the blind, and those in prison. I love the image of the plaque over the door that reads “The Church is leaving the building.” Are there ways our faith community can work with others in the community to meet needs? Do we know what people are already doing? Are we familiar with Asset Based Community Development which will help us look at the gifts we already have? Consider looking up “With love from Harlan,” where two young women that felt a calling to help those in need and have built a unbelievable ministry in their home county.

REFLECTION

How are you involved in seeking the Common Good already?

Is this work sustainable?
Why or Why not.

What are you doing to empower others to develop themselves?

Do you regularly listen to the wider community outside of the faith community?

AND

RESPONSE

WHEN WE
SEEK THE COMMON GOOD,
SEEKING TO DRAW ALL
PEOPLE TO GOD, WE BECOME
FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST,
LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AS
OURSELVES IN UNITY WITH
GOD'S CREATION.

CLOSING PRAYER

O GOD
OUR HEAVENLY FATHER,
YOU HAVE BLESSED US AND GIVEN US DOMINION
OVER ALL THE EARTH: INCREASE OUR REVERENCE
BEFORE THE MYSTERY OF LIFE; AND GIVE US NEW
INSIGHT INTO YOUR PURPOSES FOR THE HUMAN
RACE, AND NEW WISDOM AND DETERMINATION IN
MAKING PROVISION FOR ITS FUTURE IN
ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR WILL;
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.
AMEN.

THE LORD BE
WITH YOU
AND ALSO
WITH YOU
LET US,
PRAY

COVENANT

Be the Church - Be the Change

In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We, the vestry/bishop's council of

_____ have studied, understood and support the Diocesan Vision endorsed by Special Convention meeting at Emmanuel Church, Winchester on November 1 - 2, 2019.

We acknowledge that together, we are the Diocese of Lexington. As one Church, we will seek to orientate our worship, ministry and mission around this our common vision to join in with the Spirit to restore all life to unity with God and one another in Christ Jesus.

We will accomplish this purpose by praising God, making disciples and sharing the Good News of Jesus in our neighborhoods as we implement the 8 goals of our vision.

Signed by the members of this vestry/bishop's council at _____,

On the _____ day of _____, 2020.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Name	Role	Name	Role
_____	_____	_____	_____
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If more space is required for signatures, please use the reverse side.