



Diocese of Bristol

Transforming Church Together

A foundation of prayer

Transforming Church Together has a foundation in prayer. Through the first phase of engagement, a passage of scripture was chosen and used as a means of prayerfully listening to God through the Scripture.

Now, as we move towards turning from vision to practice, the same passage is offered but participants are invited to imagine themselves into the story. Using all our senses and our imaginations, we will seek God's direction and guidance.

It is suitable for people of all ages, can be used in any context and enables all voices to be heard.

We encourage the use of the full version; however the process can be used flexibly to suit your circumstances.

The prayer is also available as a prayer for Transforming Church Together and can be reproduced and used as appropriate.

Outline instructions:

- The prayer is said
- Before the passage is read give these instructions:
 - You are invited to imagine yourself present in the story. You may find that your imagination is drawn to picture yourself as one of the characters: Jesus, a disciple, a member of the crowd, someone else, or a neutral observer. Trust the leading of the Holy Spirit and see what God shows you.
 - What do you feel? what do you touch, smell, hear, taste?
 - After the reading, we will share together what surprised us from this experience and what challenged us
- The passage is read out loud (Mark 6.30-52). Pause for a beat after each paragraph.
- In the whole group or in a small group of 4 to 6 people, share your reflections for a few minutes.
- If in small groups, you may be asked to share briefly highlights of the conversation with the whole group.
- If you wish, you can end by saying the opening prayer together.

God of the Way,
you call us to leave familiar places and to set out on new paths.
Enlarge our vision of your work in the communities we serve,
speak to us through the people we encounter,
and open our hearts to your love.
Give us courage and boldness to engage together in this time of prayer and discernment;
and by your Holy, life-giving and creative Spirit,
renew your church in prayer and service,
and in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. Amen

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.'

Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.*

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

When evening came, the boat was out on the lake, and he was alone on the land. When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the lake.

He intended to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified.

But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Mark 6: 30–52 *Mt 14:21 adds 'besides women and children'