What is the Lord Calling us to Be and Do?

ENGAGING WITH THE SYNODAL VISION
FOR THE DIOCESE OF HEXHAM & NEWCASTLE

A Guide for Communities

The following resource has been designed to help people engage with the Diocesan Vision.

The suggested sessions seek to support prayerful consideration of the commitments we are invited to make, exploring how this might be owned and lived in our context of One Diocesan Family.

It outlines five suggested sessions that seek to synodally unpack the vision. This is not intended to be prescriptive or to be an information gathering process. This is for prayer and discernment among our community.

How to use this resource

Conversation in the Spirit is an ancient practice of the Church particularly helping all the voices to be heard when people are gathered. This method relies on good communication - being able to hear and understand one another. Here are some practical considerations:

- The meeting space should have chairs arranged in circles. If you are having multiple groups ensure the circles are spaced out from one another.
- Place a focal point at the centre of each circle - a candle for example.
- Display and use the Conversation in the Spirit resource cards ensuring everyone knows they speak only for 1 minute at a time and that silence is important.

Five discernment sessions

1. Discerning the vision together
2. Diocesan commitment 1: To walk with Jesus and enable others to encounter Him
3. Diocesan commitment 2: To grow as One Diocesan Family - rebuilding relationships
4. Diocesan commitment 3: Forming and developing people for mission
5. Diocesan commitment 4: Living justly and caring for our common home

Suggested timings per session

(60 - 90 minutes)

Opening Prayer and Lectio Divina
15 min

Three rounds of
Spiritual Conversation
40 min

Closing Prayer
5 min

If you have 90 minutes allow time for the different groups to share with one another.

SESSION 1

Discerning the vision together

Preparatory reading

It is suggested that ahead of meeting together participants read the Diocesan Vision document shared at Pentecost 2024.

Opening prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who is at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

JEREMIAH 29:11-14

- Allow time for people to repeat the word, phrase or line that resonates for them.
- Conclude this prayer time by reading the text once more.

Spiritual Conversation (see Spiritual Conversation Method resource cards)

Having read the Diocesan Vision:

1. What in this vision connects with your own sense of how God might be calling you?
2. What in this vision seems most relevant to your community?

Closing prayer

Father, pour out your Spirit upon your people,
and grant us a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word,
and a new consecration to your service;
that your love may grow among us;
and your Kingdom come;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SESSION 2

Commitment 1: To walk with Jesus and enable others to encounter Him

Opening prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who is at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina

On the Road to Emmaus

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together.

LUKE 24: 28-33

- Allow time for people to repeat the word, phrase or line that resonates for them.
- Conclude this prayer time by reading the text once more.

Participants to read Commitment 1

Commitment 1: *To Walk with Jesus and Enable Others to Encounter Him.*

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? … and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." (Luke 24:32,35)

We have confidence that the Spirit is at work in our Diocese and that the encounter with the Risen Lord is the heart of our life together. As we receive God's saving love in our lives, we offer that love to others. We are called to:

- Continually renew and nourish ourselves through Jesus' gift of Himself in the scriptures, the sacraments, and the richness and diversity of the Church's liturgy, including:
  - o Participating regularly in the Eucharist and most particularly when the whole community gathers.
  - o Setting aside time for personal and communal prayer allowing the Lord the opportunity to guide us. Continuing our strong Catholic tradition of prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.
  - o Celebrating and receiving the gift of the Lord's forgiveness and mercy, which continues to be offered through the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Be welcoming to all comers and make this a priority in our individual and communal ministries.
- Be a generous people that gives witness to God's love and mercy by accompanying one another in times of suffering and struggle.
- Develop confidence as individuals and as a community to witness to our faith in our daily lives.
- Work with our sisters and brothers in Christ in other communities, giving shared witness to the love of the Lord.

For holiness and sharing Christ with others, St Aidan, pray for us.

Spiritual Conversation (see 'Conversation in the Spirit' resource card)

Having read the Diocesan Vision Commitment 1:

1. When have you encountered Christ?
2. How can we create the space for more people to encounter Christ through our community?

Closing prayer

Father, pour out your Spirit upon your people,
and grant us a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word,
and a new consecration to your service;
that your love may grow among us;
and your Kingdom come;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SESSION 3

Commitment 2: To grow as One Diocesan Family - rebuilding relationships

Opening prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who is at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina

One Body but Many Parts

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

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.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

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

1 CORINTHIANS 12:18-27

- Allow time for people to repeat the word, phrase or line that resonates for them.
- Conclude this prayer time by reading the text once more.

Participants to read Commitment 2

Commitment 2: *To Grow as One Diocesan Family - Rebuilding Relationships.*

"… that they may all be one" (John 17:21)
"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." (1 Peter 3:8)

To be the Lord's missionary disciples, we must be disciples in communion with Christ and one another. We commit to embracing the power of working together: enabling the wisdom and expertise of the lay faithful, the unique pastoral ministry of priests and deacons, the charisms of the religious, the expert service of diocesan employees, and the skills and experience of our trustees to contribute to the flourishing of our communities. Discerning new, collaborative ways to walk together is vital to the life of our Diocese. We are called to:

- Grow as one diocesan family, increasing our understanding of each other's lives, faith, and vocations. We particularly recognise the need to attend to the voices of those most marginalised and wounded by the Church.
- Rebuild trust by listening to the Holy Spirit in prayer, accompaniment and synodal discernment.
- Work together to establish a culture in which our churches are safe places, especially for children and those who are vulnerable for whatever reason. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all.
- Establish a culture whereby our wounds and struggles are acknowledged, our concerns explored, and our voices listened to with respect.
- Resolve differences through just processes that are in keeping with Gospel values.
- Be generous in offering our personal gifts and talents to serve our local communities and the wider diocesan family.

For wisdom, unity and discernment, St Hilda, pray for us.

Spiritual Conversation (see Spiritual Conversation Method resource cards)

Having read the Diocesan Vision Commitment 2:

1. How can this community grow in its sense of being one family?
2. In what practical ways can we develop the power of working together?

You may wish to consider the practical ways families usually grow together. You may wish to consider where you find disunity or disconnection and to consider your potential role in that. You may wish to consider what you can do to bring harmony and/or to foster reconciliation and, following that, what you may need others to do.

Closing prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive -
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

SESSION 4

Commitment 3: Forming and developing people for mission

Opening prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who is at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-Two

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

LUKE 10:1-2

- Allow time for people to repeat the word, phrase or line that resonates for them.
- Conclude this prayer time by reading the text once more.

Participants to read Commitment 3

Commitment 3: *Forming and Developing People for Mission.*

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go... Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:1,2)

As a diocese, we are committed to the importance of formation for all the baptised throughout the whole of our lives so that we may all grow in our shared vocation to holiness and evangelisation. We are called to:

- Be open, as lay and ordained people, to being formed by one another as we discern new ways to be co-responsible for mission.
- Give special attention to the accompaniment and formation of young people and their families, being open to being guided by them.
- Value, support and develop the active service of the laity. Recognising that formation is vital for the flourishing of people's faith and for developing particular ministries in the Church and the world.
- Work together to enable bishop, priests and deacons to be centred daily on the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and the sacramental life of the Church; offering support and formation to maintain their well-being, fellowship and ongoing development.
- Build ever closer connections between home, parish, schools, chaplaincies, and our youth services, and share resources and expertise.
- Discern the development of appropriate ministries and structures in a changing context, being intentional and specific about our formation needs at both diocesan and parish level.

For knowledge, understanding and evangelisation, St Bede, pray for us.

Spiritual Conversation (see Spiritual Conversation Method resource cards)

Having read the Diocesan Vision Commitment 3:

1. What opportunities for formation are available in this community? **or** How are we being formed?
2. In what ways could we deepen formation in this community?

Closing prayer

Father, pour out your Spirit upon your people,
and grant us a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word,
and a new consecration to your service;
that your love may grow among us;
and your Kingdom come;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SESSION 5

Commitment 4: Living justly and caring for our common home

Opening prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;
teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You, who is at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina

The Sheep and the Goats

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

MATTHEW 25:34-40

- Allow time for people to repeat the word, phrase or line that resonates for them.
- Conclude this prayer time by reading the text once more.

Participants to read Commitment 4

Commitment 4: *Living Justly and Caring for Our Common Home.*

"…what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Jesus identified himself with the poor and those rejected by society. He came to proclaim good news to the poor and commands the Church to continue His mission. We are called to:

- See Christ in the poor and marginalised; to have a preferential option for the poor as we seek to make God's love present in practical, concrete ways.
- Respond to the cry of the earth and care for our common home by living and ministering sustainably. To be advocates and stewards for climate and biodiversity justice.
- Be advocates for social justice at home and abroad, living and ministering in accordance with Catholic Social Teaching.
- Listen to, be changed by, and amplify the voices of those who are marginalised.
- Be advocates of human rights that flow from and uphold the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God.
- Work against racism, misogyny, homophobia, and all other prejudices which attack human dignity and weaken the body of Christ.
- Work with our sisters and brothers of all faiths and none to live justly and care for our common home.

For justice and care for our common home, St Cuthbert, pray for us.

Spiritual Conversation (see Spiritual Conversation Method resource cards)

Having read the Diocesan Vision Commitment 4:

1. In what ways is this community responding to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth and how might we increase this response?
2. In what ways could this community reach out and hear the realities of those who may be on the peripheries?

Closing prayer

Whirlwind Spirit of God,
roar through our timidities and fears,
shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities,
sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy,
blow down the walls that separate us, one from another.

Then into all our empty spaces, breathe
re-strengthened courage to challenge injustice,
renewed belief in the urgency of our vocation,
revitalised passion to change our lifestyles,
re-dedication to speak only words that build and unite.

Let gentle breeze and still small voice
become in us today
mighty wind and loud proclamation.
Make of us a Pentecost people!
Amen.

Prayer: Kathleen O'Brien/CAFOD