



Deanery Planning Resources

Praying and Learning Together

Published
October 2022

One (and perhaps the key) 'outcome' of the Deanery Planning process is to help the deanery – the DDG, Synod and each parish - to draw closer to God in prayer and learning. The Deanery planning process needs to begin, continue and end in prayer. It will seem obvious to state this but each meeting needs to be surrounded in prayer and so as well as prayer needing to be part of each DDG meeting we suggest:

- Reading scripture together – There are lots of small group study resources available but it may help to revisit the Growing Church Bringing Hope study resources. There are 4 short sessions, with a Bible passage, focusing on each word in our diocesan vision statement. You might find these Bible passages a good place to start. You could use the same passage for consecutive meetings as per the practice of Dwelling in the Word - churchmissionsociety.org/dwelling-in-the-word
- Using or creating a cycle of prayer for the deanery, encouraging each parish to use this at their Daily Offices and in Sunday worship
- Deanery study and learning opportunities – shared Advent and Lent groups
- Prayer Walks as a DDG in different parishes around the deanery as well as encouraging others across the deanery to prayer walk around their own and other parishes
- Something should be done in every DDG meeting to maintain or rekindle your vision. You are not just trying to tinker a bit with the systems of Newcastle Diocese. You are there to help bring about a transformation in the life of the people of God. But when things start getting a bit hard, and progress seems slow, you need to take time to recapture a sense of purpose. Look for the “Yes, that’s why we’re here!” moments.

Here is a prayer you might like to use at your meetings and throughout the deanery planning process:

Living and loving God

**We thank you for the trust you place in us
to seek the signs of your Kingdom
Bless the work of this deanery,
help us to work together to grow your church,
and to be bearers of your hope in the communities we serve.
And may we seek always to be open to your transforming love,
generous with your transforming gifts,
engaged in your transforming work in the world
In the name of Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith
Amen.**



Vision Reflection One

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

1 Corinthians 3. 1-9 (NRSV)

And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4 For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. 9 For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.



Where are the signs for you personally that God's kingdom is growing?



How might we join with God in this growth?



What do you think might be similar factions in the Church today, both local and national, that are signs of our spiritual infancy and which hinder our growth?



Vision Reflection Two

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

1 Peter 2. 4-10 (NRSV)

4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and 5 like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' 7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner' 8 and 'A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.



In two places in this passage Peter describes the Church as being a priestly people, i.e. the whole people of God. What might it look like for us to operate and be known as a royal priesthood:

- In our worship?
- In our daily lives?



Building a temple with 'living stones' sounds like a tricky business, more difficult than working with uniform bricks. What might be some of the challenges and joys of building with 'living stones'? What might be some of the ways these stones hold together?



Vision Reflection Three

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

Mark 2.1-12 (NRSV)

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'... Jesus said, 10 'But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'— Jesus said to the paralytic— 11 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'



Who brings church, hope or growth?



What stops you being brought to Jesus?



What obstacles lie in the way of bringing people to Jesus?



Vision Reflection Four

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

Isaiah 40.27-31 (NIV)

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel,

“My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.



How does this passage give you hope?



How might we nurture hope in ourselves?



How is your Church a source of hope?



Vision Reflection Five

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

1 Corinthians 12.12-27 omit 15&16 (NRSV)

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.



What does it mean to you to be Christ's body or be part of Christ's body?



Which parts of your parish or deanery have honour or are suffering at the moment?



How does the body of the deanery currently recognise and celebrate its connections and interdependence?



Vision Reflection Six

You are invited to read the following passage through twice with 2 different voices and silence / space between each reading then consider the 'wonderings'. They are not questions needing an answer but promptings for your own reflections together. You may like to read the passage again at the end of your discussion.

Luke 10. 1-11

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. 2 He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. 3 Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" 6 And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. 7 Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; 9 cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 11 "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near."



If Jesus asked you to 'go' into your deanery, where would you go?



What would you find it difficult to leave behind?



What or who would you hope to encounter on your journey?



APPENDIX 1: REFLECTIVE PRAYER WALKING

GUIDANCE NOTES

By going out and walking the streets in which we live, we can become more aware of the people and the issues that surround us. Prayer walking is about purposefully walking, looking, listening and taking in our surroundings. We use all our senses to really notice and allow our surroundings to speak to us. As you do this and, in our own way, bring the people and places to God in prayer, thanking God for all that your neighbourhood has to offer, and asking Him for continued blessing and healing.

Guidance for Reflective Prayer Walking

- Keep it simple! There is no set pattern or formula.
- You can go alone but you might want to go out in twos and threes.
- After your walk, make some notes, come back and share with others what you have discovered.

Before

- Choose an area that you feel comfortable walking around and plan your route.
- Prepare yourselves before you go out so that you feel comfortable with each other; share your hopes and anxieties.
- Pray together before you go out and ask God to guide you.
- Ask to see the area with God's eyes, that you might sense what is good and pleasing in God's sight as well as what things grieve Him deeply.
- Look through the Community Observation Guide (below) before you begin the Prayer Walk so that you are familiar with the sorts of things it encourages you to look out for.

During

- Take some time to feel comfortable and do not take risks!
- Take the Community Observation Guide with you and refer to it from time to time.
- You can decide to pray silently as you walk or you might like to pray out loud with your colleagues in which case you might like to look as if you are having a conversation together.
- Pray for families, schools, churches, farms, GP surgeries, police and hospitals - whatever you find in your area.
- Linger at specific sites which seem to be key.
- Pray for the people you see. Smile, be friendly.
- Pray about any local issues you know about.
- Give thanks for the people and places you walk amongst.
- Pray for people responsible in any position of authority – for teachers, police, local politicians and parents.
- Pray for church leaders and congregations in other churches that you pass.
- Pray for God's blessing on the houses you walk past.

After

Share with others what you have experienced and prayed. Share your insights. It will encourage others as well as yourself. Think about going at different times and in different weathers to reflect on how the area changes.



COMMUNITY OBSERVATION GUIDE

As you walk prayerfully around your neighbourhood, you might find it helpful to look out for some of the following things to help you think more deeply about life in your neighbourhood, asking God to help you see it with fresh eyes.



People groups

Who is standing at bus stops, who is out and about in the streets, or going into businesses, or playing in the park, doing their shopping, etc? Note what you see. How much do you see people interacting with one another? What type of traffic moves about the neighbourhood?



Services

Where can people go to shop, eat out, get an education, worship, and receive assistance? What appears to be the quantity and quality of available services? Who is providing services, and who is receiving them?



Places of activity

Shops, café's, busy main roads, playgrounds, schools, gathering places for people all ages.



Structures

What are the types and conditions of the buildings (homes, businesses, roads, parks)? How much open space is there in the community?



Signs of change

Note which businesses are opening or closing, and if housing is under construction, for sale, or being demolished. Check for languages added to shop signs, and buildings used in ways different from their original purpose. Overall, do conditions appear to be getting better or worse?



Signs of hope

Where is there evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Look for playing children, uplifting artwork, voluntary organisations, social gatherings, and gardens. Look especially for local assets that could be connected with neighbourhood needs.



Signs of faith

Look out for churches and places of worship. What is hopeful about church(es) in this neighbourhood? How might our neighbours of other faiths be partners in bringing positive change in this community?



Signs of need

Look for evidence of hardship, hurt, or injustice. Is what you see specific to particular areas or affecting the neighbourhood as a whole? Be aware that marginalised/isolated people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.

