

Listening & Discerning on the Way

Briefing for children & families

This briefing document has been written for children and families to enable them to join in with the listening and discerning exercise happening within our Church communities.

Providing opportunities for children and young people to grow in their faith is God's desire. Jesus welcomed children to him and instructed those around him to have childlike faith (Matthew 18:2-3). Just as Jesus wanted to hear and learn from the children, so do we. We want to seize this moment to listen as a diocesan family and use it as a springboard to support the growing and nurturing of our children and families' lifelong and personal relationship with God.

We want to hear what God is saying to our children and young people - their voice is vital in capturing all that God is saying to his people.

This timetable shows the dates for the listening loops. We recognise that the three listening questions that are being posed to the wider church community, may not be fully accessible, yet, to our children and young people. Therefore we ask that they engage with the listening questions for family using some of the exercises below in order to gather what God is saying to each of you.

There is a special feedback form so that you can share your responses to this process and ensure that your voices are heard and help to shape our future as a diocesan family.

Our prayer is that through the development of spiritual practices as a family, children will be empowered to discern God's voice, actions and desires for their lives and those around them.

The listening questions that are being used in our church communities during this time are as follows:

- **What are we noticing...**
of God's movement at this difficult time?
- **What are we learning...**
as we reflect on how God seems to be moving?
- **What might we let go of or allow to die...**
so that we may enter a new future with God?

The listening questions that we'd recommend for use with children and families are as follows:

- **Ask God what he wants to show us**
I wonder where you have noticed God?
- **Ask God what he wants us to learn**
I wonder where God is working and how he would like us to join in?
- **Ask God what he wants us to stop, so he can work with us to start something new**

Sharing children & young people's faith journeys

God speaks to children. He is faithful enough to keep talking even when they don't think they hear him.

How can we point out where God is already working in their daily lives, as they learn to listen and recognise his voice?

The exercises outlined below are designed to support you and your family in forming a daily spiritual rhythm to 'chat and catch' with God. So, when you are asked 'What are you hearing from God?' 'What have you noticed God doing or saying?' your family will be able to truly engage with these questions, because it is part of your daily walk and spiritual practice.

I wonder how you will be able to make some of these practices a habit and part of your daily life? I wonder what the impact will be on you and your family?

Catch & Chat

We offer our grateful thanks to the work of Rachel Turner from Parenting For Faith who has influenced this section.

'Chat and Catch' is simply a way to describe prayer. Just like we chat with our friends, and catch their answer - whether they tell us in words, a gesture or just body language - so we can chat and catch with God.

Chatting (conversational prayer) encourages children to use informal language, as well as non-verbal forms, to communicate with God. Catching (listening to God through prayer) is simply supporting children to recognise and respond to God's voice – however he chooses to speak – meaning that they can easily, naturally and directly connect with God in a two-way, ongoing conversation about anything, whenever and wherever they are.

Using the term 'catch', when thinking about listening to God, helps children understand that listening is active and they need to be ready to 'catch' whatever God is going to send them.

The promises in the Bible tell us that God will answer when we speak to him and that we will recognise his voice. We all have to learn how to do this and make it part of our daily practice so that we become more in tune with God's voice.

Example chatting prompts:

- Tell God about your day, what went well, what didn't
- Tell God something that makes you feel worried and why
- Show or tell God something you are proud of
- Tell or show God something you are thankful for
- Tell God about a time when you felt really alone
- Tell God about something that makes you feel loved

Example catching prompts:

- Jesus is there anything today that we could thank you for? Why?
- Is there anything that we need to say sorry for?
- Is there anyone you want us to pray for?
- Are there any burdens or sadness we are carrying that you want to lift for us? Ask Jesus where it came from, what it is, and if he would please remove it.
- Jesus, do you have any promises or blessings for me before I go to sleep?

Recording what we catch – practical examples

- Consider starting a family journal to record God's words and promises
- Use post it notes or luggage tags to record God's answers to your catch questions
- Share what you have heard with each other or other friends and family
- Could you draw or paint what God has shown you/ spoken to you about?
- Could you use Lego, playdough or sand to recreate what God said to you?

Find out more about Catch & Chat - including ideas for engaging with this as a family - [on our website here](#).

Examen Prayer

The Examen prayer is a practice for discerning the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day. It is a chance to reflect on the day and consider how and where God might be prompting you to behave or act. You may choose to discuss some of these together, ponder silently on some of the prompts, or turn them into prayers. Adapt the questions to suit your family. Model and coach your children in this practice, so it becomes part of their daily rhythm.

1. Give thanks – What are you grateful for today? Where have you noticed God at work? Were there moments when I felt ungrateful?
2. Ask for help – What do you need help with? Who around you might need help? Where have you seen God at work?
3. Reflect on your day - What have you seen, what have you noticed? What was the most life-giving part of your day? What was the most difficult or challenging part of your day? When today did you feel connected to God? When did you feel least connected?
4. Say sorry - Look inward, who/what do I need to say sorry to/for, What might I need to do differently?
5. Decide - Look forward into the coming days... Where/What might God be prompting you to go, do or say?

I wonder how you might use this prayer and reflection exercise with your family?

I wonder how it might open up listening and noticing conversations with your family?

Stepping into Bible stories

This exercise encourages your family to ‘step into’ a Bible story to hear what God is saying to them through the words. Teach your child to visualise the story in their imagination as they meet with and catch from God. Ask your child to choose a Bible story. Invite the child to find Jesus in the story, approach him, talk to him, touch him and listen to him. As you read the story together discuss: “Where is he, what is he doing, what is he saying?” “I wonder what Jesus wants to say to you through this story?” Try the example below:

Jesus calms a storm

Text from Mark 4:35-41 (The Passion Translation)

Later that day, after it grew dark, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the lake.” After they had sent the crowd away, they pushed off from shore with him, as he

had been teaching from the boat, and there were other boats that sailed with them.

- Can you see the boat? What does it look like? What does the sea look like? Can you see Jesus?

Suddenly, as they were crossing the lake, a ferocious storm arose, with violent winds and waves that were crashing into the boat until it was all but swamped.

- Tell me about the storm. What are the disciples doing? How are they feeling? What would you do if you were there?

But Jesus was calmly sleeping in the stern, resting on a cushion. So they shook him awake, saying, “Teacher, don’t you even care that we are all about to die!” Fully awake, he rebuked the storm and shouted to the sea, “Hush! Calm down! Peace, be still!” All at once the wind stopped howling and the water became perfectly calm.

- What was Jesus like? What was it like to see the storm calmed? How did the disciples react? How did you react?

Then he turned to his disciples and said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Haven’t you learned to trust yet? But they were overwhelmed with fear and awe and said to one another, “Who is this man who has such authority that even the wind and waves obey him?”

- I wonder what Jesus wants to say to you through this story?

Reflect on these thoughts together. Encourage your child to chat more with God about what he said to them through the story. Encourage them to catch from God by asking him a question.

I wonder how asking what God is saying to them through the story will enable your child to ‘catch’ from God?

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