

A SEASON OF MISSION

EASTER TO PENTECOST 2024



The 5 Marks of Mission



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Dear Colleagues

Easter Greetings to you.

After journeying through Lent and celebrating Christ's death and resurrection, the season after Easter is almost seen as an anti-climax as after a busy, active time, nothing seem to be happening in parish. This should not be the case as this period from Easter to Pentecost was coined 'the great 50 days', when Jesus constantly appeared to his disciples to assure them that he is alive. Yes, that Jesus has risen from the death. This therefore cannot be a quiet season, but one of excitement as we get busy with Mission in God's world.

Thank you for a wonderful meeting that we had on 19th March, where we've introduced the Diocesan Mission Season from 7 April to Pentecost Sunday. The program is of such a nature that we will not have to reinvest anything but use the Sunday readings to focus on the 5 Marks of Mission, with the follow themes:

1. The Five Marks of Mission: An Introduction
2. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
3. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
4. To respond to human need by loving service
5. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
6. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth
7. The Day of Pentecost: A Missional Church

The resources for preaching as well small group discussions are being provided to get all parishes going, and contain Sermon Material, Suggested Hymns/Choruses, Prayers of the Church, Small Group Material and a Self-Assessment for each week. Thank you to those who contributed to this Resource Book; Ven. Mkhusele Lujabe, Rev. Shaun Cozett, Rev. Yogi Moodley, Rev. Ronald Dias, Rev. Guy Axelson, Bino Makgalanyane, Caitlin Smith, Antonio Burrows and Kirsten Finn. I commend these resources to your use.

So, let's get going and then meet in the afternoon of Pentecost Sunday, 3pm at Resurrection, Bonteheuwel, for a time of Praise and Worship. We will then report back on how these marks of Mission can assist us as a parishes and diocese in moving forward. How we should move from maintenance to Mission.

Have a have great 50 days until we meet on Pentecost.

God bless!

+ JOSHUA TABLE BAY

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WEEK 1 - THE 5 MARKS OF ANGLICAN MISSION: AN INTRODUCTION

Overview: The Anglican Communion is made up of 42 provinces with tens of millions of Christians spread across the globe. The Anglican Communion has no central authority or decision-making body. It has four instruments of communion, namely the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates' Meeting, the Lambeth Conference, and the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). However, it has no right to impose policies or initiatives on those autonomous member churches. In 1984, ACC adopted the Four Marks of Mission (the fifth was to be added later), and its wording was revised in 2012 (Zink, 2017).

The fact that the four structures mentioned cannot impose any decision on autonomous bodies within the church and that across the communion the 5 marks of mission have been and continue to be Christ mission makes the 1984, together with the 2012 ACC meeting, a place where all Anglicans were of one heart and mind as the 5 marks of mission continue to be lived out daily across the communion.

The second sentence affirms the link of this text to our theme as "*No one claimed any possessions were their own, but shared everything they had.*"

The five marks of mission are not seen or claimed to belong to any grouping or region within the communion, but it's Christ calling to all those within the Anglican communion, and we share in the common good that it brings to us all.

Through the great commissioning of John 20:21: and Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I sent you." The Anglican Communion has continued to be the feet and hands of Christ in mission with the grace of the Spirit.

SERMON MATERIAL

Acts 4:32-35

The first few words set the tone for the rest of the text in that it says, "*All believers were of one heart and mind*" (Acts 4:32). This creates a sense of community coming together and agreeing on particular issues, but this goes beyond just an agreement.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles is titled "*believers share their possessions*". One could say people of common interest.

It is my belief that we are believers of faith from across the communion who are of one heart and mind (Acts), sharing in the common good, but those who had gathered experienced the feeling of a common bond in Christ (Clark, 2015).

Psalm 133

It is believed that the Jewish people sang psalm 133 to express their joy in coming together for worship at the Temple where God promised to meet them (Koester:2009). The psalm first verse of the psalm speaks of the peace and joy that comes with God's people living together in unity, which is what the 5 marks of mission bring to us. The communion might be divided and not in agreement over certain doctrines but our mission in Christ is what binds us together, it is through the spirit which Christ left us, the communion is able to listen and discern over matters. But the greatest joy of our communion is through the testimonies with have heard from the Lambeth Call on how people across the communion have continued to honour the Great Commission of Christ by being his hands and feet on earth today.

John 20:19-31

The gospel reading comes at the time of the appearance of Christ to his disciples. The disciples are in fear mode and have locked themselves in the upper room, fearing persecution by the Jewish leaders. The first thing Christ does when he appears to them and proclaims peace is to say, *"Peace be with you"* (John 20:19); he then shows them that yes, it is me; thereafter, he commissions them by saying, *"As the Father has sent me, even so I sent you"* (John 20:21), but the commission does not just come on its own but with the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

In part two of the gospel, we come across Thomas, who was not there when Jesus first appeared to his disciples and said, *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* (John 20:25). And later Christ reappears, proclaiming the peace to the disciples, and then asking that Thomas look at his hands and out his finger on his side to plead himself and believe. After all this, a message to Thomas is that *"blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* (John 20:29).

WHAT THEN MIGHT THE LINK BETWEEN OUR GOSPEL AND THEME?

In his resurrection, Christ proclaims peace to his disciples, so as Christ saw and understood the fear that was among the disciples, so should we be mindful of the context in which we execute our mission.

Shortly after that, they were commissioned with the gift of the Holy Spirit, but even so, one among them did not believe what they told him, which could be our reality. Not everyone will believe in our message and gospel unless we can prove it to them.

Achieving the Anglican marks of mission will not be an easy task, but may the peace of God give courage and patience at all times.

In its 1984 ACC report, the Anglican Communion said: *"Deliberately and precisely, Jesus made his mission the model of our mission to the world. For this reason, our understanding of the church's mission must be deduced from our understanding of what Jesus considered his mission to be."* (Anglican Communion, 2020, 2024)

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

The Anglican 5 Marks of Mission are set to be a summary of what Jesus mission was about, and the mission never ended, as stated in John 20:21. *"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* The church of God is not only called to maintain our rich traditions practiced over the years but to be the feet and hands of Christ as those who have received the gift of the spirit through Christ.

It is Dr. Steve West in his message to the Philadelphia (2022) gives us a great summary and underpinning lines of our Anglican 5 marks of mission.

Tell: *To proclaim the good news of the kingdom.*

Teach: *To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers.*

to respond to human need by loving service.

Transform: *To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation.*

Treasuring: *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

According to the Centre Sustainable of Health and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods of 2021, Cape Town is coincidentally the most segregated city in South Africa. Our city is also known to have one of the most unequal societies. We are in a city filled with poverty, gang wars, high crime areas, and overly diverse populations, with some areas still making use of pit toilets 30 years after democracy. Divided by a road, on one side we find flashy, rich communities with high-walled security fences and big homes with 24/7 security guards ensuring their safety. It is in this same city that the security cluster, together with emergency units, has classified certain areas as no-go areas (where poor people are mostly found), where, without police escort, no public service can be performed, an oppression to those who stay within these communities and have no one coming for their aid.

As we begin this journey of Easter under the theme of the Anglican 5 marks of mission, may we take some time out and reflect on each, asking ourselves if we have done enough to continue the mission of Christ within our diocese and also noting the little resources at our disposal to perform our ministry.

We are in a city where most of our people fear going to places of worship, afraid of being victimized, and for those who make it to check, we pray that we get back home safe. Which challenges the proclaiming of the gospel of God to the nations.

In a city with a high number of people of common good faith, why do we witness so much pain and insecurities across the diocese? Do our teachings speak to the social needs of the people, or have we conformed to the patterns of this world?

As a city full of segregation, mostly due to the previous government of apartheid, we sought to show love and compassion to those who are still hurting from this, or even we tried all we could to integrate our communities to display the real rainbow nation (where is my neighbour?).

Have we used our seat at the table and influence to advocate for a better life for all and the restoration of dignity to those whose dignity was forcefully taken away from them?

And lastly, are we doing enough to safeguard our God-given city by preserving and ensuring that we have a balanced, biodiverse city?

In short, one could say we are in a city full of poverty, injustice, oppression, and gang wars. The Anglican 5 marks of mission call for us to fully participate in building the kingdom of Christ here in our city and diocese as the hands and feet of Christ.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

The five marks of mission help us to be deeply rooted in Jesus's mission on earth, for he left us with the gift of the Holy Spirit and commanded that we:

Go and tell of the good news (proclaim the gospel) (Matthew 28:19).

One's people have received the word and belief; Christ says to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them (Matthew 28:19–20).

One's people have received the spirit through baptism; there should be an ongoing process of teaching and nurturing believers. However, our mission does not end within our church walls and being believers in faith; as the second great command says, *"Love your neighbour as you love yourself"* (Mark 12:31).

We have proclaimed the gospel, we are baptizing and teaching Christ, and the same Christ calls us to love our neighbours. Love can only be expressed through acts of service (Jesus said, *"But I am among you, as one*

who serves.” (Luke 22:27). Which brings us to the third mark of mission: to respond to human need by loving service (Tend).

We cannot only keep saying things will get better and only pray to God for intervention, but because Christ has gifted us with the gift of spirit (John 20:22), we therefore need to make our communities better places by standing up against the unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind, and pursuing peace and reconciliation. (A call to transform our communities)

The book of Mark reminds us that it doesn't just end with our relationship between us and our neighbours; the service of proclaiming good news goes even beyond mankind, as we are called to: And Christ said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”(Mark 16:15). Hence our call to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Which is taking care of the gift that God gave us in Genesis 1:26.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

As those filled with the gift of the spirit through Christ himself, the church is called to be a church which ministers to communities through word and action. They is a lot that still needs to be achieve especially in ensuring a better and brighter future for the next generation , but it is upon the current generation to be in mission and stand up against the battles which our societies are faced with, not only for the enhancement of mankind but all creation.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

<https://www.anglicannews.org/features/2020/02/the-anglican-communions-five-marks-of-mission-an-introduction.aspx>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

SUGGESTED HYMNS/CHORUSES:

- The Church's one foundation
- We love the place o God
- The head that once was crowned with thorns
- Lord of the Church, we pray for our renewing
- No longer slaves

RESPONSIVE PRAYERS BASED ON THE MARKS OF MISSION

By the Very Rev. Dr. Iain Luke, Dean of Athabasca

Lord Jesus Christ, let your presence fill our hearts and overflow in our actions, that we may proclaim the good news of your Kingdom.

Let your glory fill this place,

Let your glory fill this world.

Lord, fill us with your welcoming Spirit of truth, that we may faithfully teach, baptize and nurture those who come to believe in you.

Let your glory fill this place,

Let your glory fill this world.

Lord, as you came to serve and not to be served, fill us with the compassion and insight to respond to human need by loving service.

Let your glory fill this place,
Let your glory fill this world.

Lord, let the fire of your goodness and justice burn into us and through us, that we may seek to transform the unjust structures of society.

Let your glory fill this place,
Let your glory fill this world.

Lord, as you come into our lives to redeem all that is good, guide us in our turn to renew and sustain the life of your creation.

Let your glory fill this place,
Let your glory fill this world.

Almighty God, in our baptism you adopted us for your own. Quicken, we pray, your Spirit within us, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

JESUS' FOLLOWERS MATTHEW 4:18-22

WELCOME (10 mins)

Have you ever found yourself following someone at school, in college, a sports team, a social club or workplace? What was enticing about this person that caused you to follow?

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus.

READ - as we consider the moment Jesus called Simon (Peter) and Andrew to participate in his saving work on earth, read Psalm 67 aloud and invite God to show you how you could do the same...

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—
so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth.

May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you.

The land yields its harvest; God, our God, blesses us.

May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.”

Psalm 67:1-7

WORD (30 mins) Read Matthew 4:18-22

1. What invitation does Jesus give to these fishermen?

2. Jesus' message in v17 is to repent because the kingdom has come near. How does the invitation of v19 link with this message?
3. What is their response to Jesus' call to follow him and what is the cost to them?
4. How does this link with Jesus' message of repentance in v17?
5. How are you responding to Jesus? Are you still preparing the nets? Leaving the boat? Following hard after Jesus? Or feeling left behind?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

Share perhaps a time when God called you to do something specific, or possibly even now you are grappling with a particular call of God on your life? Share what it felt like to respond and what you did. Pray for each other to follow Jesus in this season of your life.

WITNESS (5-10 mins)

Take a minute to think about someone in your family or a close friend with whom you can share about the love of God. Share their first names with the group and pray for each one. Perhaps ask the Lord to remind you daily to pray for them and give you courage to share with them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. What is your parish Vision Statement?
2. What is your parish mission statement?
3. How is this reflected in your ministry?
4. What is your theme for this year?
5. What projects are you undertaking this year?
6. What goals have you set for yourselves for this?

WEEK 2 - TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

OVERVIEW: This week we explore the first mark of Anglican Mission; to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. In our readings we will see that the proclamation is both to those who may not know Christ, so that they may come to know, and also to those who already have a relationship with Jesus, so that their faith may be strengthened. Mission is, however not an activity that the church undertakes, it is the work of God in the world, in which the church participates. In order to participate fully in this work, the church has to be a well-resourced and effectively managed institution.

SERMON MATERIAL

Acts 3:12-19

Acts Chapter 3 begins with Peter and John going to the temple to pray and meeting a man who had been lame from birth. They interact with the man and heal him, which leads to him leaping for joy and praising God. Those who witnessed the man leaping for joy recognised him as the lame man who sat by the Beautiful Gate. As the people gather, in Solomon's Colonnade, Peter takes the opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with them. Peter tells them that it was not by their own powers that they were able to heal the lame man, but by the power that God came from the whom they knew; the God of Abraham, Isaacs and their ancestors. He tells them that the same God sent His Son.

In this passage we see Peter in his role as missionary to the Israelites. Peter speaks to them using the names of God and images of scripture that they could relate to. He speaks of the Hebrew laws and prophets and offers them the story of Jesus as the one who comes to fulfil the laws and the prophets. Peter here takes the opportunity created by the healing of the lame man to witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus and does so in a way that his hearers are able to connect with the story.

Psalm 4

Before Augustine of Hippo converted to Christianity he was a follower of Manicheanism, a form of mysticism that premised on knowledge and knowing God. Their aim was to explain the truth of Christ through seeking knowledge. In his book, *The Confessions*, St Augustine reflects on Psalm 4 as a way of witnessing to the Manicheans about the truth of Christ. He writes, in book 9 chapter 4, that Psalm 4 made him reflect on his time in Manicheanism and made him feel sad for those who were still followers of the Manichean teachings. Augustine writes that he wishes that they could hear the prayer that he offered on that day and gives thanks that God heard his prayer and answered him. Augustine then uses the text of Psalm 4 to reflect on the Gospel.

Reflecting on verse 2 "How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?" he says that he confessed before God that he followed a delusion and sought after false Gods, and then prays "And You, O Lord, had already magnified Your Holy One, raising Him from the dead, and setting Him at Your right hand, whence from on high He should send His promise, the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth." He adds similar reflections on verses 4, 6 and 8. Augustine's theology as he reflects on these verses in Psalm 4 is based on the Epistles of St Paul, since he knows that the Manicheans base their philosophy on the teachings of St Paul, in particular the Epistles that he knows the Manicheans were fond of reflecting on for themselves. Thus, like Peter in Acts 3, Augustine uses words and images that his hearers are familiar with to share with them the Gospel of Christ.

1 John 3:1-7

In 1 John Chapter 1, the writer of the Epistle offers an eye witness account of fellowship with God, and further more states, "We write this to make your joy complete" (1 John 1:4). The Epistle goes on to tell of

the light of God in the world and calls on the readers to live in that light. In Chapter 2, the writer gives several reasons for writing this letter, most notably so that the reader may know that their sins are forgiven. In Chapter 3 we are reminded that we are children of God and are to live as children of God. The writer contrasts sinful and godly living and calls on the children of God to abide in love and not to sin, since Jesus took away our sins, whoever lives in Him but be free from sin, otherwise we do not live in him.

We do not know who the intended audience of this letter is, but the message to them of love for God and neighbour comes through clearly throughout the letter. This letter is a call to believers who already know Christ to live lives in accordance with their status as children of God. This letter is not about making the case for God, but rather making a case of godly living in the believer. As we read this letter during the Season of Mission, we are reminded that mission isn't only about going to unbelievers and sharing the Gospel with them, mission is also about reflecting on the life of the church and ensuring that we are living out the values of the Kingdom of God.

Luke 24:36b-48

After revealing Himself to His followers in the road to Emmaus, Jesus disappears and they go back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples what had happened. As they are sharing Jesus appears in the midst of them and shows them the marks of His crucifixion; His pierced hands, feet and side. Jesus invites them to touch and feel for themselves, so that they may know that it is Him and not a ghost and then tells them that these were the things that He spoke about and now they could witness for themselves that He is fulfilling the prophecies.

It is significant that Jesus appears to them while they are sharing about their experiences. Our theme this week reminds us that we are called to share the Good News of the Kingdom, and here in the Gospel we see the Good News being shared with the disciples and that in the sharing Jesus becomes present with them. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, becomes present with us as we share the Good News of the Kingdom with others, a visible example of Matthew 18:20, "where two or three gather together in my name, I am in the midst of them". As with the letter of John above, we see again the our sharing about the Kingdom of God is not only for those outside the faith, it is also to strengthen the faith of those who have already experienced Jesus and have a relationship with Him. Jesus, in this text, is present to open the eyes of the disciples so that they may see the wonders that God and performed and also to open their minds so that they may understand how these wonders coincide with the promises of God.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

The theology of the first mark of mission is based on the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God. This theology tells us that God the Father sent Jesus and that together they sent the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit together send out the church. The mission field into which we are sent could be far afield or nearby and the witness to the Kingdom could take various forms. One of the barriers to mission is a lack of budget, where the church struggles to fund it's running costs mission work could seem like a luxury or an optional extra, to be undertaken when the church is able to afford it. As we focus on the call to go out and proclaim the Good News, we have to ensure that the church is well resourced, so that we do not have to choose between operational expenses and missional activities. But we must also remember that it mission is not the work of the church, mission is the work of God, in which the church participates.

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

In today's passages we see that we are called both to share the Good News of the Kingdom with those who do not know Christ and also with those who do. Th covid-lockdowns allowed many of us to concentrate our activities in the home, including school, work and church. Mission, post-covid, includes

going inviting back those who belong to the church and incorporating them back into the community of faith. We have to make God real and present again. We have financial challenges in the Diocese largely due to the Covid-period, but we cannot address these without asking questions about our new reality and what God is calling us to. We cannot resolve the financial challenges without a return to the core of who we are; a people called by God and sent into the world to participate in God's work of renewing all creation in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thus we have to look at our management of the resources God has given us, for the efficient running of the church and the effective outreach wherever God is sending us.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

The English word "mission" comes from the word meaning "to send". At the heart of mission is being sent.

"mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God." – David Bosch

"It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church." – Jurgen Moulmann

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

We have to be intentional about going out to share the Good News with others. We have to introduce Christ to those who do not know Him and teach and disciple those who do, so that their faith may be deepened. We have to ensure that the church, as institution is well well-resourced, so that there is sufficient provision for the work that God is calling us to do.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

Kotzé, A. (2001) "Reading Psalm 4 to the Manicheans" in *Vigiliae Christianae* , 2001, Vol. 55, No. 2 (2001), pp. 119-136 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1584521>)

The Confessions (Book IX) <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110109.htm>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- Go to the world
- We have a Gospel to proclaim
- Tell out my soul
- God's spirit is in my heart
- It shall flow like a river, it shall fall like the rain
- God is working His purpose out
- The head that once was crowned with thorns

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray:

Creator God, you spoke the words and the universe came into being. You spoke with men and women and called them to prophesy in your name, and you thundered at the baptism of Jesus, confirming him as your son. Speak also into our lives and make us what you would have us be.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

We thank you for your voice that still calls men and women to your service. Thank you for your calling on the lives of your servants Joshua and Thabo, our bishops, for the vision you have given them for your church and for their commitment to serving you and your people. Guide them daily in life and work and give them the assurance of your presence.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

We pray for the leaders of the world, and especially the leaders of our country, for Cyril our President, Allan our premier and Geordin our mayor. May they seek to be guided not by the voices of power or prestige but by your still small voice. Bless them with the gift of discernment that they may know your voice from the multitude of voices seeking to influence them and give them grace to do your will.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

We pray for our families, friends and all who are close to us. Strengthen the bonds that bind us to each other. Help us to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and to weep with those who are weeping. Call us afresh to serve you by serving of each other.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

We bring ourselves before you. We give you thanks that you have called us to serve you in your church and in the world. May we live lives worthy of our calling, and honour you not only with our public utterances but also with our private actions. May you who have called us, call us again and again.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd and your sheep know your voice. Speak gently to those being called from this world that they may go to the place you have prepared for them that they may receive your eternal rest. Guide them safely home.

Speak Lord, your servants are listening

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

WHAT WE VALUE: DARE TO SHARE (MATTHEW 10:1-20)

WELCOME (10 mins)

Who was one of the more unusual house guests you or your family ever hosted?

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus.

WORD (30 mins)

This week we are considering our value "Dare to Share."

1. What did Jesus do before sending out his disciples (v.1)?
2. How would the instructions Jesus gave in v.7-8 have resonated with the disciples after all they've experienced of Jesus in chapters 8-9?
3. In verse 5 Jesus limits the disciples' ministry to the Jewish people as God's primary message carriers of his salvation plan to the world. In what way was this restriction lifted after Jesus' resurrection (see Matthew 28:18-20)?
4. If you were to write Jesus' instructions on a postcard with these headings, what would you say?
How would you update it for a short-term mission today?
 - What to bring
 - What to say
 - What to do
 - How to respond if you're not welcome

5. Jesus states that his followers will come up against opposition when they share his good news (vs. 16-20). What advice does Jesus give for how they are to face this opposition? Which particular piece of advice do you want to carry with you this week?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

Sharing our faith can be a daunting task, and we need the Holy Spirit to empower us. Pray a simple prayer "Come Holy Spirit" and ask the Lord to show you what's hindering you in daring to share. After a few moments, ask Him to reveal how He wants to help you share the good news in His power and strength.

WITNESS (5-10 mins)

Share with each other 5 people who you would like to invite to church or any opportunity for them to hear the Good News about Jesus, such as an Alpha Course, a Bible Study or an outreach event. Write down their names so that the others in the group can keep you accountable for inviting them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Parish office:

- Does the church have a secretary/administrator
- How much experience does the secretary/administrator have in their position?
- Does the church have an organized filing system?
- Is the parish roll up to date?

2. Parish Finances:

- Are you able to meet your monthly expenses from pledges and offertories?
- What other income do you use to sustain the church?
- How many bank accounts does the church have (including organizations and areas)?
- Which of these bank accounts are reported on to the parish council?

3. Parish Council

- How often does the parish council meet?
- How often does the parish council receive financial statements?

WEEK 3: “TO TEACH, BAPTISE AND NURTURE NEW BELIEVERS”

Overview: At the heart of our easter pilgrimage, is the reminder of the gift of Baptism to our Christian faith. Through our Baptism “we enter into our salvation, we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, through forgiveness of or sins, and are made members of Christ’s body in the spirit” (APB, 1989:215). It is therefore a crucial task for us to remember this essential aspect of our faith, as we heed to Christ’s command in the great commission to go, bring, and baptize new believers into the faith, teaching them everything about Christ, and nurture them into growth and the full stature of Jesus in word and deed.

SERMON MATERIAL

Acts 4: 5 – 12

This reading tells us about one of many incidents, in the Book of Acts, in which the apostles defend the faith before the authorities, and in many instances, they end up imprisoned or face severe, violent persecutions. As they appear before the Sanhedrin, they are called to testify about the authority and power by which they did “this”. One inevitably needs to ask what is “this” that they did, in order to give a clear perspective and context to the rest of the passage. Two crucial incidents need to be recalled in answering that question. One of those is to backtrack, as Peter does in his testimony to an act of kindness and healing which took place in Chapter 3 of Acts, with the incident of healing of the crippled beggar who was lame from birth and was restored to new life. The second incident is subsequent to the healing scenario, where Peter then uses that opportunity of healing as an avenue to teach about Christ to the Jewish crowd, who were ignorant about Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that brought him from the dead, and with him raises all those who believe to new life in the same Spirit. For Peter, this is salvation, and it comes about through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit who gives strength and courage to all who are called and sent for this mission.

Psalm 23

This is a very well-known psalm, and more importantly, it is a very crucial reflection text for those who know the love and care of God, who nurtures and leads God’s flock from wandering to safely. The psalm can be adapted from many angles, but never without bringing about the crucial relationship of companionship between the shepherd and his sheep, wherein the experience of providence, peace and assurance, renewal and restoration, and grace, are fully expounded and revealed. It is these qualities of the shepherd, according to the psalmist, that create an environment of gracious welcome, one that invites those who are beneficiaries of God’s amazing grace and love to seek to remain in the presence and abode of God eternally, so that God the shepherd of the flock ay always be the source of plenty to draw from for the seeking soul.

1 John 3: 16 – 24

One of the greatest themes of the first letter of John is love. John uses love as the cornerstone to hold together the community of Jesus Christ, so that in faith and deed the witness to Christ may be made visible. This passage invites the reader to reflect on the extent of the sacrifice of God’s Son on the cross, and to use this image as an expression of the meaning of ultimate love, which those who believe in the same Christ are called to imitate. As is John’s approach in this letter, love translates into action to the extent that anyone who sees another companion in the faith lacking may be moved to act kindly and help that fellow companion in need. For John, this is how true witness to the life of Christ abiding in all believers, is made known and no less quality of love is demanded from every Christian. One is not to forget the backdrop of the writing of this letter as being the fierce season of Christian persecutions where the church was daily called to die as a true attestation to their faith in Jesus. In the same way, Christians were invited to that

extreme and deep reflection about sacrificial love where they pour out their whole being to love and embrace fellow Christians.

John 10: 11 – 18

Having given a general teaching at the beginning of Chapter 10 about the Shepherd's role, and the gatekeeper imagery used, Jesus now culminates his teaching by pointing to himself as the Good Shepherd, and by so doing declares himself as the ultimate leader who has the Father's command to gather the flock of God together. His comparison of the good shepherd with the hired hand in the teaching, rules out completely the idea of the false leaders, particularly those in the context of the story – the religious and imperial leaders of the time, who have proven to be a true demonstration of the hired hand and false shepherds and failed in gathering God's people together as one. The depth of the passage is in Jesus' emphasis of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, to indicate the depth of the relationship between the Good Shepherd and His flock characterized by gracious love and genuine care and companionship. The image of scattered sheep runs as a theme throughout the old testament narrative particularly in the prophetic literature. Thus, the gathering of the folds together into one flock, bringing back the scattered sheep of Israel from among the nations, was one of the basic hopes of ancient Judaism. In this passage, it is important that we note how Jesus declares that His ultimate task as the true Shepherd of God will be to bring other flock into the one fold, so as to fulfill the long-awaited promise through his death on the cross, an ultimate sacrifice that the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

WHAT THEOLOGY UNDERPINS THE THEME?

One can never be able to fully grasp an understanding of what it means to "teach, baptize, and nurture new believers" without going back to what we have come to understand as the Church's Great Commission "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28: 16 – 20a). this is the heart of the Mission of God to those who follow Christ, as in this function we are invited remember the core business of drawing believers through Baptism into the family and fold of Christian fellowship. This is the basis of understanding how God the Father of all humanity seeks fellowship with all God's children consecrated into one family through our common Baptism.

To teach the believers about the ways of Jesus has always taken central place in the life of the Church, from its early stages. One very glaring image of the extent to which the task of teaching those who know nothing about Christ, will always be the encounter of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8 whereby though the Eunuch is a seeker, in search for meaning, he could not reach this deep understanding of scripture outside of an act of teaching, nurturing and discipleship where in gentle companionship Philip brought knowledge and salvation to this new believer. In this instance, the act of teaching and nurturing this new believer, was so transforming that he could not resist conversion, and was immediately baptized into the Christian faith.

It is very important that even from the readings assigned for this week under this theme, one can pick up the very crucial ways those who have full understanding of the person and work of Christ, like the Apostles in the first reading, will always stand firm in proclaiming the gospel with confidence, in words and deeds. In the power of the Spirit, they could perform works of transformation, such as healing, generosity, and social justice because having been transformed themselves they knew how the power of Christ living in them drew them to others in order to transfer the same to others who were ignorant about Christ. Hence, Christ's declares that the ultimate task of his mission is to bring others in so that they too can experience the full experience of the embrace of God to nurture them into the full knowledge of God's love and grace.

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

One of the greatest opportunities for the church of God at this point in time, is to grow more and more in the strength of our identity as a Church of embrace, welcome and more than ever to grow more disciples for Jesus Christ in our world. We live in a more open society with great diversity in a variety of ways – different mindsets, different personalities, sexualities, theologies, churchmanship, ethnic identities, cultural assortment, etc. The greatest gift we can ever embrace as a key tool for the growth of our faith is Christ himself and reflect on how the variety of our world can be drawn together in fellowship with Christ as the cornerstone. This involves endless ears in an open dialogue where the fellowship of believers is able to sit comfortably around one another to seek a new understanding of how Christ calls us to be a community that shares common values and a common Baptism, to be one and proclaim the same true Gospel of God's love for all created beings and creatures. This is one crucial way of living out our Baptismal faith, which calls us to fight valiantly against the ills of the world that grow in us intolerance and violence rooted in our failure to understand who we are in Christ. The growth of the church will be accomplished when the church of Christ is a home for all and the mission of God alive in all who are part of God's family.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

We are invited to revive the key function of our life of faith – to restore a strong focus on discipleship, teaching, learning at all levels of church life, to care for one another, to understand one another, and to encourage acts of grace and embrace in all we do as the core business of our life of faith.

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- Teach me my God and King
- O let the Son of God enfold you
- Now is eternal life, if ris'n with Christ we stand
- Baptized in Water, sealed by the Spirit
- O Jesus I have promised
- No longer slaves

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Faithful and loving God, through your love you make us one with you in Baptism, bless all of us who have received your gift of Baptism in water and the Spirit, and grant to us your gifts of love, wisdom, and faith. Move us in acts of faith to bring your healing grace and reconciling love to your world, that the light of your presence may establish all people in the joy of your kingdom:

Lord of all grace

Hear us, we pray.

Christ our teacher. You have modeled for us through your ways of discipleship, as you gathered all God's people into the knowledge of the heavenly Kingdom. Empower us to follow your example as we journey with others in the ways of your kingdom, that we may live by your words and hear your voice sending us to those places that seek to know and grow in you:

Lord of all grace

Hear us, we pray.

Loving God, through your grace you call all people to you through forgiveness, acceptance, and embrace. Strengthen your church in its duty to love and embrace all your children, that those who are united with

you in Baptism may center their lives on the truth of your Son and the good news which he brings to all those who are marginalized, forgotten, and left out in all the world.

Lord of all grace

Hear us, we pray.

God of all goodness, we know that you promise to hear the prayers of those who call upon you. Give you us and all people, what is best for us, that with all you people, living and departed, we may know the fullness of eternal life with you.

We ask these things through your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

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SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

My Gentle God – Psalm 23

WELCOME (10 mins)

With what formula for dealing with stress were you raised? “Forget it”?

“Pray about it”? “Sleep on it”?

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Have you ever walked into a church service feeling distracted, overwhelmed, or unfocused? Do you sometimes feel you're not in the right headspace to worship? We tend to think of worship as a 'doing' thing, but it is also a 'being' thing - we experience God's peace and we rest in his presence. Psalm 23 speaks of God leading us beside still waters and restoring our souls. Take a moment to slow down, breathe, and be still. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into rest and peace.

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus.

WORD. (30 mins)

Read Psalm 23

1. Familiarise yourself with the context of Psalm 23. From what part of David's life does this Psalm come (see 1 Samuel 16:10-12)?
 2. David as a Shepherd knew all about how to care for his flock. What sort of shepherding has David experienced in his life from the Lord (vv. 1-4)?
 3. What image is used of David (vv.5-6)? What are the possible meanings of “anointment”? (see 1 Samuel 16:13; Luke 7:46)?
- Read verse 1 again. Go round as a group, emphasising a different word each time “The Lord is my shepherd.” “The Lord is my shepherd...” How does each one resonate?
 - Our Lord is a gentle God. What dark valley do you walk now? Has God rescued or protected you with “his rod and staff”? What “green pastures and still waters” has he brought your way?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

Take a minute, to imagine lying down in those green pastures, hearing the still waters running by. Be silent as a group for a minute or two. Ask God in your heart, to take you there – imagine Jesus watching you lie down on that green grass, smiling gently at you, saying 'Rest in me. I have you, lean on me'

WITNESS (5-10 mins)

For those who are led to intercede for a loved one, please pray: Lord, I bring before you....., who is walking through the valley of the shadow of death (note: also replace death with loss). Show me if there is a specific way in which I can bring your goodness and love to.....this week.? Please inspire and guide me, Lord. Amen

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Worship

- How would you describe your worship as a parish?
- How many church services do you offer per week?
- What are the differences between the services?
- On average, how many people attend each service?
- How are young people engaged in worship?
- How are the parish organizations engaged in worship?
- What training or support is offered for those who wish to be involved in leading worship?

2. Evangelism

- How many families do you have on your parish roll?
- Has this changed significantly in recent years?
- If so, what might have caused the change?
- What activities do you undertake to invite new members to church?
- How do you make visitors or new members feel welcome?
- What training or support is offered to those who wish to be involved in evangelism?

WEEK 4: TO RESPOND TO HUMAN NEED BY LOVING SERVICE

Overview: In this week's Gospel, Jesus portrays himself as the true vine, and His Father as the gardener and with us as the branches. Have you ever wondered why Jesus might have used this imagery? This week we think about what has happened and where Jesus and His disciples could most likely be?

SERMON MATERIAL

Acts 8:26-40

There is a connection and a demonstration of humility between Phillip and the Ethiopian official. A desire to receive new life in the Spirit of Baptism. The Ethiopian is reaching out as Phillip invited him in a relationship with Jesus through baptism. It is a transforming relationship by the outward sign of water that brings new life, new birth and new beginnings for Ethiopian official. Because Acts emphasises the Spirit's empowerment for mission and through that there is a break through to abundance. One could consider that the Ethiopian eunuch needed abundant life. The Acts reading demonstrates that through baptism we remain in Christ.

Psalm 22:25-31

The psalmist illustrates a deep yearning for God. Although the psalm connects to the crucifixion of Christ, the psalmist longs for a deep relationship with God. There is a cry, deeply longing to fill the emotions in the heart of the psalmist. Considering the crying out of the Messiah – "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It looks like the psalmist is using the same utterances as he laments his own brokenness. The shift in the mood of his prayer is easily connected by the scenes of his own life. Even in the discomfort of his own prayer of lament there is praiseworthy grace that moves from sorrow to joy.

1 John 4:7-21

There is a call to love one another. God demonstrated his love to us to make it easy to understand. God sent his love to us by sending Christ into the world to die for our sins so that we can live through him. The love cannot be separated between us, His people and our God. For this reason we are in the abundance of God's love; abiding in God and God abiding in us. God wants us to love Him with our whole heart and to remain in Him, the Vine (John 15). If we claim to love God, then our lives must demonstrate that we actually love Him. That is why we are connected and depend on each other and continually be transformed.

John 15:1-8

Followers of Jesus should be bearing spiritual fruit. Jesus tells us that He is the true Vine. We cannot live without the Vine so we need to be connected at all times. By abiding is to "live in Christ" and to characterise a promise of breaking through abundance by living in the here and now. All Christians are capable of bearing this spiritual fruit when they remain connected with Christ, like a branch is connected to a tree. The imagery of the vine and the branches illustrates a beautiful, intimate relationship between us God, through Jesus and also the intimate relationship that binds together the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The call is always to remain in the One who has created us.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

No one has the right to violate our human dignity. To be human is to live purposely with others, for others, in the community of love, in a community of activity, with community of sharing. We are living in a community that need to be inclusive. As human beings we are made in the image of God and serve as motivation in our community to express compassion and to care for all who suffer. "To deny people their

human dignity is to challenge their humanity". Is to deny what God has blessed us with in this beautiful land. "To be fully human is to regard other people as fully human too"

Caring for others and ensuring that their rights are not violated is at the heart of a life connected to Jesus. We see over and over again how Jesus provides for those who do not have and we have to follow His example. Today's story of the vine reminds us of spiritual fruit, that a Christian must produce and also of the physical fruits that people need to eat. As the church we must be willing to work for both, providing food for the poor and an ever growing love for God and the things of God.

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

There are many social problems in our city that the church can address, such as food security, homelessness, gang violence and substance abuse. We are called to serve God by serving others and showing the fruits of salvation through outreach. Caring for the needs of others and advocating for their rights is one way that the spiritual fruits that Jesus speaks about can be evident in our lives.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

It bears two kinds of branches, one that bears fruit and one that does not; and branches that does not bear fruit are drastically pruned back, so that they will drain away one of the plant's strength. This week's theme reminds us that we will be known by the fruits we bear, so part of mission is to make the love of Jesus known to the world by the way love and care for all God's people.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

God is calling us to work for abundant life for all. We can bear spiritual fruit if we allow God to remain in us, and the fruit we bear is for the benefit of ourselves and of others. God is calling us to be mindful of the needs of the poor and to work for the upliftment of others.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES FURTHER REFLECTION:

- Psalm 80:8 "You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it"
- Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do".
- Titus 2:13-14 "It is I who has redeemed you with my blood so that you would be purified and to be eager to do what is good".
- Galatians 5:22 "For the fruit of the spirit is Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- Love divine, all loves excelling
- Take my life and let it be
- Christ for the world we sing
- All Creatures of our God and King
- For the beauty of the earth
- As a deer pants for the water
- Thy kingdom come, o God
- Beauty for brokenness
- Will you come and follow me

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

As we celebrate the Holy Eucharist to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for his mercies, let us pray for his church in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

Almighty God, who promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in his name. We pray for your church throughout the world and especially for this Diocese, for Joshua our Bishop, together with Thabo our Diocesan and Metropolitan.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

For all clergy, stretch forth thy hand, O God from thy dwelling place on high, and strengthen them for your work and ministry,

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

For all members of the church and in their vocation and ministry, that they may serve Christ as the true vine in truth and love.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

For the mission of the Church, that in faithful witness we may proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to the ends of the earth.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

For the sick, the suffering, for the aged and infirm, for the lonely and neglected, and for all who remember and care for them,

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

For the poor and the hungry for the homeless and the oppressed, for all prisoners and captives, and for our sisters and brothers who are persecuted for their faith.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord graciously hear us.

God of unfailing Love, we come before you on this day with thankful and joyous hearts because your love knows no bounds. We praise and thank You, that you reveal yourself time and again to us as the True Vine. Use us to spread your unfailing love throughout the world. Accept these our prayers for the sake of your son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

WHAT WE VALUE: CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER (ROMANS 12:9-21)

WELCOME (10 mins)

In his book "The Five Love Languages", Dr Gary Chapman unpacks the main ways we give and receive love: through words of affirmation, quality time, giving gifts, acts of service and physical touch. Which of these resonate with you? Share with the group your top love languages.

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus

WORD (30 mins)

This week we are considering our value "Care for One another." In this passage God calls us to genuine love that goes beyond the walls of the Church and extends to even our enemies. Read Romans 12:9-21

1. If you were to attach an emoji to verses 9 through 13, which one would you choose and why?
2. What does Paul encourage us toward and warn us away from? Draw two columns separating and contrasting the warnings and encouragements.
3. When is it harder to practice love, when you are hurt by someone close to you or an acquaintance? Why?
4. How are love (v9) and peace (v18) the basis for all the other guidelines here?
5. Think back to a time you experienced genuine love (maybe in the form of your primary love language). Share your experience. How can we as a group foster genuine love for one another, with our love languages in mind?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

Of the commands listed in these verses which two are the easiest to keep and which two are the most difficult? Pray for each person that you may be able to love one another genuinely with the love from the Father.

WITNESS (5-10 mins)

How can we create opportunities for our love for one another, as a small group, to be experienced by those on the outside? Brainstorm ideas together and decide on actions that you can commit to.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. How would you describe the community around the church?
2. How would you describe the community where your parishioner live?
3. What physical needs might the community around have?
4. What physical needs might your parishioners have?
5. How does the church respond?
6. Is there anything more that the church could be doing?
7. What reason(s) (if any) could you give for not doing more?
8. Do you have partnerships with any structures or organizations in the community?

WEEK 5: TO TRANSFORM UNJUST STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE OF EVERY KIND AND PURSUE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Overview: God calls on us to show our by caring for others and being actively involved in the restoration of anyone who experiences oppression, indignity and humiliation. We are reminded this week that God calls us to love and to through our actions to make the love of God visible in the works.

SERMON MATERIAL

Acts 10:44-48

The scene emanates from Peter's arrival and visit to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea. Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, was a God fearing man that believed in God and the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus. At the time of Peter's visit, Cornelius's home was filled with his relatives and friends. They were prepared and expectant to receive the Good News conveyed by God's appointed Apostle, Peter. Whilst Peter was still preaching, the Holy Spirit descended upon them and filled each one of them; the entire household of Gentiles received the Holy Spirit. They were then baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.

By virtue of one's baptism, all become co-heirs and equal citizens in the Kingdom of God. Our membership in the Body of Christ is the same for both Jew and Gentile. Therefore, it is true, for all who approach God in sheer humility confessing their faith in Christ Jesus. The reciprocity of God's ceaseless grace and love for all people of every nationality, does not limit itself to an exclusivity of a certain group of people; instead, the barriers that once divided, through a faith and belief in common draws them to be on equal footing with one another by their faith in Jesus Christ.

Bearing witness and testifying to the resurrection and ascension of the God incarnate, Jesus who died, was buried and rose from the dead amongst the first who believed evolved into the first church. Building on this manifesto, was just the beginning for others to recognise and experience the transformative power of God working through His ordained and established community of believers, leaders and servants: the church.

Psalm 98

A clear and definitive call to worship. The nudge to praise God in song and melody. To make a joyful noise attributing the extolment of Almighty God claiming His just and righteous character. The psalmist encourages and imposes on us to recognise and declare that the God who is worthy to be praised and glorified is the One who will come to judge as ruler over all.

The One regarded as the Most High is to be praised for all the awe-inspiring and far-reaching deeds and marvellous works that He has done. To judge with righteousness and equity speaks of a God who is faithful and trustworthy in all that commands and demonstrates.

The parallel significance of the Lord's resurrection and ascension according to the Gospel to that of the Psalm brings forth a very vivid and categorical sureness that the reign of Christ and the ultimate fulfilment of the Kingdom of God has come. Through His sovereignty, evil and wickedness have been overthrown through His victory over death, once for all.

Trusting in God's salvific power creates a renewed confidence in us believing that God remains on the side of those who believe; confessing their faith in Him, who is able and ready to save and is also the One who brings wholeness to all things.

1 John 5:1-6

Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God are reminded that they are born of God. Through Christ's redeeming act of love by His crucifixion, the children of God are positioned with Him who has overcome the world. Conquering the sting of death, the beloved of God are assured in God's love that they are precious and counted for.

As Saviour of the world, God has reconciled the entire creation to Himself. It is through obedience and discipline of keeping all that God commands that disposes us with sustained faith. It is through faith, believing that the Messiah came to cleanse, purify and make all things new that we are able to withstand evil as we no longer act in our own strength but through faith and being sanctified in Christ Jesus.

The element of fear is replaced with the assurance of faith that is attained for those who believe. Drawing closer and nearer to the love of God perfects in the children of God a faith that will grow and develop into a testifying witness of the Saviour, challenging the world on everything that stands in conflicting contrast to this Divine love.

John 15:9-17

The dual call to remain in God and to love others persistently reminds us of how we ought to love referencing the illustration of the intimate love shared between God the Father and the Son. This love is described as sequential and consequential. The relationship holds a connectedness that is powerful and unyielding.

The steadfastness of this love does not only bring joy but it also captivates the true meaning and essence of the relationship. The bond of friendship is one that is familiar, sacrificial and altruistic. This love between the Father and the Son did not exist without any demand or expectation.

This sacrificial love chose its beneficiaries and the giver of this love is commanding His followers to display the same towards one another. This love spoken of is supreme and cannot be replaced or substituted with any other form or measure of it.

The riveting aspect to the command of love one another is to discover what it truly means to be part of and to then establish it in the very midst of the chaos of life.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

In order for us to comprehend how as believers and the church alike may serve as a conduit to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; we would need to work from the premise of understanding the Kingdom of God. It is also of paramount importance to acknowledge that the driving force of any form of change, reform and transition exists inherently in the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God.

Wim Dreyer (2019) offers insights in his article that unpacks John de Gruchy's Understanding of the Kingdom of God as Articulated in "The Church's Struggle in South Africa", reflecting on how his theology and the role he played in the socio-political transformation of South Africa. There is a cognitive rationale of the Kingdom of God being Christ-centred that translates into a tangible essence of being personal and social in the here and now as well as future history (2019:4). Any form of change that is imminent contributing towards the status of an egalitarian society, will stem from a purpose-driven *ecclesia* that are united in working together to shape and mould the world to change. Human action and behaviour does not constitute the Kingdom of God but resembling the ministry of Jesus and to convey that into the world, is ushering in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Guarding against ideologies and secular notions that are championed to resemble the Kingdom of God, is exactly what is required to ensure that unjust structures of society are not architecturally endorsed and appropriated as God's divine will and plan. Historical experience of grave suffering and callous exploitation that have claimed the livelihood and dignity of many people, over many decades and centuries, have proven that anything that contradicts or compromises the love of God is a heresy. If what we do correlates with what we say, in accordance with biblical expressions of what the Creator God accomplished through His Son, then only can justice and righteousness of God be realised. Human redemption and reconciliation is embedded in the love of God, through the reign of Christ and continuously manifesting itself by the Holy Spirit: through a sustained witness of truth in service to God within the household of God (oikos).

Anything that threatens the integrity and intention of God's love amongst the created order is to be called out. Justice, peace and human dignity are central to Christian faith (Dreyer 2019:9). Manuscripts like the Kairos Document and Belhar Confession are integral and deeming points of reference to aid the prophetic calling out of corruption and debilitating fragmentation resulting from unjust socio-political and economic variables.

As the psalmist echoes sentiments of "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10); and as the prophet Micah calls the people of God "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8); is the foretaste of the Kingdom of the God that Jesus preached and commanded. It is not a romantic indictment pressed upon us as we are called to step into the boldness of Christ's embodiment that is on the side of the marginalised and inflicted. Hailers of the Gospel have no easy ride into the distant sunset but an incumbent requisite rests on them to be prepared to navigate spaces and places to illuminate God's light and peace.

The hope that the Kingdom of God brings, promises that justice and righteousness will flourish. The initiative remains with God however, as believers we become participants in the mission of God (Missio Dei).

Transformation will takes its form on a personal intimate level as we become more like Christ however its exponential impact on community, society, the world; should not be underestimated as the victorious resurrected Christ through the Missio Dei is at hand and will continue to exude His reign of power and peace. The love of God moves us to heal, transform, reconcile and unite a world broken by sin, suffering and injustices. God's love compels us to work towards the new earth and the new heaven in which the Lord reigns. The social justice imperative is embedded in God's love for all people and creation (Pillay 2022: 3).

It is incumbent on the church to speak out in moments of crisis, to confront agencies of systemic violence and to be the voice of the powerless representing their needs and raising significant issues that violate, threaten and transgress against human dignity; all of which the Kingdom of God advocates for the preservation and protection of life. Life created in the image of God, born of God and all that rests with God.

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

As a City, we are acutely aware of the high unemployment rate amongst unskilled workers and qualified professionals. Our townships on the greater Cape Flats terrain and informal settlement areas are ever increasing where people are living in densified, overcrowded and unhygienic conditions with no or very minimal access to resources that are essential to a healthy and environmentally acceptable standard.

Gender-based violence, gangsterism, substance abuse and human trafficking are among some of the social ills that plague many of our communities.

Provincially, the government may have taken pride in exhibiting good statistics in respect of job creation, healthcare services and general economic growth however; there is a constant advocacy to be independent from the Country's political polity and national governance. As a resident of the Western Cape who is also a citizen of South Africa, where does this leave the ordinary person who falls in the category of being regarded as a disenfranchised, unemployed member of society?

Residents in and around Cape Town are also members within parishes of the Diocese of Cape Town. We bear witness to some of the consequential remnants resulting from the aforementioned, notwithstanding the devastating and added insult to injury long lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Inflation, for most who find themselves beneath the breadline, cannot cope. It is unattainable and therefore life specifically from a material and physical well-being perspective is not sustained.

However, the gap between the wealthy and the poor continues to grow. It is a stark and evidential reality. On one side of the track there is not even a morsel of bread to satisfy an undernourished, hungry child; and on the other side, plenty of wastage as opulence and a total dissociation or lack of awareness of what is really happening seems to play out in the communities we reside in.

The reality is not hidden. A holidaymaker or tourist is able to witness this by means of a paid City sightseeing tour. The vulnerabilities and indignities of many are exposed, violated and to a large degree, completely minimised.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

As the Father sent the Son, so has the Son commissioned us to continue in service with a love that is selfless, fully and actively participating in the various parts of His vineyard; to preach the good news, to encourage and educate others of the faith, to be concerned about the weak, sick, elderly, impoverished, down-trodden, victimised, to challenge systems and structures that catapults those on the periphery further into ungodly and inhumane conditions and to nurture responsible stewards.

The mission of God unfolds in the lives of ordinary persons advancing the principles and characteristics of a Holy Kingdom, an everlasting ordinance of what God has already set in motion.

The presence of God's peace and reign unravels the bondages that resists transformation and edification of God's beloved. It is an acknowledgment of God's power and authority being supreme so much so that even in chaos, distress and devastation; there is a divine busy-ness that will overrule the wickedness of any inculcated evil.

It is identifying with those who desperately require justice to improve their social and economic circumstances that the mission of God brings forth a transformative opportunity to recreate, restore and reinstate inclusive communities by bridging the gaps that divide, segregate and discriminate.

The mission of God is a perpetual labour of love that builds up people and communities to harvest a life-renewing and stable society. It is about learning and discovering how God perceives His own handiwork.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2)".

It is imperative for us to first recognise who we are in God and who God is in us. As beneficiaries of God's unconditional love, I do believe that we are to challenge ourselves and take stock as individuals, as church, and as communities where we stand as missionaries in the mission of God.

If we have been contented to be bystanders, perhaps the time has come for us to re-engage using our prophetic voice to call for the deconstruction and reconstruction of public policy, revision of financial aid distribution according to planned budgets, safety in communities should be made a priority, correctional services for the rehabilitation of offenders is in dire need to be reviewed, a more visible integration in society bridging social and economic disparities ought to be physically and geographically landscaped.

Our stepping into line with the mission of God will bring us to a pinnacle point I hope and pray that the Beloved of God will gravitate closer to the vision of the Kingdom of God. It is an anticipated action through missiological advancement that is positioned to transform, challenge and pursue all that builds up our common life.

Suggested resources for further reading:

Dreyer, Wim A., 2019, 'John de Gruchy's Understanding of the Kingdom of God as Articulated in "The Church Struggle in South Africa"', *Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae* 45(1), #4790.
<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/4790>

Klaasen, John S., 2020, 'Diakonia and Diaconal Church', *Missionalia* 48(1), 120-133.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.7832/48-1-363>

Pillay, J., 2022, 'The significance of social justice and *diakonia* in the Reformed tradition', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78(4), a7846. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7846>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- Make me a channel of your peace
- I, the Lord, of Sea and Sky
- Shine Jesus Shine
- Power of Your Love
- Change my heart, Oh God (You are the Potter)
- 10 000 reasons (Bless the Lord O my soul)
- Because of who you are
- God is here, as we His People
- Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
- Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart
- We turn to you, O God of every nation
- We have a gospel to proclaim
- Father, Lord of all Creation
- Love Divine, all loves excelling

Prayers of the People:

O Almighty God,
the Father of all humanity,
turn, we pray, the hearts of all peoples and their rulers,
that by the power of your Holy Spirit
peace may be established among the nations
on the foundation of justice, righteousness and truth;
through him who was lifted up on the cross
to draw all people to himself,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(William Temple, 1881-1944)

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace
proceed, kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all the true
love of peace, and guide with your pure and peaceable
wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the
earth; that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward,
until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Francis Paget, 1851-1911)

O God,
who would fold both heaven and earth
in a single peace:
Let the design of thy great love
lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows:
and give peace to thy Church,
peace among nations,
peace in our dwellings,
and peace in our hearts:
through thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Eric Milner-White, 1884-1963)

O God the Father of all, you ask every one of us to
spread love where the poor are humiliated, joy where
the Church is brought low, and reconciliation where
people are divided, father against son, mother against
daughter, husband against wife, believers against those
who cannot believe, Christians against their unloved
fellow Christians. You open this way for us, so that the
wounded body of Jesus Christ, your Church, may be
leaven of communion for the poor of the earth and in
the whole human family.

(Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, 1910-97)

Creator God,
You loved the world into life.
Forgive us when our dreams of the future
are shaped by anything other
than glimpses of a kingdom
of justice, peace and an end to poverty.

Incarnate God,
you taught us to speak out for what is right.
Make us content with nothing less than a world
that is transformed into the shape of love,
where poverty shall be no more.

Breath of God,
let there be abundant life.
Inspire us with the vision of poverty over,
and give us the faith, courage and will
to make it happen.

(Christian Aid)

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

WHAT ABOUT SENDING ME? (ISAIAH 6)

WELCOME (5-10 min)

Have you ever been asked by a person in authority to do something out of your comfort zone? Describe, in a sentence, your feelings and response.

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus.

WORD (30 mins)

Read: Isaiah 6

1. Imagine you are Isaiah, what do you tell a friend about what you saw, heard and felt in verse 1-4?
2. Compare Isaiah's response in verse 8 with verse 5. What is significant about that?
3. What is Isaiah's new mission? (Verse 9-10) what effect will this mission have on Judah?
4. How is your experience with God like Isaiah's: Awestruck? Guilt-ridden? Cleansed? Are you willing to serve anywhere, anytime?
5. Why has God sent you to your world?

WONDER (5-10mins)

Isn't it interesting that Isaiah was righteous, a 'good' person, a prophet, yet when confronted by God's divine presence in his throne room, he feels totally unworthy, so sinful. The last kind of person God, in his utter Holiness, might use.

God asks Isaiah "Whom shall I send, who will go?" He wants a volunteer, someone who will choose to accept his invitation. Have you ever felt God's call? Have you responded? Share in the group.

WITNESS (5-10mins)

Have you responded to God's call but sort of lost your way, or got side-tracked, or just feel not good enough? Is being a 'called and sent' Christian relevant to you, in your daily life at work, at school or at home?

Pray in pairs for one another.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. How does your parish church advocate for the plight of the poor and oppressed?
2. Does your parish church participate in any community structures?
3. What services/seasons do you hold where social issues are highlighted?
4. Do you use your notices in church to share information about community-led activities?
5. Do you use your pew leaflet to share information about community-led activities?
6. Do you use your website to share information about community-led activities?

WEEK 6: TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION, AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH

Overview: The fifth mark of mission reminds us that God is creator and calls on us to care for all that God Has created. The first commandment that God gave to us is to care for the land and keep it. How we care for what God has created is a form of worship and thanksgiving for all that God has done for us, it is also a way of caring for those who cannot always care for themselves. Caring for creation is a way of caring for ourselves and reminds us that we are not islands, but part of a web of life.

SERMON MATERIAL

Psalm 1

People that follow the ways of the Lord are being compared to trees that grow in prime spots. They have access to water allowing them to grow and produce fruit, and their leaves do not wither. We can draw a comparison between the water the trees receive to the light of Christ. The light of Christ and the Lord's teachings are the source of life for people. If you follow the Lord's teaching, you will flourish and will be able to overcome challenges and trying times. We are reminded of Jeremiah 17: 7-8 "But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit".

How does this link to the theme? In order for trees to thrive, they need water and nutrients, and a clean environment. This links to us, as the guardians of nature, to ensure a safe and clean environment for both plants and animals to thrive in. A safe and clean environment leads to security for future generations of plants and animals to continue to grow and reproduce continuing the cycle of life.

1 John 5:9-13

This passage reiterates John 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." It speaks to the Psalm for the day which also speaks about "but their delight is in the law of the Lord" and the trees planted by streams, they do not wither instead they prosper.

John 17:6-19

Jesus prays for his disciples. He asks God to protect them after he is gone.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

There are several examples in the Bible that teaches us to be protectors of the environment. To only use what we need and to not take more that is necessary—to make sure future generations will also have. In Genesis 1:26, 28-30, Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God gives us all the plants and animals to look after, yes, we

use them for food, but we must also look after and protect them. God himself gives us a rainbow as a sign to sustain every living creature on Earth. Genesis 9. 8-17

In Deuteronomy 24:19-22, we are told not to exhaust the harvest. In other words, to make sure our actions with our environment is

sustainable. In Matthew 6.25-34 God tells us to trust in Him, that he will provide for us.

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

Our City and Diocese falls into one of the six Floral Kingdoms of the world (a geographic area recognized for its exclusive plant life). The Cape Floristic Kingdom is the smallest of the six comprising of fynbos plants, and the most diverse. Almost 75% of the plants found in this region are listed as threatened in the Red List of South African Plants.

How does this link to our theme: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth? It's exactly as the theme says, we need to safeguard not only the plants but entire ecosystems of natural veld. Why entire ecosystems? Everything is life is linked to each other, everything in nature is linked in a food web plants, animals, and insects need each other for survival. We have many protected areas in the Cape Peninsula already, but building environmental awareness to the public is key. Making them aware of what we have and why it is important to protect it.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

It requires us to be more aware of our responsibility to the environment. It also requires us to be more transparent in what we do to be more environmentally stable. There are examples of the Church setting the example when it comes to the environment—banning the use of Styrofoam at Church events, planting a tree every time a New Rector is inducted at a Parish, giving confirmation candidates spekboom to plant, grow, and look after.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

In Genesis chapter 1: verse 28 it says that human beings are to fill the earth and to have dominion over its creatures. Dominion, however, does not mean to rule with supremacy or dominance about us, we should rule with love, care, and respect for all living creatures, big and small, animals, and plants. In Genesis chapter 2: verse 15 it says that Adam is to till the garden and to keep it. Keeping the garden means protecting it and being responsible for its welfare. God wants us to be stewards of Earth and its resources. That means each and every one of us needs to play their part in environmental care. We should be more mindful of how we treat the Earth and its resources. Sustainability is a word commonly associated with the environment and its resources. It means to use only what we need for the present, so we do not compromise what is needed for future generations. It's about doing our part, even small things, like taking our own bags to the shop, to trying to reduce single use plastic, being less wasteful.

Suggested resources for further reading:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/2-liturgical-resources-ewg.pdf>

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/98318/41-And-it-was-good.pdf>

https://www.greenanglicans.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Final-Manual-2023_compressed.pdf

<https://www.liturgytools.net/2015/08/hymns-care-of-creation-world-day-of-prayer-conservation-ecology-earth-stewardship.html>

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- All things bright and beautiful
- Immortal, invisible, God only wise
- Joyful, Joyful, we Adore Thee
- For the beauty of the Earth
- This Is My Father's World
- As the Sun Doth Daily Rise

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/2-liturgical-resources-ewg.pdf>)

To Strive:

God, creator of the universe,
Fill us with your love for the creation,
for the natural world around us,
for the earth from which we come
and to which we will return.
Awake in us energy to work for your world;
let us never fall into complacency, ignorance,
or being overwhelmed by the task before us.
Help us to restore, remake, renew.
Amen

To Safeguard:

Jesus, Redeemer of the World,
Remind us to consider the lost lilies,
the disappearing sparrows;
teach us not to squander precious resources;
help us value habitats:
seas, deserts, forests and seek to preserve this world in its diversity.
Alert us to the cause of all living creatures
destroyed wantonly for human greed or pleasure;
Help us to value what we have left
and to learn to live without taking more than we give. Amen
Integrity of Creation
Spirit of the Living God
At the beginning you moved over the face of the waters.
You brought life into being, the teeming life
that finds its way through earth and sea and air,
that makes its home around us, everywhere.
You know how living things flourish and grow
How they co-exist; how they feed and breed and change
Help us to understand those delicate relationships,
value them, and keep them from destruction.
Amen

To Sustain:

God, of the living earth

You have called people to care for your world –
you asked Noah to save creatures from destruction.

May we now understand how to sustain your world –

Not over-fishing, not over-hunting,

Not destroying trees, precious rainforest

Not farming soil into useless dust.

Help us to find ways to use resources wisely

to find a path to good, sustainable living

in peace and harmony with creatures around us.

Amen

To Renew:

Jesus, who raised the dead to life

Help us to find ways to renew

what we have broken, damaged and destroyed:

Where we have taken too much water,

polluted the air, poured plastic into the sea,

cut down the forests and soured fertile soils.

Help all those who work to find solutions to

damage and decay; give hope to those

who are today working for a greener future.

Amen

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

WHAT ABOUT CREATION? (Genesis 1:1-31)

WELCOME (10 mins)

Have you ever "created" something...

A clay object, a sculpture, a painting or a drawing? How did it make you feel? Good, proud, possessive, accomplished?

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus.

WORD (30 mins) Read Genesis 1:1-31

1. What do the opening verses of this chapter tell us about the order of creation? Its author? The purpose of creation? The climax? The goodness?
2. When you read the story of creation, what is your first impression of God?
3. Why do you think God first forms the world (days 1-3) and then fills that world (days 4-6) ?
4. What is the role of human beings in creation? What does that mean for our role now on the earth?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

What is the most wonderful thing you've ever seen in nature? How did it speak to you of God? Thank him. Creativity is one of God's greatest gifts, mirroring God's nature. Share in pairs, praying that God will reveal new ways to you to be creative in your life, to grow in what you already do, or how to be defending our environment.

Witness (5-10 mins)

In September we will participate with the global church in Season of Creation. How might we prepare now for this focus. It will be upon us soon.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. What measures, if any, have you taken to ensure that you reduce your use of resources (water, electricity, paper etc.) as a church?
2. Do you celebrate the Season of Creation every year?
3. What kinds of plants do you have in your church garden?
4. Do you undertake any activities, as a church, to highlight a care for creation (eg. beach clean-up, tree planting etc)
5. Do you speak about caring for creation in your parish council meetings?
6. Do you teach caring for creation in Sunday School?
7. How does the youth of the church engage in caring for creation?
8. Do the church organisations include caring for creation in their activities?
9. Do you hold outdoor services?

WEEK 6: A MISSIONAL CHURCH

Overview: Today we celebrate the church of God and our calling to participate in the Mission of God. Much of what we have been speaking about for the past six weeks and focused on us as church, today we are reminded that we called, to be sent out. As the Holy Spirit is poured on the disciples, they are empowered to enact the Great Commission and begin the task of taking the Gospel of Christ into all the world.

1 Acts 2:1-21

In the first reading today, we see that the disciples are all gathered in the upper room, where Jesus had commanded them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift that God was about to send (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4). When the Spirit falls on the disciples, like tongues of fire, they are immediately able to communicate with people from across the Mediterranean and share the good news of Christ with them.

All this happens on the Feast of Pentecost, a the Jewish Festival of Shavout, The Festival weeks. This festival occurs seven weeks after Passover and celebrates the giving of the Ten Commandments. This feast of Pentecost is one of the three Pilgrimage festivals, when all Israelites were expected to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. The feast is also an agricultural feast, marking the first harvest of the new season.

Peter's speech, quoting Joel 2:28-32, reminds us that the Spirit of the Lord will fall on all people and empower them for God's service. From here Peter and the other disciples journey into the world proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has come.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

Psalm 104 tells another creation story. Here we see again that God is creator and that the Spirit of God is present at creation. In the Psalm we read about the things that God has created and are reminded that God did not create and walk away but has remained active in creation and all creation is dependent of God to provide for our needs. The Psalmist goes further and tells us, in verse 30, that by the Spirit God is able to renew creation. Thus God's creative work in the world remains active through Spirit.

Romans 8:22-27

In Romans 8 Paul uses the language of adoption to explain that we are all children of God, adopted through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter there is a progression of terms as Paul begins by speaking of children, using the Greek word "*tekna*" in verse 15, meaning a child that is born into a family. He uses this term as part of spelling out the distinction between those who are guided by the flesh and those who are guided by the Holy Spirit. The word *tekna* refers not simply to child, but to a person who is dependent on others, in this case a person who is dependant either on the guidance of the flesh or of the Spirit, they are slaves either to the flesh or to the Spirit.

In verse 23 Paul uses the word "*huiiothesian*" literally meaning an adopted son. The act of adoption is one in which the child is passive and the parent is active. Adoption was not only about those who join from outside the biological family, it was customary for the status of sons to change at their coming of age from being a child, to a son or an adult. This adult could share in the inheritance of the family, could be sent to represent his father in business matters. In the same way the passage we reflect on today reminds us that we are God's representatives, not simply those who are dependent but able to act on behalf of God and heirs of the things of God. There is therefore a missionary imperative for those adopted by God, as children of God to act on behalf of God as workers in the Kingdom.

Gospel John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

John 15 is part of the farewell discourse in John's Gospel, chapters 14-17. Already in Chapter 14:15-31 Jesus begins to speak about the Advocate who is to come, who will be present with the disciples as they do the work which they have been preparing for, under the leadership of Jesus as their teacher. Jesus tells that the world does not know the Spirit, because it cannot see the Spirit, but the disciples will know the Spirit because the Spirit will be within them. Jesus reminds the disciples that he has to go and assures them that He would be present with them through the Spirit, who will also remind them of everything that He taught.

In Chapter 15:26-27 Jesus again speaks about the coming of the Advocate and that Advocate will testify to who Jesus is and that the disciples should do the same. Herein lies their mission as disciples that, filled with the Spirit, they are to spread the Good News abroad. In what follows in the Acts of the Apostles we see how the disciples live out this instruction from Jesus.

In Chapter 16:4-15 Jesus again speaks about coming of the Advocate and this time stresses that Advocate will come as the Spirit of truth to convict the world of its sins and guide the disciples into all truth. Jesus also reiterates that the Spirit will not speak of its own accord but will speak what the Father and the Son instruct it to say. As in the passage from Romans 8, Jesus tells the disciples of the heritage that is theirs through the Spirit; that all that is God's is His and he will make it known to them (and to us) through the Spirit living and working in and through them.

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGY THAT UNDERPINS THE THEME?

As we conclude our Season of Mission, we read of the power of the Spirit both for creation and the renewal of creation. We are also reminded that Spirit brings about this renewal through us who have the Holy Spirit living in us. The church, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is sent into the world for the salvation of the world. The theology of the *Missio Dei*, the Mission God, reminds us that we serve a sending God; God sent Jesus into the world, God through Jesus send the Holy Spirit and together the Father, Son and Holy Spirit send us into the world. Mission is at the heart of who God is, and work for the renewing of the world, spiritually and physically, is at the heart of the church, being sent to do the work of God in the world. As Christopher J Wright says: "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God if mission has a church in the world."

"The missionary dimension of a local church's life manifests itself, among other ways, when it is truly a worshipping community; it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home; it is a church in which the pastor does not have the monopoly and the members are not merely objects of pastoral care; its members are equipped for their calling in society; it is structurally pliable and innovative; and it does not defend the privileges of a select group. However, the church's missionary dimension evokes intentional, that is direct involvement in society; it actually moves beyond the walls of the church and engages in missionary 'points of concentration' such as evangelism and work for justice and peace." David Bosch

HOW DOES THE THEME RELATE TO OUR CONTEXT AS A CITY AND AS A DIOCESE?

The post-Covid church has been very inward looking, as we contend with a reduction in attendance and in income. This Season of Mission has sought to remind us that inasmuch as we need to rethink and reimagine the church as institution we also have to ensure that church lives out our calling of being sent by God to participate in the salvation of the world. God is calling on the church to bring healing and wholeness to the world, reminding us that the Good News of the Kingdom still changes lives and that the love of God is made evident by active presence of the Church in the world.

HOW DOES THE THEME HELP US UNDERSTAND A THEOLOGY OF MISSION?

Mission is the work of the church. Throughout the Season of Mission we have explore various aspects of Mission and have seen how mission is core to the life of the church. Mission is about our worshipping life, it is the equipping of the people of God to be actively involved in the life of the church and about the church actively involved in the lives of parishioners and the community. Pentecost Sunday reminds us that we do all this through the empowering of the in-dwelling Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit we are inheritors of the things of God and are sent as God's ambassadors into the world.

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE CALLING US TO DO ABOUT THIS THEME?

God is calling on us to receive the Holy Spirit afresh and to work together as the Church for the sake of the world, We are reminded that as a church we do not have the luxury of choosing between growing in a knowledge and love of God and serving in the world as both of these are enabled by the outpouring the Holy Spirit. God is missional and the God of mission has a church in the world.

LITURGICAL MATERIAL

Suggested Hymns/Choruses:

- Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost
- We plough the fields and scatter
- Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me
- The Church's one foundation
- Thy hand, o God has guided
- Be still for the presence of the Lord
- Go to the world
- God's spirit is in my heart

RECOMMITMENT TO MISSION

We proclaim Christ crucified
The power of God and the wisdom of God.

For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom
and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Over the past six weeks we considered various aspects of the mission of the church. We have reflected on the 5 Marks of Mission, we have discussed, in small groups, how we might be able to address each of these and have answered question about the our mission and ministry. Today, on the Day of Pentecost, we are reminded that the Spirit of God send us into the world for its renewal. We come now, as the community of faith, to recommit ourselves to being led by the Holy Spirit into God's mission.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
With the help of God, we will.

Will you persevere in resisting evil,
and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
With the help of God, we will.

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?

With the help of God, we will.

Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

With the help of God, we will.

May God who knows the desires of our hearts grant you your desire to be used for the extension of His Kingdom, and to live out the commitment you have made here to the best of your ability and in keeping with His grace.

Amen

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP

WHAT WE VALUE: EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:1-12)

WELCOME (10 mins)

What language(s) other than your native tongue would you love to speak fluently, and why?

WORSHIP (10 mins)

Sing an appropriate hymn or chorus

WORD (30 mins)

1. Why were the disciples gathering and waiting in the upper room? (See Acts 1:7&8)
2. In this passage how does the Holy Spirit reveal Himself?
3. Looking at verse 5 why did God choose Pentecost as the day to give His Holy Spirit? What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit reveals Himself today?
4. Would you naturally respond more like those in verse 12 or verse 13 and why?
5. How did this encounter of the Holy Spirit empower the believers to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth and begin the Church?

WONDER (5-10 mins)

As a group take time to share an experience or testimony of an encounter with the Holy Spirit. What happened? Where were you? How did you feel?

After sharing, take some time to pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to come and fill each member of the group.

This could be an opportunity for someone in the group who may have never experienced the Holy Spirit before or may feel confused about the Holy Spirit to be prayed for to encounter and be filled by the Holy Spirit.

WITNESS (5-10 mins)

Have you experienced an empowering from God to witness about Christ?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. What missional goals would you like to set for yourselves as a church?
2. Who would be the target audience/recipients of your missional activities under these goals?
3. How could you provide the resources to attain the goals?
4. Who might be able to assist you in achieving these goals?
5. What skills, from within the church membership, could you use to achieve your goals?
6. What skills would have to be nurtured and developed in order for your goals to be met?
7. How do these goals help you reflect on you vision and mission statements?