



**Diocese of Argyll
and The Isles**

Living our Vision:

Praying our Vision

Year 4

Leader's Guide

Living our vision: Year 4

The theme for this year is **Praying our Vision**. The Revd Dr Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in London was the keynote speaker at the Diocesan Conference 2020.

This material is designed as a resource for congregations to further explore the theme of 'Praying our Vision' and relate it to their own situations.

Ros and Chris Brett, Mission Enablers, would be happy to help lead sessions or find suitable discussion leaders if needed. Contact missionenablers@argyll.anglican.org or 07802 746460/07711 944807.

Suggestions for use:

It could be used in several sessions, perhaps as an Advent course. Or it could form the basis for a congregational 'Away-day' (or Away-day-at-home!) Or you could select sections which you feel are most relevant to your congregation. Free free to adapt the material to suit your congregation.

The material and the opening and closing worship were authored by Dr Ros Brett for the use of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. Bible passages are quoted from the NRSV Anglicized edition.

Leaders:

There is a lot of material here. It is meant to be a resource, not a burden. It is up to you how much of this material to use in your congregation; also, over how many sessions you spread the material.

Opening and closing worship are provided at the beginning and end of the booklet respectively.

The opening worship is inspired by the experience at the Diocesan Retreat 2019 when the Revd Andrew Bain led us in thinking about the spirituality of St Benedict.

It would be useful to explain the Lectio Divina to participants before beginning. The passage is read three times (it's good to hear it in three 'voices' if possible) and the hearers are encouraged to respectively listen, chew over and pray over the words. Finally, after a period of silence, the participants are encouraged to simply share, without discussion, a word or phrase from the reading which has struck them particularly.

6 readings are suggested, so that the worship can be used for several sessions. You could, of course, choose completely different passages relevant to your group and to the material.

Opening Worship

You may like to light a candle

Prayer

Loving God, we come into the awareness of your presence. But you have never been absent from us. Open our eyes to see you, and open our hearts to listen to your words of life.

Amen

Lectio divina

*Choose **one** of the following passages. Have it read aloud (if possible, by 3 different people).*

Isaiah 43:1-4

Psalms 103:1-5

Matthew 28:16-20

John 1:14, 16-18

John 14:15-23

2 Corinthians 4:6

Hear it a 1st time (lectio)

Listen. What particularly strikes you?

Hear it a 2nd time (meditatio)

Listen again. Dwell on, 'chew over' what has struck you.

Hear it a 3rd time (oratio).

Pray silently as you listen again.

A silence is kept (contemplatio) – simply 'be' in the presence of God.

After the silence members of the group may speak out a word or phrase from the passage which has struck them and meant something to them (no discussion).

Say together St Benedict's Prayer:

Gracious and holy Father, please give me:

A mind to understand you;

reason to discern you;

diligence to seek you;

wisdom to find you;

a spirit to know you;

a heart to meditate upon you;

ears to hear you; eyes to see you;

a tongue to proclaim you;

a way of life pleasing to you;

patience to wait for you;

and perseverance to look for you.

Grant me: a perfect end,

Your holy presence;

A blessed resurrection, and life everlasting. Amen.

Praying our vision...

Leaders:

We are aware that different congregations may be at different stages of thinking about mission and vision. To pray our vision, we must have some idea of what it is!

The next panel is provided to remind congregations of the materials which helped to cast the vision, and which might need to be reviewed...

It would be good to be able to articulate the congregation's vision before you start on the study material. You might get them to note it on the first blank page in the participants' booklet.

Our vision...

This is the 4th year of 'Living our Vision' in the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles. In order to live our vision and, this year, to pray our vision, we must know what it is! So, this is the moment to recap what your vision as a congregation is. Your congregation should have had a 'Mission Plan' at the end of the 5th year of 'Building the Vision'.

You might need a new Mission Plan. Perhaps you have achieved all that you were aiming for then. Or circumstances have changed and the old plan is no longer appropriate. Or you never made a Mission Plan.

If so, you could either go through the process from that 5th year: <http://argyll.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VisionforMissionpack12Jan2015v2.pdf>

and make a Mission Plan for the next period.

Or you could use/review the material from last year: <http://argyll.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Living-our-Vision-Year-3-Participants-Guide.pdf> <http://argyll.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Living-our-Vision-Year-3-Leaders-Guide.pdf>, especially part 1 and identify some things you wish to do as a congregation at this point.

Sam Wells, who spoke at this year's Diocesan Conference, talks about 4 ways of ministry and mission: Working for; Working with; Being for; and Being with. *Working for* is 'doing' – things for God and other people. *Working with* is also action, but alongside and with the participation of those being ministered to. *Being for* is perhaps most easily seen as 'being on the other person's/community's side', but does not really involve doing anything or being alongside the other in any way. *Being with* is about accompanying people without trying to 'fix' their situation. Perhaps the biggest contrast is between Working for and Being with.

Dr Wells argues that Being with is the basis for Christian ministry and mission (though there are places for the other modes).

- *Working for*
Working with
Being for
Being with

Which best describes your/your congregation's model of ministry and mission? Give examples! Eg: Working for: the church runs a food bank (no recipients are part of the decision-making and running).

- *Do you agree that 'being with' is the basis of ministry and mission? Why? Why not?*

Being with God

Read the following and spend some time in silence thinking about them:

...you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you
(Isaiah 43:4a, NRSVA)

We love because [God] first loved us. (1 John 4:19, NRSVA)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39, NRSVA)

“God’s desire is to be with us in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.” (Sam Wells)

“God’s hungry. Hungry for you.” (Sam Wells, Incarnational Mission. Canterbury Press, 2018, p.240).

- *How does this make you feel?*

Bible Study

- Read Luke 10:38-42
- *What jumps out at you?*
- *What is Mary doing? Place it in one of Wells' four categories.*
- *What is Martha doing? Place that in one of Wells' four categories.*
- *What is the 'one thing' that Mary had chosen? Would you choose that? Or do you relate better to Martha?*
- *If you are a 'Martha', does anything need to change? If you are a Mary, how can you build on that?*
- *So, who is going to cook the dinner? Practically, if Martha also chooses the 'one thing' and sits and listens to what Jesus is saying, how do things get done? Relate that to your congregation's vision/Mission Plan. Does anything need to be changed in the light of Jesus commending the good that Mary has chosen?*

Being with God in prayer

How can we 'be with God'? Sam Wells writes: "The ministry of being with God begins with being with God in prayer". (Incarnational Ministry. Canterbury Press, 2017, p.24).

Here are 3 possible ways:

- personal prayer
- reading Scripture, which helps us understand what God is like and can help us pray.
- prayer together with others

What is your experience of personal prayer?

Do you read Scripture? How often? Does it help you know God? Does it help you pray?

Does praying with others help you to 'be with God'?

What other things help you to 'be with God'? (eg the Eucharist, special places/sacred spaces)

Leaders: Here is some resource material on prayer, which can be shared with the participants if needed.

On prayer in general. Both have some suggestions for the 'how', but aren't how-to books

Mayne, Michael, *Prayer*. Darton, Longman and Todd, 2013

Dalrymple, John. *Simple prayer*. Darton, Longman and Todd, 2010

I find the Grove Booklets a great resource: short and to the point, sometimes a bit provocative, often practical. You can buy them from here: <https://grovebooks.co.uk/>

Some useful ones:

S142 Silence: the gateway to God

S107 Praying with stuff: ideas for hands-on prayer

W108 Labyrinths and prayer stations

(S52 Prayers to remember

sadly, out of print. It recommends having a 'knapsack' of prayers you know by heart, for use when no other prayer comes!)

Daily Prayer

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/>

<https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/> (for something more Celtic)

For lots of ideas (don't be put off if it looks 'not our thing', explore the whole site – the ideas are varied and relate to many traditions)

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/helpmepray>

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/helpmychurchpray>

‘Being with’ and the church

One helpful picture of how churches should work is an ‘Up – In – Out’ view of relationships. ‘Up’ is about our relationship with God, ‘In’ is about our relationships with each other, within the church, and ‘Out’ is about our relationship with the world outside the church – our mission. In healthy churches there will be a good balance between these three.

- *How does this relate to ‘being with’?*

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47, NRSVA)

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another... (Hebrews 10:24-25, NRSVA)

- *What are the ‘meetings together’ which sustain your church life? – both those which are spiritually encouraging, and those which are simply being with, enjoying one another?*

- *Do you have the 'Up-In-Out' balance right?*
- *How should we be praying in the light of this?*

'Being with' and our mission in the world

At last year's Diocesan Conference, Richard Tiplady introduced us to a strategy for outreach – the 4 Ps: prayer, presence, proclamation, persuasion. (There is more about this in the Year 3 Living our Vision material). It all begins with **prayer**.

Here are some ways of praying with the world...

Prayer walking – walking around your community, simply holding what you see before God in prayer.

Read the local newspaper and commit the people and the events to God.

In the intercessions... Be specific about your longings for the world and your local community. What do you want God to do? Remember what God has done in the past and has the power to do now.

The prayer requests in your pewsheets/newsheets ... are they only for the sick, or do they include concerns of your community and your missional involvement in it?

Leaders: Invite other ideas from the group

Being with God and our mission

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. (Exodus 34:29, NRSVA)

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of (lit. that they had been with) Jesus. (Acts 4:13, NRSVA)

Consider:

Being with God shows in our lives.

A deep personal spirituality and a vibrant congregational worship and prayer life lead to mission, because:

- our faith will be attractive
- we will be more confident in our faith

Do you agree?

How have you seen that in your life and the life of your congregation?

Is there anything you need to do?

Closing Worship

The Lord be with you.
And also with you

Let us bless the Lord
Thanks be to God

Prayers

God of all trust,
may we who confess your faith prove it in our lives, with
abundant joy, outrageous hope and dependence on
nothing but your word alone,
through Jesus Christ.

Amen

Janet Morley

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than
all we can ask or conceive, by the power which is at work
among us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ
Jesus from generation to generation for evermore.

Amen

Eph 3:20-21

The Grace
