



A Time to Change
Together

Resourcing Sustainable Church

Growing together

**A five-week course to help us to pray, worship,
plan and work together as followers of Christ in
the Diocese of Lincoln**

Lent 2023.

“From Christ, the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” **Ephesians 4.16**

Let us go on a journey. A journey in which we are confident in who we are as children of the creator God. A journey in which we travel together. A journey in which we have the companionship and guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ. A journey which is the pilgrimage of the church. A journey in which we touch the lives of all we meet on the way.

Daunting? The National Space Centre at Leicester used to have badges that said “Actually, it is rocket science”. Our badges for this journey might well say “Actually, it is for the faint-hearted”. The journey might seem challenging. It might seem to require more sacrifice than we dare consider making. It might be seen to be surrounded by insurmountable dangers, risks and opposition. We may confront our journey from “I” to “we”, from churchgoers to disciples, from a people in decline to those with the new energy of new life, from hopeless to hope-inspiring, as a great idea but impossible. But it is only too much for us if we try to do it alone. We have to learn that we work for the flourishing of the church and the transformation of individual and shared lives, together. Together with our fellow members of the body of the fellowship of the baptised, and together with the Lord Jesus Christ – God with us. So here we are - unworthy, weak, unready, faint-hearted – we are the people God has chosen to transform his church, his world and his creatures.

Time to Change Together. To borrow from the language of protestors:

What do we want?

New life!

When do we want it?

Now!

How shall we do it?

Together!

This programme of five sessions explores what it is to be part of the movement the Lord instituted with his disciples. A movement experienced by the disciples in their shared life of ministry, teaching and service. A movement cemented by all the Lord delegated to his disciples, and therefore to us, as he challenged them to pick up the ball and run with it. A movement given power by the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost. A movement established as a closely-knit family of those who knew and loved the Lord, growing as they collaborated, broke bread together, prayed, and continued the Lord's work – the mission to make disciples of all and the mission to feed all the sheep. Bishop Stephen spoke inspiringly at our three Archdeaconry Vision Days of our vocation as Christians, members of the church through Baptism, to discover the sustaining power of reinventing church as the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles did. The early church was inspired by knowledge of Christ, but challenged to create a church for which there was no precedent. No prototype. They used “faithful improvisation”, and that is what Time to Change Together invites us to use. Challenges us to use.

Changing our lives, changing our churches, changing the world – that cannot be all talk, so this five-week programme invites us to take some action and to have some new experiences too.

If you are following this programme alone – and you are welcome to try! – you will have to imagine some of the collaborative work. Try if you can to find a group that is exploring and following this journey together. We are now beginning to express our “church belonging” not just in “my church”, but in the sustaining and inviting common life of a Local Mission Partnership. Your church is part of such a partnership, and we are all committed to welcome and support each other. Ask one of your ministers where you might look for fellows so you can, at this critical “time”, explore your own and your church's opportunity for “change”, and do it, like the early church and like our 3-personned God, “together”.

Itinerary for the journey

Identity. The journey of this Lent Course begins by taking stock of who we are, how we are doing, how we relate to the Lord, what our hopes and ambitions are.

Belonging. It moves on to explore our need for belonging, and what the church offers us in a common life in Christ.

Growing. As we travel we grow – in understanding, in discipleship, in commitment to do the Lord's work. We hope also we may pick up others as we travel, curious or inspired by the journey. We should be getting fitter, too.

Sharing. Discovering the give and take of being a community on the move together, learning to pool our skill, play to our strengths, and value what others contribute.

Proclaiming. Sharing all that we are finding along the way we are travelling together, inviting others to come along, and telling all of the importance of the destination, the value of the journey, and the companionship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kit and provisions

What do we need for the journey?

- This journey-guide
- The bible, as our resource, map and guidebook
- A time and a place for:
 - Doing things together each week
 - A daily time of reflection and prayer alone with God
 - A daily contact with at least one fellow traveller, in person, online or by text
- A note-book to record your experiences

Get printed copies from Parish Support, by telephoning 01522 504050 or at parishsupport@lincoln.anglican.org.

Sermon series Sunday Evensong at the Cathedral follows themes of this course. Leaders' webinar online.

Some commitments

We should aim to find time and opportunity over the weeks to:

- Follow this course, ideally with others, and make it a priority
- Join in prayer or worship at least weekly
- Join in worship at least once at another church in your Local Mission Partnership, ideally of a different Type.
- Offer to do something helpful in your own church or the wider church that you don't normally do – pray, read, serve refreshments, make gifts for others, sit with visitors.
- Make one or more acts of generosity – money, things, actions. Personal or anonymous. In or outside your church.
- Make it clear to someone in your life or whom you meet, and who may not realise this, that you are traveling as a disciple of Jesus Christ
- Identify a “buddy” for your journey – using texting or phone calls, messaging or some private medium – to whom you will send updates, encouragement and requests for prayer as often as you can. They can be equally valuable if they are on the same bus or back home.
- Score each day as a record – responses will change:
 - A 1-5 – How confident do I feel about the journey?
 - B 1-5 – Have I had personal experience or insights
 - C 1-5 – How are my fellow travellers getting on?
- Begin to plan what you might do differently once this short journey has been done.

And some rules

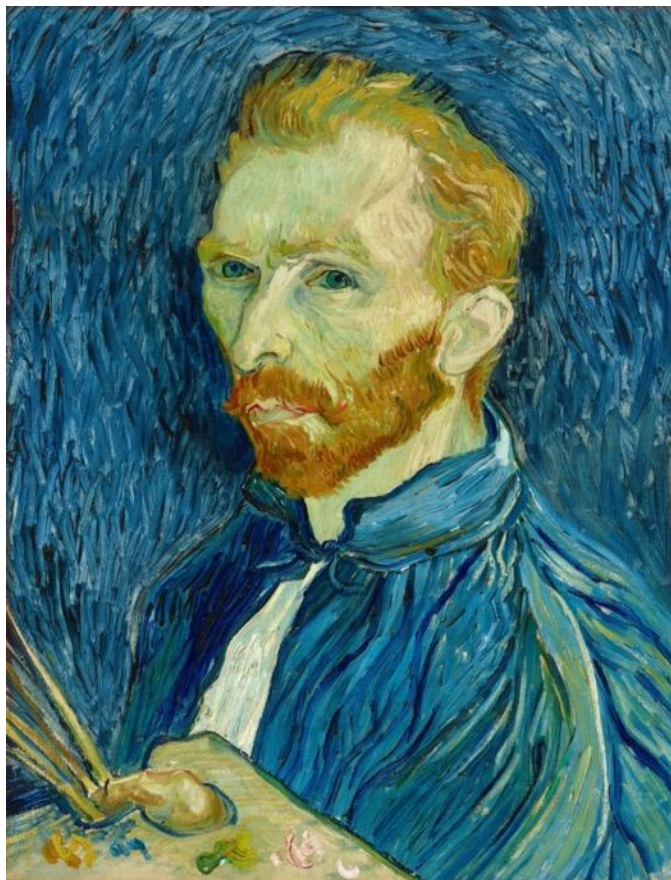
- Share and ask for help from a minister or trusted friend if you are struggling
- Only share in the group what you feel confident to share
- Keep confidence and privacy within the group, and only share the conversations and statements of others that are explicitly agreed to be shareable

Week one

Identity

Welcome! There is a famous Victoria Wood scene, the opening of a sitcom about a package holiday, where we and they discover who their fellow travellers will be. A combination of nightmare and excitement. The likelihood is we know each other to some extent, but on this occasion we don't clearly know where we are heading and what is in store. For a journey with our fellow disciples and along with the Lord Jesus Christ, you might imagine we'd start by getting to know each other. Let us, instead, spend a little time getting to know ourselves. How we see ourselves. How God sees us. What we bring to God.

If you were able to paint a self-portrait, what would it reveal?



This self-portrait by Vincent Van Gogh from the US National Collection in Washington, is one of his latest paintings.

What might you glean from it – set aside if you can what you know of the artist?

You can see things which speak of his physical self, obviously his skills, maybe his circumstances. His soul? His mental health? His relationship with his brother or with society, with God, even.

Some of us can talk endlessly about ourselves, others are much more private. If you have a Facebook or Instagram account, you will have been invited to describe yourself. Can you choose three words that sum you up. Will it be what you really are? Or what you want people to know about you? God, of course, knows much more, and smiles when we dress up our description. Have a go, privately, at three words.

Here are the three words, chosen by others, to describe Edward Heath. The parts of him recognised by the public, anyway.

Not much about the private man. His faith and loyalty to the Church of England and to Salisbury Cathedral. Whom he loved and whether they loved him.

Not much about how he was in himself, what he struggled with, what he hoped for.



ACTION Take a Post-It Note or two. On one write your public three words, an epitaph, like Edward Heath's, and be prepared to share it. On another write what you believe God can see, what God's three words for you might be – put this away safely. Discuss the exercise, but not the content. You might even want a third version. What is going on here?

TOPIC We often have pieces of music or poems or other items that connect us both with our past and with our sense of identity. Inheritance tracks. Think about what yours are. Why? What do they say about you? If you've got them with you, you could play them and share them.

The wonderful hymn we are using to explore growing together, “I come with joy to meet my Lord” is by Brian Wren, a United Reformed minister and theologian, and a prolific hymn-writer, who had a strong view that hymns were poetry and theology as well as music. He encourages the reading of his hymns as well as singing. This song pivots around the Eucharist. The first verse starts where we are this week – first person singular – “I”. By the second verse the “I” is contextualised – “with Christians far and near”. By the fifth verse, when we’ve met the Lord in scripture and in sacrament, it is “we”. That is why we are focusing on being confident in the “I” in this first session. Read his opening verse and see if you recognise yourself in it.

I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me.

There are many ways in which you can feel yourself “a child of God”. Through our belief that we are made in God’s image – all of us! Through the name Jesus uses and asks us to use – Father. In the prayer we use daily – the Lord’s Prayer. If you really want to see how the church has been given the authority to make each one of us, have a look at the baptism service. Our identity is given to us in our baptism – not as popularly misunderstood our name – that is the registrar’s job! Get this, from the baptism service:

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism:
N, by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

**We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;
we are children of the same heavenly Father;
we welcome you.**

Children of the same heavenly Father! Is that part of the identity we have? And what does it make us in relation to each other?

A little of the Psalms.

Psalm 139.12-16

What does this say about our identity?

11 Even darkness is no darkness with you;
the night is as clear as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

12 For you yourself created my inmost parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

13 I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
marvellous are your works, my soul knows well.

14 My frame was not hidden from you,
**when I was made in secret
and woven in the depths of the earth.**

15 Your eyes beheld my form, as yet unfinished;
already in your book were all my members written,

16 As day by day they were fashioned
when as yet there was none of them.

Discuss this portion of Psalm 139. What feelings does it stimulate?
Awe? Pride? Gratitude? Apprehension?

Planning for next week

Check out the list of things you might want to do on Page 5. You may want to discuss these and think about which of them you are able to do, whether there any you could do together. This course goes further than just reading and meeting – it asks us to experiment with the TTCT objectives of Collaboration, Generosity and Mission. You'll get more out of it if you try.

Make sure you know which the other worshipping communities of your Local Mission Partnership are. That way you can pray for them (the minimum!) and you can join with them in worship.

Now close in prayer together or worship, or bless each other in the Grace.

Week Two

Belonging

You're back! Great news. How has the week been? Did you manage any of the tasks on the list? Or come up with something better? Share a few thoughts on what you have done, what you plan to do and what you hope to learn.

The pronouns we use say a lot about our identity. In his address to the three Archdeaconry Vision Days, Bishop Stephen talked about how we describe ourselves as churches when we used pronouns. These pronouns shift as relationships change. When you are new to a church or a club or a social group you use “you” and “your”. “Your morning service”. When telling a relative on the phone about your church visit it’s “their great flowers”. There is a magical moment when it becomes “our morning service” and “our great flowers. That is the moment we feel we belong.

Where do you belong? It is such an important idea and an important word, but it has lots of meanings. Do you belong to the RAC or the AA? If you do, it really just means you have a contract with an organisation to look after you when you break down. However much their marketing might try to build loyalty by saying it is more, do you, to quote the sociologists, “strongly identify with the organisation and its members,



feel a deep affinity, a coincidence of purpose, and find it a space or an environment in which you can flourish and be fully yourself”? Do you belong to a sports supporters’ club, or a political party? A Union?



That has more sense of loyalty, and also might be about place as well as ethos and activity.



DISCUSS. In your experience of belonging – try listing where you use the language of belonging – which have the characteristic of shared identity, and which are just contractual?

Think about other words that express belonging – or alternatively, not belonging. When people who work at Edward King House say “the Diocese”, they are talking about all the clergy, ministers, lay representatives and people and churches – all of them. When people in churches say “the Diocese” they mean the people, institution and functions based in Edward King House. The complete opposite. What does that tell us? Can we change it?

CONVERSATION. Talk for a while about your sense in the group of what, in the church, you belong to. Make a list. My church? My benefice? Maybe for some people, our diocese? The Church of England? The Christian Church? Not yet, probably, your Local Mission Partnership. And what is the difference between the feeling of belonging you have for each of these?

Do you remember when as a child you said your address was Jean Smith, 18 Church Grove, Blagby-in-the-Wold, Caistor, W Lindsey, Lincolnshire, England, Great Britain, Europe, the World, the Solar System, the Universe. Try it for where you are now. Then use the same idea to answer the question, which church do you belong to?

BIBLE STUDY Going to a church – a significant number of people, perhaps a reducing number, do this – is important, but it is not what the early life of the church that we learn in the New Testament was all about. They didn't go to church, they were church.

Divide into two groups and look at two passages that describe the life of the early church. **Romans 12.10-13** is clearly about the common life and belonging of the church. **Acts 2.42-end** is the classic description of a belonging-based growing church. Most of the post-resurrection New Testament is addressed to churches, ie groups of disciples to which people belong, not to individuals. Not a building in sight. Our faith is built up by where we belong, not by what we visit. Arguably, to focus on the “me”, not the “us”, where the “us” is the community of belonging, is to miss the point of the New Testament. Say the Lord's Prayer – where does it say “me”?

Belonging is an essential for people. Scientists talk of “Belongingness”. They use the language of social bonds, of commitment, of protective circles. Even in the secular world, it is clear belonging is essential to full personal flourishing. Belonging in any real way is about trust, collaboration, support, joint enterprise, and shared values. In our relationship with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, belonging to the church, being part of the Body of Christ, is essential.

Time to Change Together challenges us to belong in the fullest sense. And to have what was rather clunkily described, in the first paperwork, as “multiple layers of belonging”. The immediately local, the array of worship communities with shared location or shared identity, the sphere of a number of really flourishing churches, a Deanery Partnership, the Diocese, the national church. Our hooks into each of these will be different. Familiarity and being personally affirmed will be harder in the larger places, but the opportunities in the smaller and more local places will be fewer. What would need to change to feel you belong to all these?

A little of the Psalms.

Psalm 73.23-28

What does this say about belonging to God? Which words suggest the security of belonging?

23 Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

24 You will guide me with your counsel
and afterwards receive me with glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
**And there is nothing upon earth that I desire
in comparison with you.**

26 Though my flesh and my heart fail me,
**God is the strength of my heart and my portion for
ever.**

27 Truly, those who forsake you will perish;
you will put to silence the faithless who betray you.

28 But it is good for me to draw near to God;
**in the Lord God have I made my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.**

Planning for next week

Keep a list of things you are hoping to do from Page 5. You may want to discuss these and share any problems you might be having with them? Where are “worshipping away? What new tasks are you trying out? What new generosity are you showing?

Arrange time between these weekly sessions to pray, visit and to try new ways of being involved in your church community. Explore where you might find belonging.

Prepare yourself to think about how the churches to which you belong might grow – deeper, wider, more numerous.

Now close in prayer together or worship, or bless each other in the Grace.

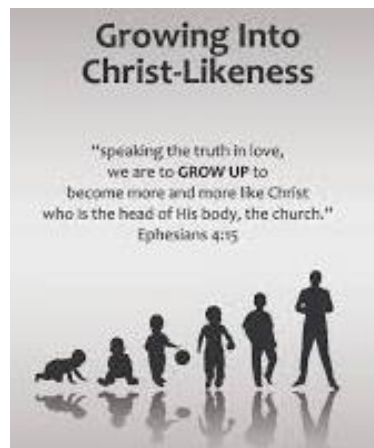
Week Three

Growing

The churches in the New Testament were growing at a huge rate. In a couple of generations, they'd gone from the small number who'd experienced Christ's earthly ministry and a handful of his closest friends and followers regrouping after the Lord's death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit. All this in a scary and uncertain world.

This journey of ours is to make us, with God's help, stronger people, more flourishing and purposeful churches, more loyal and active disciples. The destination of our journey, like the destination of any pilgrimage, is incredibly important. But the journey itself is just as important.

In how many different ways might we be seeking to grow? Discuss what these little images suggest and think of some other ways you and/or your worshipping community might grow?





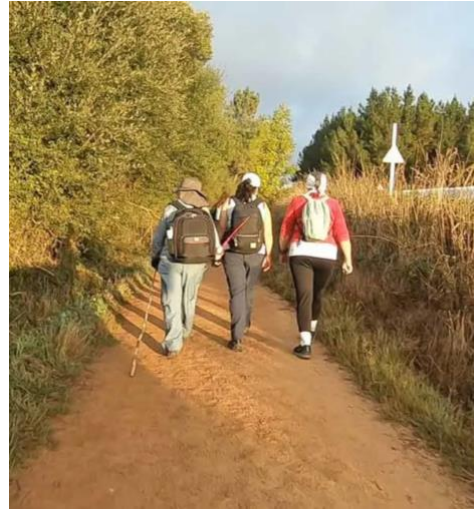
There are many words to use alongside “growing” to understand different types of growth. Try “deeper”, “closer to Christ”, “more committed”, “more welcoming”, “more numerous”, “more generous”, “together”. Choose four or five and try putting them in step order, first for your own journey as a disciple of Christ. Then, what order of aspects of growth do you think might aid the flourishing of a church like yours? Can you do wider before you’ve done deeper?

The types of growth we experience on our journey of faith are varied. There is no doubt that any enterprise that is challenging toughens you up. Physically, but also mentally. Working as disciples for the Kingdom is good physical exercise, but it is also great for emotional resilience. Not without bumps along the way – think about the life of the twelve travelling with Jesus. At the end of their journey they were tougher, but also closer to Jesus and to God’s mission. Physical growth, mental growth and spiritual growth. Some people go on physical journeys to challenge themselves and grow in all three ways. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land, training for a 5k run, climbing a list of peaks, studying a language, and, for centuries, the following of the Camino. The journey for southern France to Santiago da Compostela, in western Spain. If you’d like to hear about the personal growth that comes from that famous journey, listen to one of their talks, by clicking https://soundcloud.com/followthecamino/halloween-in-spain?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing.

Without setting aside 35 days and walking 500 miles (unless you feel called), what can we apply from this description of the Camino that we might apply to our own journey, shortcuts and all?

One of our bishops in Lincoln Diocese, has been heard to say “a church which doesn’t expect to grow isn’t a church at all”. Even with the broad definition of growing we might choose to use, is that something we can rise to?

Our exploration of growth along the way is different from becoming people or a church that can, when ready, be agents of growth. Together – one of the key TTCT words – we can both toughen and deepen our faith, and pick up fellow travellers. Who might we invite to “accompany us on our journey of discovery” rather than just to be “prepared to be challenged when we get there?”. What actions and attitudes might make growing as we go along possible?



A little of the Psalms.

Psalm 92.12-15

What does this say about growth and flourishing? How do we know it is God’s will we should flourish in vigour, depth and number?

12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

13 Such as are planted in the house of the Lord
shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be vigorous and in full leaf;

15 That they may show that the Lord is true;
**he is my rock,
and there is no unrighteousness in him.**

Planning for next week

Keep a list of things you are hoping to do from Page 5. You may want to discuss these and share any problems you might be having with them? You are half-way through, so if there are things you want to do that you feel would be useful – individually or together – you'd best get cracking. This is a good time to take stock. How is your journey?

Arrange time between these weekly sessions to pray, visit and to try new ways of being generous as an individual or as a church community. Next week is about sharing, and amongst other things, it would be good to be able to share experience so far. Make a list of things about which you are thinking differently. Or where you might be questioning whether what you have been doing is enough.

Now close in prayer together or worship, or bless each other in the Grace.

Week Four

Sharing

Jesus threw himself into his ministry like a great adventure, and he chose ordinary folk to share in that adventure. Whether or not he could have done what he did by himself, he wanted to collaborate. So much of what the Lord showed us and taught us was about sharing.

Why is collaboration preferable to going it alone, even if you are the Saviour of the World? Think of the tasks in hand as described in the stories of the Lord's ministry, and think also of what they will need to do when they are left to get on with it. Jesus seems to see collaborating in the work of the Gospel as being at least as important as the work itself.



The poet, priest and singer Malcolm Guite recently wrote a sonnet about Jesus' desire to share his adventure, his pilgrimage, with a group of fellow travellers. Do you think it possible he wants to share the journey with us? Do we believe that the Lord is with us in our pilgrimage? Jesus invites disciples to share the task with him. Look at the scene painted by Duccio di Buoninsegna, hanging in the Vatican. What do we learn of the lives of the men called by Jesus?

Here is the poem. The times in which we are called to join in the mission and adventure with the Lord in Lincolnshire are dark, in many ways, reminiscent of first century Galilee.

See that in the poem as we are encouraged to 'float above the rising waves, the falling dark'.

He calls us all to step aboard his ship,
Take the adventure on this morning's wing,
Raise sail with him, launch out into the deep,
Whatever storms or floods are threatening.
If faith gives way to doubt, or love to fear,
Then, as on Galilee, we'll rouse the Lord,
For he is always with us and will hear
And make our peace with his creative Word,
Who made us, loved us, formed us and has set
All his beloved lovers in an ark;

Borne upwards by his Spirit, we will float
Above the rising waves, the falling dark,
As fellow pilgrims, driven towards that haven,
Where all will be redeemed, fulfilled, forgiven.

The Lord's call to sharing in his mission rather than by all-powerful remote control has many purposes. Discuss why we are called to share in Christ's redeeming work. So we are changed by experience? So we can go on and do even more in the name of the Lord? Because God gave us free will so we have to want to change? Why do you think? A burden or a privilege?

To share we have to be generous. Generosity is one of the three TTCT big words, along with collaboration and growth. So far we have focused today on sharing all that we are in the work of the church and the gospel. That is a huge dimension of generous living and all-in discipleships.

Let us explore more obvious aspects of generosity. We are called by the Lord as disciples to share everything God has endowed us with.

What do these images suggest to you we might be called to share? Why? How?

Your transactions				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Debit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Giro Bank Giro <input type="checkbox"/> Card payment <input type="checkbox"/> Online transfer <input type="checkbox"/> ATM Cash machine				
Date	Description	Money out	Money In	Balance
12 Apr	Start balance			355.32
13 Apr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Received salary Ref: ABCD0000		1,958.52	2,313.84
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Debit to Mortgage Co. Ref: 123465789	625.35		1,688.49
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Debit to Energy Co. Ref: 123465789	32.50		1,655.99
15 Apr	<input type="checkbox"/> Card payment to Petrol Station	12.30		1,643.69
16 Apr	<input type="checkbox"/> Online transfer to Friends bank account Ref: 1111222233334444	4.99		1,638.70



Read Luke 14.12-14. With whom are we called to share? What is the point of sharing? God is generous to us – the Lord says the two key commandments are to love God and to love our neighbour. So we repay God's generosity by sharing with God's children, especially our worshipping community for its work, and with those in need for their flourishing. If you don't think your churches are doing what the Lord requires of them, and you'd rather give to others – should you change your giving or change your church to be more in line with God's mission?

A little of the Psalms.

Psalm 112.4-9

What does this say about sharing and generosity? What are we called to do with what God has given us? How joined-up are righteousness, compassion and willingness to share?

4 Light shines in the darkness for the upright;
gracious and full of compassion are the righteous.

5 It goes well with those who are generous in lending
and order their affairs with justice,

6 For they will never be shaken;
the righteous will be held in everlasting remembrance.

7 They will not be afraid of any evil tidings;
their heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

8 Their heart is sustained and will not fear,
until they see the downfall of their foes.

9 They have given freely to the poor;
**their righteousness stands fast for ever;
their head will be exalted with honour.**

Planning for next week

How are your tasks going? Are you ready to share some of your experiences? Only a week to go. Are you finding time between these weekly sessions to pray, visit and to try new ways of being involved in your church community?

Nest week is about sharing the Good News. You might want to plan yourself a script for how you will share why you are on this journey, who this Jesus is that travels with you, and how the church might flourish with renewed vigour. And why it matters. Just a few lines. It is much less frightening sharing the Good News if you are prepared.

Where are you going to meet people with whom to share?

So close in prayer/worship, or bless each other in the Grace.

Week Five

Proclaiming

All that we are and all that we do, the journey we are on and the places we belong, every prayer and every act of worship, as individuals, churches or families of churches, should proclaim the Good News. That God made us, richly endowed us and loves us; that Christ was made human, died on the cross and rose again to save us and the world; that we are called to be Christ in the world as the Church, which we join through baptism, change of heart, repentance and forgiveness, and in which we are sustained by the Holy Spirit and the sacraments.

We proclaim the Good News because we have received it and it fills us with excitement so we are bursting to tell – like the Lord's friends when they found him after the resurrection. We proclaim the Good News because we are blessed by it. We proclaim the Good News so that all may have the chance to hear it. So that the company of the faithful might flourish and grow and God's mission in the world have faithful servants.



The Calling of the Apostles, 1481, Sistine Chapel, Domenico Ghirlandaio

The painting above depicts the calling of Apostles, all bound up with who Jesus was, the attractiveness of his life and mission, his teaching and healing and his personal appeal to individuals to hear the good news and join the campaign. Read the story carefully in Matthew 4.12-23.

In Verse 17 we hear “Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come near”. What might we have to do for people in our own time and place to believe that the Kingdom of God has come near?

How can our life as disciples and the culture of our church provide a light in the darkness of the world which will irresistibly attract? (Verse 16). How can people be swept by a juggernaut of a worshipping, challenging, healing movement in our own day? (Verse 23). Why might people (maybe even ourselves) not be leaving their nets and following the call just now when they clearly did in the 1st Century? (Verse 22).

Where do we start with proclaiming? Sometimes we know we have the answers but we offer them to questions people aren't asking. A poster used to say “want to know the answer to the meaning of life?”. Another used to say “are you tired of sin?”. Another “are you looking for eternal life?”. What are the questions people are asking in this day and age and in the society we are called to travel with? They might be a bit more mundane and a bit less philosophical. What do you think the questions were that the thousands who turned up to see, hear and touch Jesus wanted answering? Or the ones who joined the early church in Acts and the Letters of Paul?

CONVERSATION Talk together about what their “questions” might have been. What are their equivalents today? And what does Jesus offer them, in Galilee and in Lincolnshire? There is a quiz game – if this is the answer what was the question. So what if the answer is companionship, compassion, healing, food, belief that oppression and poverty might come to an end, courage to keep on, sense that someone understands, that God cares?

TV, magazine and online advertising often uses the premise that if you see a lifestyle that is really attractive you will buy a product or a service, or watch a programme. For those who watch a particular TV programme regularly there is a likelihood of aspiration. Masterchef – ability to make lovely food. Repair Shop – skills to transform objects, and working in a charming, friendly and collaborative environment. Escape to the Chateau – the creative life in an astonishing setting. Think for a while about what aspect of a church community might make it something that those who saw it yearned to belong to? You can fantasize wildly. Now look at what you as an individual present to others in all you say and do as a Christian. Look at your church, its fellowship, its building, its experience, and ask – who will yearn to be part of it? How can it become something that attracts? How can our church and we as its people proclaim the Good News just by being? How do we model the kingdom so that all may know it is nearby? Come up with a list for yourself of what you might want to do differently? Come up with a list together of how your church or, in your LMP, your churches might have the appeal to allow you to proclaim.

As we near the end of this short journey together, how might we continue and how might we attract others to the journey even if they don't yet yearn for the destination? Being clear and confident about our identity, having an enriching sense of belonging, learning to share, growing something new and exciting – these are things that appeal to many in society even if they don't know they are working for the kingdom. Some of you may still have and even have read "The Go-between God" by John V Taylor – it is still worth a read! He suggests for mission, "finding what God is doing and joining in". Often, the joining-in is the means by which people are swept up in a movement. Belonging leads to believing. Make a list of the tasks that might help to build the local church up – mark with a cross those that can only be done by a Christian. Invite others to come along for the task, for

the fellowship, for the fun, for the sense of doing something for other people, maybe even for the beautification of a historic place or creation of a spectacular event. Those who are Christians must not be afraid of saying why they are in, but others will pick that up as they go. Think about who you know that will be interested in the hundreds of tasks that will make Time to Change Together build an exciting future for the local church, and rope them in. If God wants the church to flourish – and God does; if you want the church to flourish – and you do; if the Gospel transforms lives, both for individuals and communities, and that is better for everyone – and it is; then the journey you have begun in these last five weeks, and we all pray you will want to continue, can sweep others along. They can share your work and they can share your sense of purpose. You must just be prepared to meet them where they are and confidently say why you are where you are.

What next? You say. That is the spirit of Time to Change Together.

A little of the Psalms.

Psalm 96

What does this say about Proclaiming the Good News? What message does it tell us to use, and how shall we share it as we go?

- 1 Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord and bless his name;
tell out his salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations
and his wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;
he is more to be feared than all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the nations are but idols;
it is the Lord who made the heavens.

6 Honour and majesty are before him;
power and splendour are in his sanctuary.

7 Ascribe to the Lord, you families of the peoples;
ascribe to the Lord honour and strength.

8 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name;
bring offerings and come into his courts.

9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
let the whole earth tremble before him.

10 Tell it out among the nations that the Lord is king.
He has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.

11 Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;

12 Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them;
let all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord.

13 For he comes, he comes to judge the earth;
with righteousness he will judge the world and the peoples with his truth.

Planning for life beyond this course

You should now have finished some of the tasks outlined on Page 5. Make sure you have shared the experience so we can all learn and grow together.

So as you come to the end of the course, it is time to think about “what next”. If you have followed the course during Lent, you now have the incredible journey of God’s amazing saving action, the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The generous self-giving of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we might share in the New Creation is celebrated every year, culminating in the sharing the story of the

Resurrection. The story that leads to Christ being eternally there to travel with us and future generations on our journey's of pilgrimage, transforming lives and challenging the sin of the world.

Prepare yourself to think about how the churches to which you belong might grow – deeper, wider, more numerous.

And “what next” in terms of the important work of building flourishing churches, bringing more people to discipleship, and making all our churches and their families centres of new life and mission. Now is the time to decide on what you can offer to the churches you are touched by. To explore new vocations. To serve the Lord with passion and generosity. And to play a role in making a success of our work to make this the Time to Change Together.

Now close in prayer together or worship, or bless each other in the Grace.

Some prayer resources

The Lincoln Diocesan Prayer

Bless our diocese:
may we be faithful in our worship;
confident in our discipleship;
and joyful in our service;
that, through us, the world may catch a glimpse
of the love you have for each one of us,
made known to us in your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Collect for the ministry of all the baptised

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

An act of commitment

Will you go from here
committed to pray and work together
for the flourishing of the churches
and Local Mission Partnerships of this diocese,
and for each other,
open to all God asks of you,
and putting aside fear and self-interest?
Will you live out and share the gospel of hope?
With the help of God, we will.

An Act of Worship

Many will find this simple act of worship a good way to begin or end a gathering each week of this Lent Course. You might also find it helpful to use it each day of Lent.

The Lord be with you
And also with you

We meet in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Lord Jesus, you said to your disciples:
'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, we know that the harvest is plentiful
but the labourers are few.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you appointed us to go and bear fruit
that will last.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

A Psalm for those on a journey. Psalm 84

I How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My
soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the
Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young:
at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

3 Blessed are they who dwell in your house:
they will always be praising you.

4 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion,

5 Who going through the barren valley find there a spring,
and the early rains will clothe it with blessing.

6 They will go from strength to strength
and appear before God in Zion.

7 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
listen, O God of Jacob.

8 Behold our defender, O God,
and look upon the face of your anointed.

9 For one day in your courts
is better than a thousand.

10 I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

11 For the Lord God is both sun and shield;
he will give grace and glory;
**no good thing shall the Lord withhold
from those who walk with integrity.**

12 O Lord God of hosts,
blessed are those who put their trust in you.

Prayer

A short time of silence, listening for the Father's voice and bringing all our concerns and hopes and aspirations for God to discern and bless.

We pray together for the church in this place. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray that God's Kingdom will be with us in Greater Lincolnshire, in our Local Mission Partnership, in our churches and in our own hearts; believed, shared and lived out.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

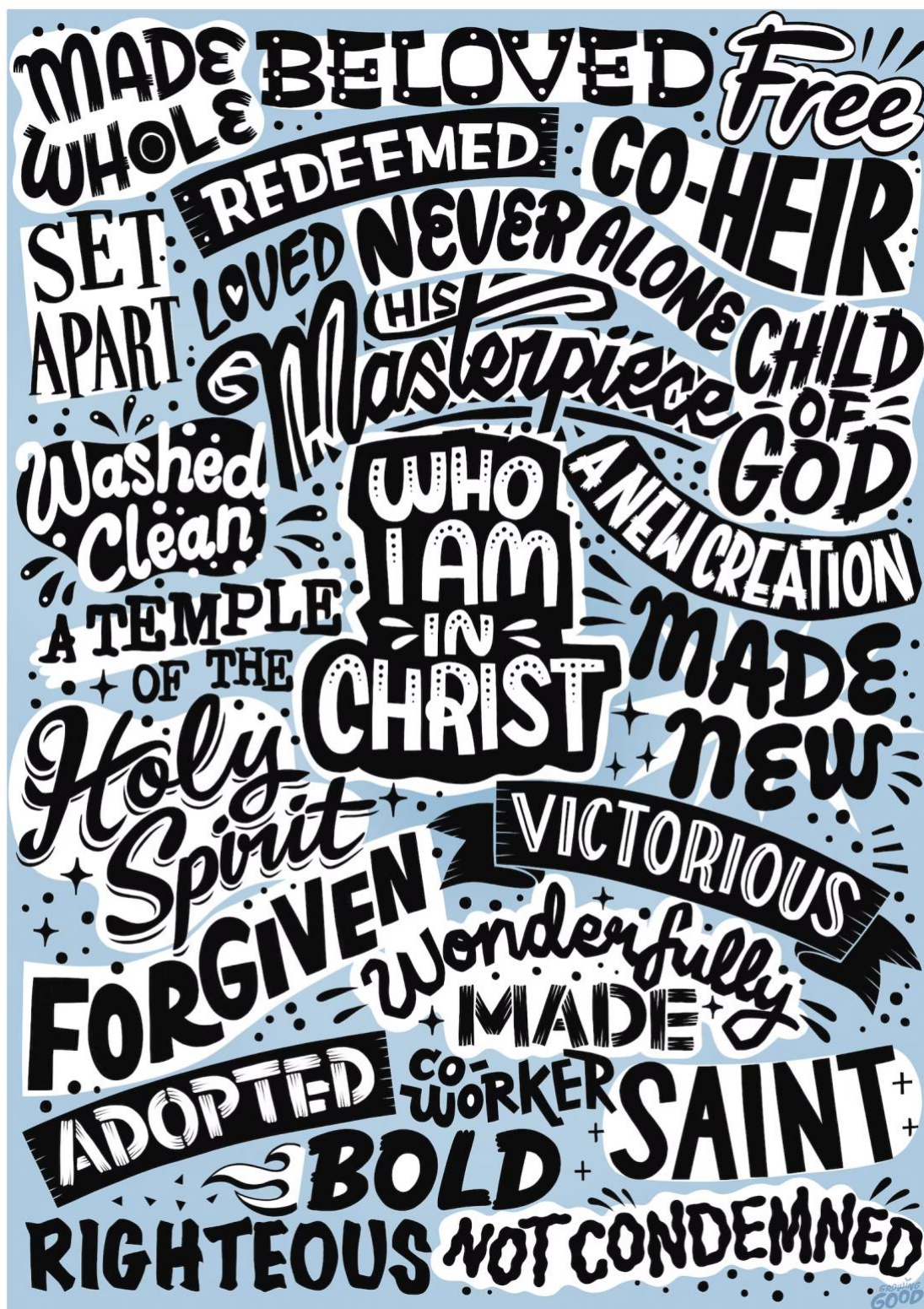
Song or verse

Before I come with joy, a child of God,
 forgiven, loved and free,
 the life of Jesus to recall,
 in love laid down for me.

After Together met, together bound
 by all that God has done,
 we'll go with joy, to give the world
 the love that makes us one.

Brian Wren. © 1971, 1995 Hope Publishing Company, 380 S Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

Music: [Click here](http://www.lincoln.anglican.org/lent2023-music) to listen to the tune: www.lincoln.anglican.org/lent2023-music



Time to Change Together, Lincoln Diocese's aspiration and methodology for being a transforming church made of transformed churches built by people transformed through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

www.lincoln.anglican.org/TTCT