

EMERGING HOPEFULLY

SUPPORT FOR LEADERS,
PARISHES AND CHURCHES

Mission Recovery Workshop



WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Workshop

This is part of a series of workshops focused on emerging hopefully from the pandemic and lockdown and we hope these will be a support for you as leaders, in your churches, parishes, benefices and deaneries.

We want these sessions to support your mission action planning and plans to re-start or start NWCs (new worshipping communities) or FX's (fresh expressions).

This pack gives you creative ways of reflecting and thinking and discussing.

This workshop pack also includes:

- MAP (Mission Action Plan) guide and workshop and contact information
- RNP (Reaching New People) guide and contact information
- The "Why" Activity sheet
- Powerpoint presentation

This workshop can be done in person or online and will help you to discuss as a team/PCC or whole church.

At times you will need to break into small groups if you are a larger group.

As this workshop raises a lot of questions and there will be much to think about, you will probably need an extended time to think, consider and discuss and may want to do this in more than one session, and create times and topics for prayer.

It is intended to spark your thinking and to raise questions. You will begin the thought process, and it will take you time to find all the answers.

Aims of the workshop

- To enable leaders and teams to rediscover God's purpose for them and their church(es) as we emerge from lockdown.
- To support the revision of your MAP(s).
- To assist plans to start or restart new worshipping communities (NWCs) or fresh expressions (FXs) of church.

We hope that this workshop will create opportunities to think, pray and ponder that will go beyond this time together and that it will help you in all your conversations about the "What next" for your church and community discussions.

SUGGESTED OPENING WORSHIP

(approximate timing: 5 mins)

We recognise our wounds, hopes and fears
(as individuals and church/es) at this time.

Silence

We meet in the presence of God

**who knows our needs,
hears our cries,
feels our pain,
and heals our wounds.**

Silence

Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the
disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge of his presence
with us,
that we maybe strengthened and sustained
by his risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness
and truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

EMERGING

(approximate timing: 5 mins)



Instructions for
this section

**To get you tuned in to where we are and
what we are feeling, I will read out each
question and after each question there will
be a pause for you to answer either using
the chat function (if online) or in person.**

(If you are doing this in person it could take
much more time, make sure you allow for
this in your timings):

What are we emerging from (change,
challenges, pain, opportunities etc)?

Pause

What are we emerging with (hopes, fears,
wounds, ideas etc)?

Pause

What are we emerging into (changed
world, possibilities, confusion, problems
etc)?

Pause

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(approximate timing: 15 mins)

Read Genesis 18:1-16 (ask someone to read this to the whole group)

Ask your participants to consider these questions in groups – allow 10 mins for this part of the exercise) (if using online you will need to put the questions into the chat function so that they can be seen when in the breakout rooms)

Where do you see yourself in this narrative?

Which character or part of the narrative best represents you at the moment?

Which character or part of the narrative best represents your church(es) or context?

Discussion in groups (or whole group) - this does not need to be fed back to whole group at this point, although if there is time it is good to hear from 2 or 3 people

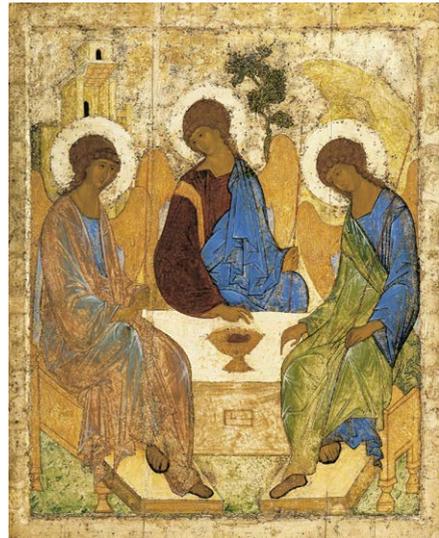
AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE TRINITY

(approximate timings: 5 mins)



Leaders instruction for this section

For this session we will be basing our discussions around the encounter that Sarah and Abraham had with the Holy Three and using Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity to help us in our discussions and thinking and planning.



Rublev's famous icon of the Trinity depicts the three holy visitors that Abraham and Sarah encountered near the great trees of Mamre.

It is an icon rich in meaning and theology which illustrates the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah as well as insights into the communal life of the Trinity.

I wonder how this icon and the bible passage speak into our experiences of the past year and all that lies ahead as we emerge from this strangest of years.

What you see in this icon is that the strangers who are entertained by Abraham and Sarah become the hosts and this is what Rublev is depicting. The strangers as host. You will notice there is a space at the table with the Holy Three and that space is for you. You can pull up your chair and sit at that table. When you join this table, you will complete the circle. This is called “the circle of love”. We are embraced in that circle of love and we are called in our ministry to express that and play our part in that through all that we do and say in your worship and our lives.

If you look from a distance at that icon you will notice that you can trace the inside line of the two outside characters – The Father and The Spirit and you will see within that – in the centre – the shape of a chalice is depicted. In that you then see Jesus gives his life for us all. This icon is full of meaning – if you want to explore further:

Copies of *The Circle of Love* by Ann Persson
– are available from the RNP team



Reflection (instructions for this section)

At this point it would be good to spend some time looking at the icon, reflecting and being open to what God maybe saying to you about your own life at this time, your own part in God’s church, what God maybe saying to you about your own context at this time.

Spend a few minutes looking through the icon. What do you see?

Silence



Leaders instruction for this section

In this place of encounter where Sarah and Abraham meet the Holy Trinity there is pain and difficulty. It is the place where the Triune God speaks into Abraham and Sarah’s childlessness and the pain of that and God issues an unbelievable promise of a son from whom a nation will grow. A promise which we know, through reading the narrative of the Bible, God keeps. This is a passage of hope that is spoken into a place of pain, which many of us will identify with at this time, Covid has caused pain and disruption in our churches and communities, and we need this message of hope.

Suggested Comfort Break

(approximate timing: 5 mins)



Welcome Back.

We are going to continue to reflect on this scripture and all that it can say to us at this time.

AT THE ENTRANCE... IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY

(approx. timing: 10 mins)

Abraham stood at the entrance to the tent, we are not sure why, but perhaps avoiding the direct sunlight outside and the intense heat within.

I wonder how does this apply to the current situation of your church(es) or context? We often stand at the entrance caught between difficulty within and difficulty without, we have come to accept heat on the inside and heat on the outside.

If we look on the inside, we may be exhausted and bruised by the intensity of trying to grow flourishing churches in today's world, trying to keep 'the show on the road' whilst fixing the roof, increasing giving, and saving the planet! Just as Abraham and Sarah faced childlessness, childlessness is also a problem we face as a church - the numbers of children are decreasing steadily and COVID has meant it has been even more difficult to keep connected with those children and young people we do know and also the people who were connected with our new worshipping communities.

As we venture outside. we can be a bit baffled and bamboozled by the extensive rejection of the church, from a world that perceives us as racist, sexist and homophobic. Yet we are aware of a great spiritual hunger within society. During this past year we have seen online church attendance increase by 4%, with many people trying 'church' for the first time in this way.



In groups discuss the following questions:

What difficulties are you caught between at the moment, the difficulties on the inside? (finance, human resources, equipment needed etc).

What difficulties on the outside, just as Abraham did standing on the edge of his tent looking out, as you look out from the church(es) into your community what needs do you see? (mental health issues, food poverty, tech poverty, new housing etc).

Where might God be calling you to encounter him?

What is one thing you can do to help address these challenges?

Reflect

Make a note and discuss as a group.

HOSPITALITY

(approx. timing: 10 mins)



Leaders Instructions

Let's look together as a whole group at this idea of hospitality that is described in this passage from Genesis

What do you notice about hospitality described in the Genesis narrative?

Share a few ideas as a whole group - take time to hear from everyone who wants to contribute if possible or split into smaller groups to discuss.



Leaders Instructions

Share these insights with the whole group

The Holy Trinity inspires personal and communal hope for the future. And this takes place through hospitality - an impromptu encounter with God near the entrance to Abraham and Sarah's tent.

In some ways this relates to the demanding situation we have found ourselves in over the past year - creating new and impromptu forms of hospitality in a challenging and painful context.

We've been 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 - impromptu and new forms of hospitality. The ingenuity and commitment has been amazing.

We've been meeting the needs of our communities - like Sarah and Abraham we've looked to provide with 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, on Zoom.

And we've done all this at times near our tent but not in it (as sometimes we've not been able to gather in our buildings), and we've gone out into the community in practical and digital ways - and we've encountered God there - the God of hope, our God who always keeps his promises and hears our prayers.



Discussion in Groups around these 2 questions

How can we make sure that we continue to provide hospitality and encounter God outside as well as inside our tent?

(In this past year or so we have encountered new opportunities, how can we continue to engage in these new ways, ie online worship, new groups of people we have met etc)

In what ways could you reach out in generosity, build new friendships, and help people grow in faith in Christ?

(this is where we change our mindset perhaps not expecting people to come into our church, so looking at how we can go out to meet them, how we can disciple them, etc).

Discussion

Feedback

Decide on one action you could take for each question that is a forward and positive step.

Potential comfort Break

(5 mins)

UNBELIEVABLE HOPE

(approximate timings: 10 mins)



Leaders Instructions

The unbelievable hope that Sarah laughed at - she was old, exhausted and beyond her child bearing years and into this moment God steps and promises her that within a year she will have a child. Not surprising that she laughed as this must have seemed impossible to her.

Personally reflect on the following question

In what ways do we laugh at God's promises? What promise(s) do we struggle to believe as a leader, church, parish or benefice? Why?

Personally reflect (quietly for 1 minute) this maybe a question you will need to keep coming back to, thinking about it in more detail.



Moving on - Why Activity Question

(approximate timings 20 mins - could take much longer.

God has a hope-filled purpose for us and churches in every place.

But why? Activity - see attached Activity Form

(Explanation)

In this next activity we would like you to work together in small groups to answer the following question, the purpose of this is to ask that question and whatever your 'Why' answer, continue to drill down and ask 'But Why' on five separate occasions

For example:

Your response maybe to the first **Why?**

- 1 This will bless us as it blesses others.
But Why?
- 2 This helps us to consider others.
But Why?
- 3 We do this to fulfil God's call on us.
But Why?
- 4 To show the people that there is a God who cares for them.
But Why?
- 5 Because we are Jesus' hands and feet in the world.

The question to consider for this activity:

What hope is God calling us to bring to the people and places of our community/parish/benefice? Why?

Reflect on the above question and when you've come up with a response answer the 'but why?' question 5 times.

Share one or two examples, continue to work on this as it is a fundamental question to work through.

ON THE CUSP

(approximate timings: 15 mins)



Leaders Instructions

It has been said that we are on the cusp of a new world. As we look to emerge hopefully from the pandemic in the months and years ahead, we recognise that we are not quite sure how life, work, family, church, community, schools and education settings etc will take shape. Will we take this opportunity to build on all that we have learnt in the past year and a half, all the new skills, the new ways of doing things, or will we simply fall back into nostalgia and the temptation of old ways? Will we build on all that we have learned to form new ideas, or will it be a hybrid, a combination of the two - old and new? We suspect it will be the latter. Even this will mean a time of adjustment for God's Church - recovering, re-connecting, re-imagining, re-vitalising, re-starting and this will require a great deal of prayer and reflection. It will be a new world in lots of ways, a time of adjustment and we have been given a fresh chance to discern the future, to see where God is at work, so that we can join in.

Being or dwelling on the cusp or threshold is an important spiritual space for us to occupy. It can be an exciting and encouraging space to be in, but it can also be, for many, a deeply disturbing spiritual space as nothing is sure or certain. And yet it is important to recognise 'the threshold' is an important transformative space where we can encounter God in our reflection, discussion, prayer, pondering and also in our excitement at what new things God has in store for us and our community.

How can we recognise that this is the spiritual space that we currently occupy and not rush ahead in our enthusiasm nor do our best to avoid it if it is disturbing to us?



Discussion (in small groups)

How will we use the experience of the past year to look hopefully ahead?

What God-given dream or purpose are you beginning to discern?

What do you need to leave behind?

What new ideas / skills / learning can you take with you in to the future?



Discuss in groups

MISSION RECOVERY



Leaders Instructions

Having done some of this thinking around the last few questions you may well want to start considering these next bullet points and create an action point for the 'what is the next step' for each one.

Identify your next step / action for each of the following:

- going deeper into God in a changed context (eg do you consider continuing with online worship, or other things that you have been doing in this interim period?)
- transforming communities that have been deeply impacted (are there communities that you have connected with in a new way that you want to continue being with in some way?)
- making new disciples by exploring new opportunities (finding those places and ways to nurture new disciples where people can begin to join that 'circle of love' that we talked about earlier and be part of the Trinity?)

Make a note of each step or action (for further discussion and action).

FINAL QUESTIONS

In the light of your actions, how does your MAP need to be revised? When will you do this? How will you do it?



Leaders Instructions

See the enclosed resource on the MAP process and the Flourishing Churches contact details for support and information about up and coming workshops.

In what ways do the actions affect how you might start or restart a new worshipping community or fresh expression of church?

See the enclosed Reaching New People Guide and the RNP team contact details for tailored discussion, support and training for your context



Leaders Instructions

You may find this short closing act of worship a good way to end your time together.

CONCLUDING WORSHIP

Final prayer

As we plan and make decisions

God be our way.

As we learn and ask questions,

God be our truth

As we grow and as we change

God be our life.

God the Father,

by whose glory Christ

was raised from the dead,

strengthen you (us) to walk

with him in his risen life;

and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be among you and remain with you always.

Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen.

WHY?

What hope is God calling us to bring to the people and places of your community / parish / benefice?

...BUT WHY?

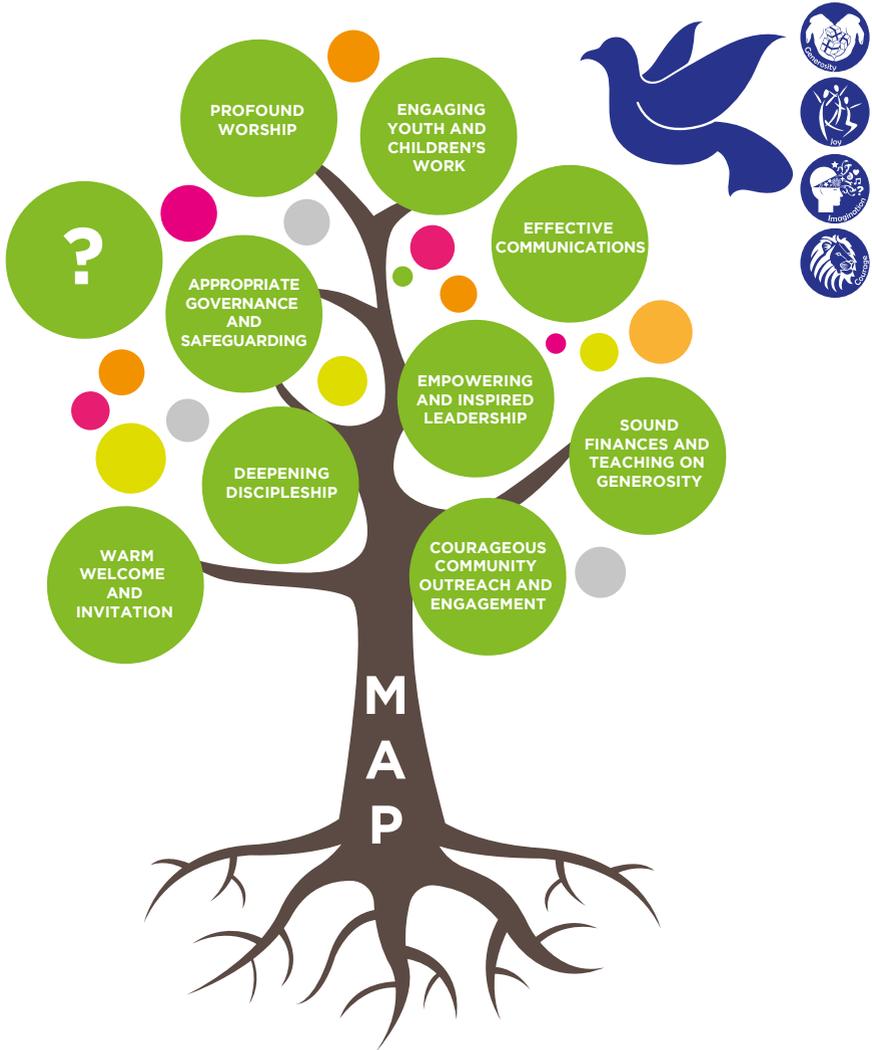
...BUT WHY?

...BUT WHY?

...BUT WHY?

“BEAR FRUIT, FRUIT THAT WILL LAST”

JOHN 15 v16



ROOTED IN
GOD'S WORD & GOD'S PRESENCE