

Leadership for Lent

Reflecting on the Bible with Young Leaders



Introduction and prayer from Bishop Karen

On Ash Wednesday, Christians are invited, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, which includes reading and meditating on God's holy word.

In the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, Thomas Cranmer encourages us to 'Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest God's word.' Both are calls to allow the truth of the Bible to dig down deep into our lives, to take root and to nourish us. Reading, marking, and learning are all things we do with our minds; while inwardly digesting is something we do with our heart and soul.



This Lent, taking the theme of Leadership, we are encouraged to dig deeper. To dwell on scripture and reflect upon it using the studies prepared for each session. We are introduced to six biblical characters, with the opportunity to get to know them better and allow their lives and story to shape our own.

We are grateful to the young leaders in our diocese for writing these studies and taking us on our own journey's of faith. So, I would encourage you to set aside time each day or each week to ponder the passages and allow God's word to speak. Begin each session by asking God for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to still our hearts and end in prayer asking God to show us how we can respond to what we have read or reflected upon. Above all, receive these studies as a gift and enjoy dwelling in God's word whether together with others, or alone.

Join us as we pray:

Gracious God, open your word to us this day.
As we read about faithful leadership in others,
may we too remain faithful;
as we ponder vulnerable leadership,
may we too be bold;
as we encounter reluctant leadership,
may we be willing to serve;
At this time, and in the places you have put us,
show us how we should lead,
and above all as we journey through Lent,
make us more like Christ.
Amen





Ross Meikle

Hi, I'm Revd Ross Meikle and I'm the Missioner for Young People at Salisbury Cathedral, where I started in March 2024. Previously, I was a Vicar in Reading and curate in Witney, Oxfordshire. I am a writer and storyteller, especially of fairy tales, and I enjoy the theatre, television and both board and video gaming.

Key figure: Stephen

Let's think about Stephen: Deacon, martyr, storyteller. As a storyteller myself, I'm fascinated by Stephen's use of story in his famous speech before the teachers of the law of Moses.

We meet Stephen in **Acts 6** when he is appointed deacon, performs miracles and signs, and debates with religious opponents who eventually seize him and bring him before the High Priest. **Acts 7** is dedicated to his speech and its outcome, that is, his martyrdom.

Stephen tells them the story of their people through the heroes of the faith. The temptation for us who know these stories may be to quickly skim over Stephen's speech. But they've been written and recorded for a reason. Every word is significant.

Stephen offers interpretation throughout the story, revealing the folly of humanity and our relationship to power. He reflects on the faithfulness between God and the heroes of faith: the promise to Abraham, God's presence with Joseph, the calling and ministry of Moses. He seemingly ends his story with the voice of God through the Prophet Isaiah in **verses 48-50**, a clear reminder of God's sovereignty and humanity's humble nature. That is the story that is threaded throughout Scripture.

And it is the story we keep on forgetting.

I adore the opening three words to **Acts 7:51**: "Stephen continued speaking". It reads like "And another thing!", but this is when Stephen stands in the midst of the religious leaders and points out their own pride and folly. In preaching terms, this is the application or the challenge.

"You received the law of Moses... but you don't obey it!".

Any fool can know a Bible story or recite a verse from memory. See how Satan does so in his tempting of Jesus in the wilderness.

Stephen's speech is so remarkable because Stephen is rooted in the whole story of God and God's people, that the body of Scripture has become the lens with which he sees the world he lives in.



And when questioned, he is confident to tell that story, without notes and quotations, against the people with power, who know Scripture yet fail to live it.

In a time of great abuses of and shifts in power throughout the world, Stephen is an inspiring figure of faith – especially those of us who may feel compromised in our relationship with the Church of England. As a Deacon, we see him live out words from the Prophet Micah: acting justly in the face of lost religiosity, loving mercy in his service to the community of faith, and humbly following God even unto death.

As a storyteller, he is a reminder of how important it is to be embedded in the story of Scripture that sees the proud humiliated and the lowly lifted high, and to tell that story publicly and boldly.

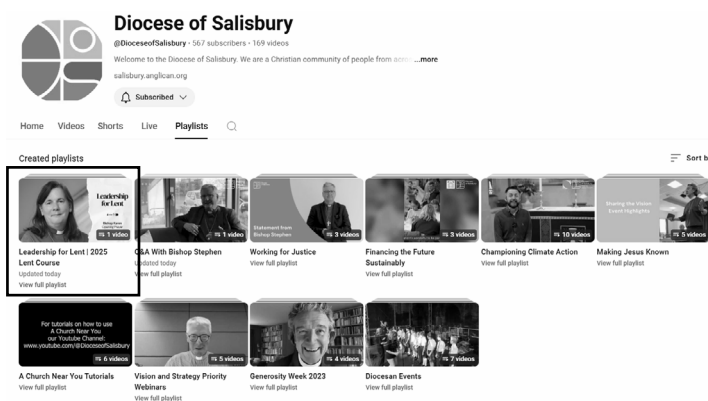
St Stephen, pray for us and for the Church of Christ.

Questions

- What role does Scripture have in your life? What does it mean for you to ‘know your Bible’?
- Stephen chooses stories particular to his audience, the teachers of the law. What stories from Scripture would you choose to tell the story of God in a context of your choosing?

Video reflection

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Liv Wordley

Hi, I'm Liv and I'm on the first of two gap years, training to be a dental nurse and working at Bishop Wordsworth's School part time as a Chaplaincy Assistant. I finished my A levels last summer and had no idea what I wanted to do, so I'm taking this academic year to attempt to discern the calling on my life through varied work experience. I am really enjoying work at the moment and I am unendingly grateful to everyone who has enabled and supported me to get here! I'm nervous but excited and hopeful about what is to come over the next few years!

Key figure: Miriam

Miriam is so easy to overlook. The child, the musician and the condemned. She is mentioned specifically only 3 times in the Bible.

Exodus 2:1-10 is my favourite. Miriam, a child only 5 or 6 years old, watches her mother float her two-month-old baby brother down the river in a basket. The deep conviction in God's providence that we see in Miriam's mother here, is reflected in Miriam's watchful pursuit of Moses' journey from the reeds of the Nile to the discovery of the baby in a basket by the Pharaoh's daughter. What stands out to me is how Miriam, a poor Hebrew girl, boldly approaches one of the most powerful women in Egypt with a childlike courage that many of us grown-ups would never dare to replicate.

For good reason we could argue, prudence, wisdom and caution are necessary to live in a Godly way. Later we do see Miriam's lack of those 'adult' traits coming back to harm her.

But in this moment, God uses the innocence and brashness of a small girl to change the course of history. This is ultimately done through the protection of Moses and lead to the deliverance of God's people, the Israelites. Because Miriam, in that moment, threw caution to the wind, was joyfully uninhibited and simply bold. How much radical transformation and salvation could we see if we as leaders and those in leadership around us, allowed God to use our childlike courage and willingness for his glory?

We see Miriam later in **Exodus 15:20-21**, described as a prophetess. Wow! I could speak for hours about the momentousness of God elevating Miriam to this title. However, in the passage I want to focus on something else. Her tambourine. Following, the Israelites safe passage through the Red Sea, Miriam is described as taking her tambourine and leading the other Israelite women in singing and dancing before the Lord to glorify Him.

The Israelites had just narrowly escaped from the Egyptian army. They were homeless, vulnerable, wandering people. There were hundreds of more practical actions they could have chosen to take. But no. Moses' leadership looks like worshipping God first and foremost. And Miriam joins him in this, leading the women to dance to the Lord and his deliverance.



When the world seems so dark right now, can we be brave enough to take delight actively in what the Lord is doing through us and those around us? Can we worship and praise first?

Now onto the harder part.

Miriam and Aaron speak out against Moses in **Numbers 12**, they do not agree that he has taken a Cushite (someone from the land of Cush, Africa) woman as his wife. Aaron and Miriam argue, "Has the Lord only spoken through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" The Lord hears this and unsurprisingly, calls them both out. While he rebukes them both, he punishes only Miriam, causing her to become leprous. Aaron and Moses plead with the Lord to heal her and the Lord does so after seven days. This acts as a stark and clear reminder to those in leadership.

Those who God glorifies as his chosen leaders or prophets will be held to a higher standard, as we see reiterated in **James 3:1**. Miriam and Aaron put themselves on the same level of God through their judgement of their brother Moses and their self-righteousness leads to them believing that they should be elevated to the same level as Moses.

Questions

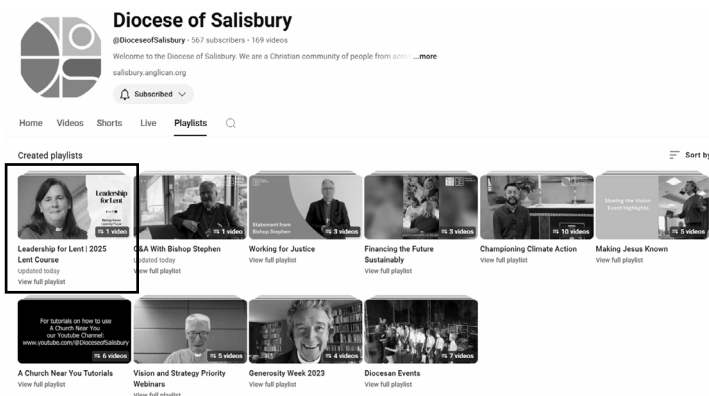
- Are there any situations you find yourself in at this time for which you need childlike courage?
- Through Miriam, we can recognise the importance of keeping our egos in check, take a moment today to consider what you are working on at the moment. How can you make sure that you are doing it for the glory of God alone?

Video reflection

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David Reed

Hi, I'm David. I am currently serving a curacy in Corfe Mullen parish at St Nicholas' and St Hubert's church. I'm married to Roseanna, and we have two children, Nora (3) and Jonah (1). I was previously a "perfectly convinced atheist" working in the charity sector and found faith after deciding to get married in church, being struck by the experience of grace I found there. I trained for ordination at both Wycliffe Hall and Sarum College before being ordained a Deacon at Salisbury Cathedral last year.

Key figure: Moses

Our culture expects leaders to be charismatic, decisive and assertive. We look for leaders to be self-authoring individuals whose call to lead others is rooted in a confident sense of their own gifts. Moses has none of these qualities. Yet in the course of the Biblical narrative, this one-time fugitive rises to become a transformative figure in salvation history, and a great leader who guides his people into becoming a great nation.

When God calls Moses at the burning bush, he does not step forward with eager resolve. Instead, he shrinks back. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" he protests (**Exodus 3:11**), "I have never been eloquent... I am slow of speech and tongue." He pleads inadequacy, doubts his own voice and asks God to send someone else. If leadership requires a feeling of self-assurance, Moses is a failure from the start.

Moses is not a flawless model of a leader, far from it. He struggles with impatience, anger, and reluctance. He is exhausted by the burdens of the people he leads, at times even despairing of his calling (**Numbers 11:14-15**). He fails to trust God fully, striking the rock at Meribah in frustration rather than speaking to it as commanded (**Numbers 20:8-12**). For these reasons, he is only able to lead Israel to the borders of the Promised Land, not to enter himself.

Yet even in the midst of his shortcomings, Moses has a uniquely direct relationship with the Lord God, speaking with him "face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (**Exodus 33:11**). At his best moments, Moses knows himself to depend upon God as a child depends upon a parent. The assurance that God will be with him persuades him to barter with Pharaoh (**Exodus 3:12-15**). Without assurance of God's presence, he refuses to move the Israelite camp forward (**Exodus 33:15**). The parting wisdom he gives his successor Joshua speaks to a lifetime of reliance on God ("The Lord himself will never leave you nor forsake you", **Deuteronomy 31:8**).

Rooted in this vulnerable intimacy with God, the most striking moment of Moses' leadership is when he intercedes to God on behalf of his people. Time and again, the Israelites grumble against Moses, even threatening to kill him (**Exodus 17:4**). Yet Moses does not abandon them in frustration.



He pleads with God on their behalf, standing in the gap for them even when they do not deserve it. In these pinnacle moments he comes to inhabit a Christ-like role of leadership that is only fully manifested in Jesus centuries later.

Here, we find a picture of what real leadership involves. Moses knew that on his own he could achieve nothing. Any leader who acts as if the future is entirely within their gift to achieve is a dangerous fraud waiting to be found out. Yet when the illusion of control is shattered and we abandon our vanity projects of self-advancement, we become receptive to the divine call of God's purposes for the world. In that surrender, the impossible begins to happen.

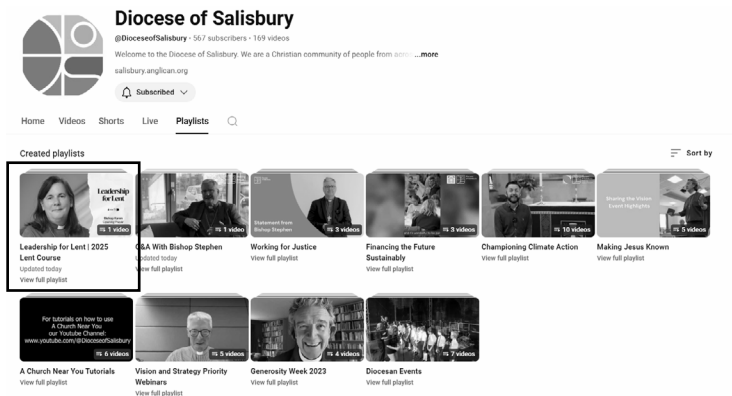
Questions

- Can you name a time where you have waited and listened for God's call? How did this make you feel?
- How can we make a conscious effort to listen to God and his message, especially in the noise of our daily lives?

Video reflection

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Joel Banks

Hi I'm Joel Banks, I currently serve as the Assistant Minister at St Paul's Church in Jersey. My main responsibility is looking after the youth and young adult ministries. I graduated from Nazarene Theological College at the end of 2023 where I studied Practical Theology BA (hons). Alongside work and ministry I enjoy spending my time skateboarding and exploring the beaches of Jersey with my amazing wife Charlotte and our little boy.

Key figure: Naaman's Servant

2 Kings 5:1-17

How one sentence, nineteen words, and the faith of an unnamed servant changed the course of history. What can we learn about faithful leadership from an exiled, servant girl?

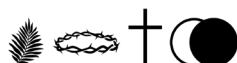
Compassion: Firstly, in this story we see how a lowly servant is compelled by her compassion for the very person who commanded an army against her city and ended up taking her to be his wife's servant.

"I wish my master would go see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy"
Verse 3

Colossians 3:12 instructs us to "clothe ourselves with compassion". Jesus' ministry was defined by compassion for people. Yet often at times we find it hard to follow the example that Christ gives as he was perfect, leaving us feeling deflated. Considering Naaman's servant and the barbaric nature in which she was treated, it is hard to see how she could have compassion for her master. Even still, we read of a lowly Israelite girl, serving a foreign master, in a foreign land and we see an act of ordinary, faith filled compassion, leading to an incredible opportunity for God's glory to be displayed.

How can we grow in compassion for those around us, considering the compassion Naaman's Servant showed her master?

Boldness: Naaman's servant girl experienced terrible things and was an exile, living away from home and family and to a certain extent detached from her faith community. Whenever I think of times that I have been bold in my faith and confident in Christ – it is often when I am surrounded by other Christians. Here, Naaman's servant girl was on her own, isolated from her community and forced to live under the rule of a different master who served a different God. Yet, when she saw an opportunity to boldly speak out about her faith and a prophet of her God, she took it. Even as a young girl she seized an opportunity to proclaim the truth. This level of boldness and confidence in her God is hard to find. Ask yourself how we can choose boldness in the everyday, standing firm in the truth we know, sharing that hope with others, as Naaman's servant does so well here?



Resulting Influence: After Naaman's first refusal to follow the instructions of Elisha, we hear his officers, his loyal military servants, encouraging him. Perplexed by his unwillingness to perform even the simplest action:

"Sir, if the prophet has told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go and wash and be cured!'"

Verse 13

I do not know about Naaman's personal relationship with his officers; however, it is safe to assume that he gave commands, and the officers obeyed. In the second instance of boldness in this passage, we see the boldness of the less important and powerful speaking up to their master. I imagine these officers must have heard of the servant girl who spoke up and caused their master to act, so they too were emboldened to speak out. They did, Naaman was healed, and consequently proclaimed the true nature of Yahweh as the one true God.

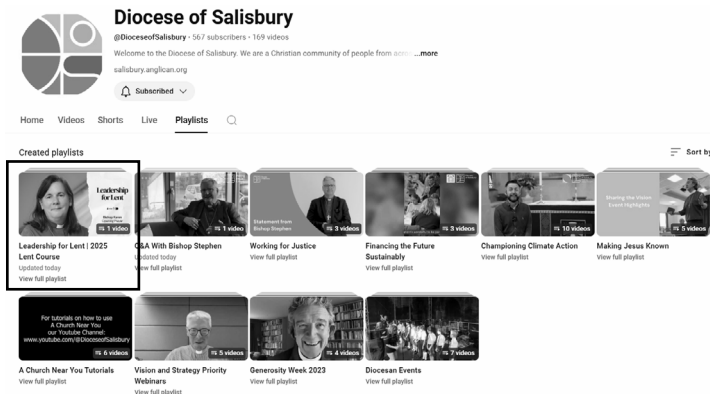
Naaman's servant girl said one sentence that amounted to nineteen words, we could be forgiven for calling it insignificant. Her name isn't even recorded, yet her boldness, sparked by compassion, led to a domino effect, resulting in the healing of Naaman and the growth of God's kingdom. We should never diminish the power our words hold, God can use them for his glory. We might look at our place in the world or even our own ideas about ourselves and think, "God could not use me." Yet Naaman's servant girl proves that so wrong and can provoke faith in us. When God gives us opportunity to proclaim truth there is no limit to its impact.

Questions

- How can we ensure we are bringing a voice to those who need it most?
- Can you name an instance where something small had a large impact on your life?

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Leila Mather

Hi, I'm Leila Mather and I serve as the Rector of the Benefice of Charminster, Stinsford and the Chalk Stream Villages, a community made up of six rural, vibrant and inclusive parishes in Dorset. I am passionate about engaging with the Hebrew Bible in the modern church, and about enabling people of all ages to discern God's call in their lives. I live with Cookie the dog and have five different pairs of welly boots to meet the complex demands of muddy rural parish ministry.

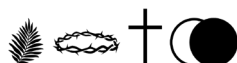
Key figure: Esther

It's interesting how much our faith and character can change when things get tough. In leadership roles, those changes are often more evident. Recently, it may have felt as if we're facing a time of crisis as a Church, as those things once hidden in darkness are finally coming to light. Esther, both as a book and as a person, reminds us of the importance of owning the truth, stepping out with courage, and starting from a place of prayer and discernment. We, like Esther, are called for "such a time as this" (**Esther, 4:14**).

I've loved the story of Esther for as long as I've called myself a Christian. When I first encountered God's call to ordained ministry a decade ago, I spoke with a vocations advisor about how I felt drawn to the character of the king's eunuch (A trusted attendant of the King, offering advice and counsel), Hegai, and his role of preparation. I felt struck by the idea of discipleship as drawing out the beauty with which God has created every human. Later, as I walked through the tougher aspects of incumbency, I've found more resonance with the stubborn devotion of Mordecai, and the unconventional, creative and prayerful actions of Esther.

The book of Esther offers us a cautionary tale of three leaders. Firstly, King Ahasuerus, impulsive and susceptible to influence, accustomed to privilege and surrounded by an echo chamber, has become blind to the manipulation of others. Then, Haman, his ambitious advisor, is willing to sacrifice an entire people for self-gain. Finally, Esther, a Jewish orphan, who finds herself in an unexpected position of leadership. Her boldness is tempered by humility, wisdom, and a willingness to take risks for others. Her actions demonstrate the ways in which God can work through leadership rooted in prayerfulness, compassion, and justice.

Esther is also a tale of considerate rule-breaking, when an edict goes out demanding that everyone should bow down to Haman, Mordecai refuses. As a devout Jew, he cannot bow to anyone but God. When Haman hears of this, he demands a royal edict (force of law, order or command) that all the Jews of Persia are killed. Esther suddenly shifts into a courageous, prayerful, and creative leader. She and her household fast and pray for three days before she breaks two crucial laws. She enters the king's room uninvited, risking death, and prostrates herself at his feet, the reverse of Mordecai's refusal. Esther, seeks the will of God first, and then steps out in courage, knowing that God has called her "for such a time as this".



Questions

- How do the different types of leadership illustrated by Ahasuersus, Haman, and Esther, resonate with your own life and faith?
- Have you ever engaged with the Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving (giving money)? How did God use them to transform you and enrich your faith?
- In times of difficulty, how have you responded? What steps can you take to embody the qualities of Esther (humility, courage, advocacy and boldness of faith, to name a few) both in your personal life and as a church community?

Video reflection

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Will Triffitt

I'm Will and I'm the Digital Engagement Officer at the Diocese of Salisbury, working within the Communications Team. I'm also a member of SML Poole where I served in a variety of roles before joining the Diocese. Outside of work, I love spending time with my family and friends, walking along the beach with a hot drink (or ice cream in the summer) and supporting the mighty Bradford City!

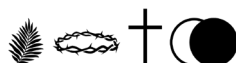
Key figure: Rahab

If you were to write a story featuring an unlikely leader, a hero if you like, who would they be? A prostitute named Rahab may be the most unlikely of all. Many Jewish scholars estimate Rahab was probably 50 years old at the time Jericho fell and that she'd spent around 40 years forced into prostitution. She was an outcast, amongst the lowest in society, denied access into community life. Pushed aside, she would have lived an isolated life, not your everyday leader. The Bible is full of surprises and moments where God does the unexpected, and this is certainly one of them! God chooses Rahab of all people to be a part of his amazing plan. No one is too broken or hurting for God to use.

Joshua, Moses' successor, sent spies to scout Jericho, but they were quickly found out. They hid at Rahab's house in the city wall, and when the King's guard came searching, she sent them on a wild goose chase across the desert. In return, the spies promised to protect her and her family when the Israelites came. But why does Rahab do this? Because she's heard something of who God is and what God has done. "When we heard of it [the Exodus], our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (**Joshua 2:11**). She gets it. She understands what's happening, how God is moving, who God is, and it changes her life.

Rahab isn't your everyday Biblical leader, running a kingdom, fighting battles, teaching thousands etc. But to me she demonstrates how we are all called to be leaders. No matter how broken or excluded we feel, God invites us into his family and includes us in the work of his Kingdom. To lead isn't always about being the person upfront, rather it can simply be an openness and willingness to see what God is doing now, and join in. In an amazing end to the story, the outcast Rahab is included in Jesus' family tree (**Matthew 1:5**), and listed as a hero of faith, "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient" (**Hebrews 11:31**), the only woman to be named in both passages. Her courageous, faith-filled leadership, putting her life on the line to protect others for the sake of God's plan, is inspiring. It's the story of what happened before which fuels and ignites her faith, mixed with a willingness and openness to notice that God is at work, which forges her into a great leader.

Whatever you do, wherever you work and serve (at home, school, office, community, church), however broken, excluded or messed up you feel, God can use you if you're open and willing to listen and respond, and he calls you to lead those around you, maybe even just one or two people, for his glory.

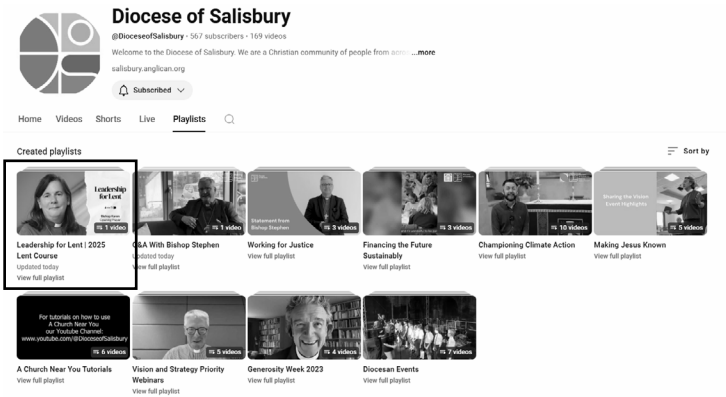


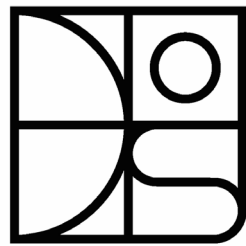
Questions

- If you were to build/design a leader, what would they look like?
- Is brokenness and vulnerability accepted in leaders today?
- Where might be some places in your life where you are called to lead?

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**Making
Jesus
Known**