

## Guided Reflection

### Why Come Away and Rest a While?

We find ourselves on the cusp of emerging from the greatest global crisis since the Second World War. It has been an incredibly demanding year of ministry in the gospel of Christ which has presented significant challenges and opportunities for worship, community and mission.

In this dark and exhausting time, God has been at work for good. We've been creating new and impromptu forms of hospitality, by calling the elderly and isolated, sending out written forms of prayer and worship, setting up online worship and services, engaging with new people online and through social media. We've been meeting the needs of our communities with incredible generosity - through food banks, food pantries, food parcels, clothes, computers and practical support. And we've been building community where we have encountered it - online, WhatsApp, in driveways, and on Zoom. We've done all this at times away from our church buildings, we've gone out into the community in practical and digital ways - and we've encountered God there - the God of hope, our promising God who always keeps his promises.

There is no doubt, however, that this crisis has wounded us, at a diocesan and local level. Normal patterns of churchgoing have been disrupted; engagement with children, young people and families has been lower; there are concerns about our financial health; education, home, work and family life have all been affected; and wellbeing and mental health have been impacted. And of course, those working on the front line have given their all in keeping our nation and communities going. Despite this global catastrophe inflicting many wounds, we know as the Church of Christ, that it's only in and through our wounds that we find healing and new life.

Therefore, we want to encourage each other to continue reflecting, discussing and praying together, so that, with the inspiration and strength of the Holy Spirit we can discover the hope of a church and purpose beyond the crisis.

As we embark on the roadmap to the end of lockdown and restrictions, we want to explore together how we can emerge hopefully as the church in each local place across our diocese. How we can live God's love, with generosity and joy, imagination and courage, within this unprecedented period.

### Reflection Framework

What follows is a framework for reflection, learning and conversation based on The Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mark 6:30-44).

Please use this framework for reflection as part of a short retreat during Holy Week, in the hour or so, or in the days before the Zoom part of the retreat. If you haven't booked into this then you can do so.



**BOOK NOW**

As you go through the reflection, pause to think, to pray, or to be silent.

Perhaps make notes of your thoughts.

Following your mini retreat please do encourage others to use this reflection if they are not able to take part during Holy Week, and feel free to do so with your home group, PCCs, ministry teams, colleagues, deanery synod, and deanery chapter.

## Guided Reflection

### Reflection

Clear your diary, desk, space and switch off any gadget that might distract you. Find a comfortable place to sit. If possible sit with your feet on the floor, close your eyes for a moment or two and become aware of your breathing.

Read Mark 6:30-44.

v30 - 'The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.'

In what ways have you seen God at work for good in and through the life of your church(es)?

How will you use the experience of the past 12 months to lay foundations and look hopefully ahead, taking with you learning, wisdom and insight?

v31 - 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.'

What needs to be put in place to support spiritual recovery and wellbeing now and in the months ahead?

v34 - 'As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd and he had compassion for them.'

What needs do you see in the community or communities of which you are part? Who do you have compassion for?

v36 - 'send them away so they can buy something for themselves to eat.'

Having very recently recalled all they have done in Jesus's name, the disciples fell into old ways.

What will you do to ensure that you do your best not to fall back into old unhelpful habits/ways as lockdown ends?

### Be Still

Be encouraged to turn off your email notifications, switch your phone to silent, maybe locate yourself in a different part of the house other than at your desk or in your work space, to enable you to be attentive to the voice of Christ within.



v37 - 'you give them something to eat.'

What is Christ instructing you to do for your people? What purpose does he have for you? Why?

v38 - 'How many loaves do you have?'

What has God given you or placed in your hands (resources, skills, abilities) to help you to fulfil your purpose or to meet the needs of your communities? Who can you partner with and how will you go about partnering with them?

v38 - 'Five, and two fish.'

What will we generously provide in order to fulfil our God-given purpose? How will we encourage others to give generously of their time, skills and money?

v41 - 'Taking the five loaves and two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves.'

What do we need to trust God for in the weeks and months ahead? How will you commit to pray for God's help?

v42 - 'And all ate and were filled.'

What has Christ given you to share with the people of your local place? How will you share it this year?

v43 - 'and they took up twelve baskets full.'

What dream or hope is God giving you, even within the pain and difficulty of the current situation?

## What next?

In the light of your reflections, what is God saying to you at this time as an individual, leader or church member?

If it's helpful make a note of these and give thanks to God for them.

## Concluding Prayer

Living God, draw us deeper into your love

Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve

Holy Spirit make us heralds of good news.

Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us,

To live your love with generosity and joy, imagination and courage

For the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus

Amen.

