

Journey in Faith
Module Two
God's Call and Our Response



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Module Two: God's Call and Our Response

Introduction

Hopefully you have enjoyed the Christmas break and are eager to begin module two of the Journey in Faith Course. This module introduces you some ways of thinking about faith and gives us some tools for thinking in a theological way. We can apply these tools to reflecting on our own journey.

Last term we looked at some of the ways God called some Old Testament characters and the impact of their faith on their lives. This term we shall explore the way in which we live out *our* relationship with God and how we share the God-life within us with others. God invites us to our own vocation, which is uniquely ours and offers us the opportunity to respond.

Vocations are not discovered alone or lived alone. The community in which we live also contributes to calling us. We are shaped and formed by those with whom we share our lives. Without the support of community members it would be difficult to make decisions and to live out commitments. Communities help to nurture and sustain the unique vocation of all members.

Module Two: Book list

Theology

Foster R, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of the Christian Faith* (London: Fount, 1999)

Thompson J, *Theological Reflection: SCM Study Guide* (London: SCM Press, 2008)

Vocation

Buchanan S, *'Called by God' A Handbook for those testing Christian Vocation* SPCK 2008

Cottrell S *On Priesthood* (Hodder & Stoughton 2020)

Croft S *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (London DLT 1999)

Dewar F *Called or Collared? An Alternative Approach to Vocation* 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2000)

Nouwen. H.J.M., *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (London: DLT, 1994/1979)

Renewal and Reform (CofE) *Calling all God's People* (Church House Publishing, 2019)

Rowling C *Reader Ministry Explored* (SPCK 2009)

Sadgrove M *Wisdom & Ministry: The Call to Leadership* (London SPCK 2008)

Torrey M *Diverse Gifts* (London Canterbury Press 2006) [All]

Theology

Foster R, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of the Christian Faith* (London: Fount, 1999)

Thompson J, *Theological Reflection: SCM Study Guide* (London: SCM Press, 2008)

Other books of interest

Wells S, *Incarnational Mission* (Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2018)

Module Two Assignments

These are the optional five assignments for Module 2. Choose **one** only.

Church Traditions

Critique the major spiritual traditions (not denominations) of the Christian church i.e. the Catholic, Charismatic, Evangelical and Liberal (*in about 1200 words*).

Share your own preferences from one or a number of traditions and how you came to these preferences (*in about 800 words*).

Spirituality Interviews

Reflect upon the interviews you conducted for Session 4 about spirituality. You should have talked with at least 5 people some of whom are Christian and some not. Present your findings which should include:

- a) an assessment of the interviewees (who they are, what they do etc.)
- b) a summary of their responses
- c) an evaluation of a) and b) with reference to what you have discovered about spirituality from the course and the bibliography.

You should aim to write about half the words on parts a) and b) and half the words on c).

Theological Reflection

Write up the process of reflecting theologically on one of the experiences used in the group using the pastoral cycle. If it was not your own ask permission of the group to do so. You should work around the pastoral cycle beginning with experience, followed by analysis and dialogue and then leading to what action you would take. It is important to show how the different stages are connected with each other and how the action flows from what has been discovered in the previous stages.

Of the total words you should write at least half of them on the dialogue stage.

The Meaning of Work

“Some people work to live and others live to work”

Discuss this statement in the light of what you have learnt about vocation. Is either position in the statement an adequate basis for a Christian understanding of the meaning of work?

Book Review

Write a review of one of the following books.

- Cottrell S *On Priesthood* 2020
- *Kingdom Calling* 2020 Church House Publishing

You should include a summary of the book, consideration of its strengths and weaknesses and what was the most valuable thing you gained from it. From the Francis Dewar book you might want to suggest how useful it would be for those exploring vocation.

Your assignment should be of 2,000 words (+ or – 10%).

A Module Journal

Keep a diary during the module and record thoughts, feelings, learning, questions that arise during the preparation and sessions themselves.

Write a reflection based on this diary. These reflections should focus on the points of growth – i.e. where new knowledge, insights ideas and skills were gained, as well as the feelings that were around (where these were strong they may indicate things to think further about). You could also indicate what it would be good to pursue further after the module is complete.

The basic diary can then be summarised and written up in the form of a journal to the required word length.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

A Meditation

Why are you anxious about God's Call?

Consider the vines of the vineyard,
How they grow;
They neither toil nor strive,
Yet, I tell you,
Even humanity with all their technology
Cannot produce fruit like one of these.
If God so fruits the vine,
Which today is alive
And tomorrow is cast into the fire,
Will he not more surely
Produce fruit in your life,
O you of little faith?
So do not fret, saying:
'How shall I achieve something worthwhile?'
Or, 'How shall I leave my mark on this world?'
For after such fulfilment the heathen crave,
And your heavenly Father knows your need of it.
Who among you, when your child asks if he can help,
Would always spurn his offers?
Or, if he wants to achieve something worthwhile,
Would you let him waste his life,
Rather than help him succeed?
If you then, being evil,
Know how to love your children,
How much more shall your Father in heaven
Give a ministry to those who seek it.
'Abide in Me.....
And you shall bear much fruit....
And My Father shall be glorified.'

John 15:5-8 Adapted by Grantley Morris

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 1 Theological Reflection 1 Preparation

At the beginning of module two we are going to focus on how we can think about faith; 'thinking Christianly' is formally called **theological reflection**, and it is an essential practice in our deepening discipleship.

Anselm (Archbishop of Canterbury 1093-1109) described theology as 'faith searching for understanding' and this is a good working definition for us.

Theological reflection, searching for that understanding, is the task of all God's people as they try to make sense of ethical dilemmas, personal challenges and church decisions.

Getting started with theological reflection

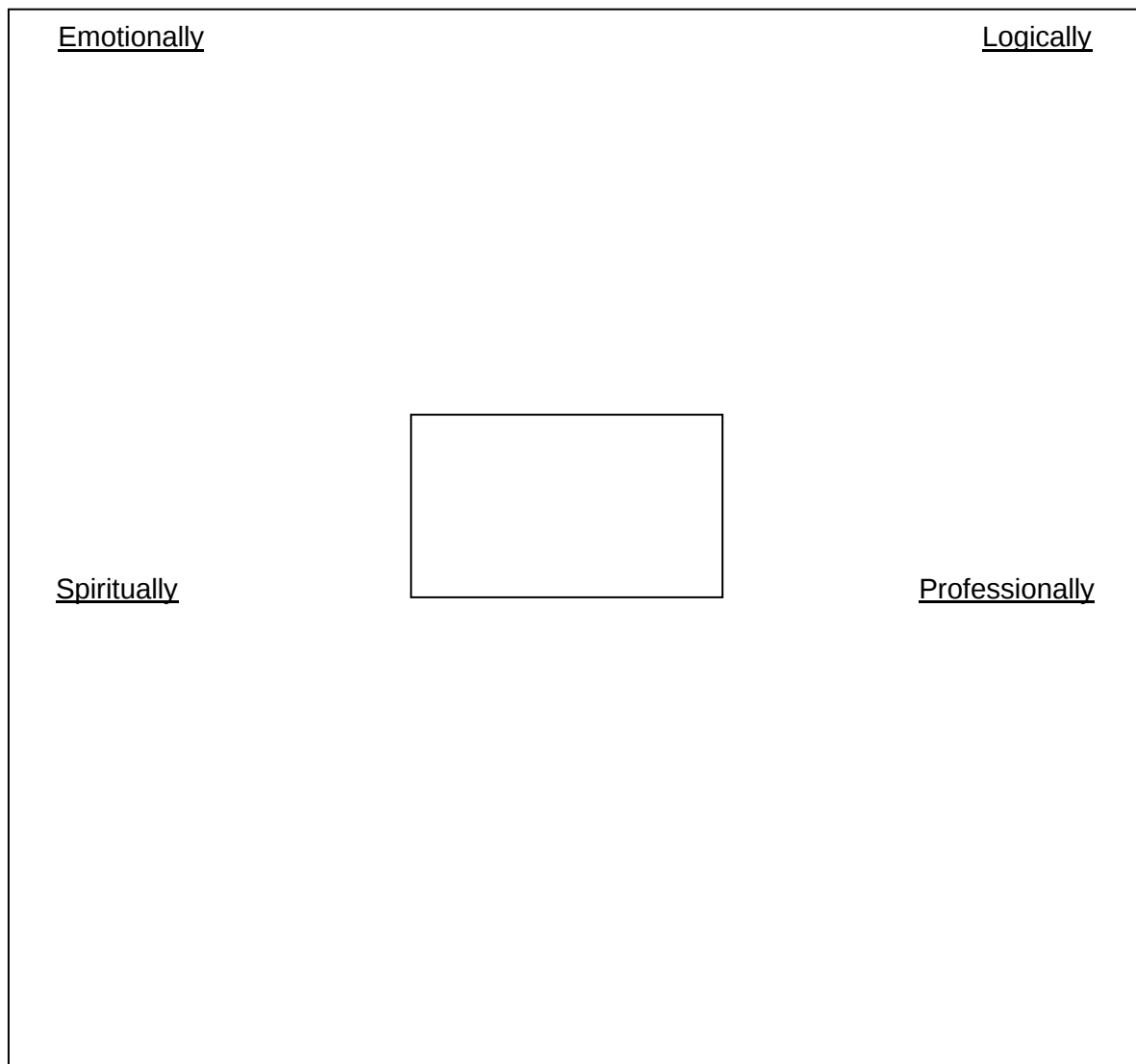
Think of a personal situation or experience you would like to reflect on and write it in the centre of the box on the next page.

Then take some time to think about your reaction to this situation emotionally, logically, spiritually and professionally.

Fill out the space with your reactions.

Now as you look at the diagram and notice which reaction dominates?

Think about how you responded to the situation or decided what to do as a result.



As Christians we have before us a wealth of resources to help us make decisions and think about things based on principles and understanding that underpin our faith. Traditionally there are four lenses through which to reflect theologically on situations:

1. **Scripture**, by which we mean the *whole* of scripture, as it reveals the character of God, and the scope of his mission in the world. It's not about finding individual verses that support our preconceived idea.
2. **Tradition**, the inherited wisdom of God's people through the centuries, held in the practices, beliefs and witness of every generation of Christians. Tradition comes to us with an authority of having stood the test of time. We look back, not to ossified rules but to find the wisdom and choices by which Christians have lived in faith and hope.
3. **Reason**, an understanding of the world in which we live and using our common sense.
4. **Experience**, that of ourselves and others.

To draw conclusions about life and faith using only one or two lenses would be to short-change our theological thinking.

Finally, here are some descriptions of theological reflection.

- a way of thinking about the things that happen in life – to us and to others – through “God coloured spectacles”
- a process by which connections are made between life, faith and practice
- a way of asking questions to enable on-going reconsideration and reformation of thought and practice.
- exploring and engaging with scripture with fresh eyes in the light of our experiences
- the means by which the attitudes and opinions of the reflector can be open to criticism, challenge and change
- a way of reaching fresh understanding
- a means of sharing difficulty or pain with honesty and an openness that leads to enlightenment and satisfaction

Theological Reflection is *not* ...

- Using “proof texts” to support any existing ideas or opinions in the absence of wider objective scrutiny
- A woolly or “above criticism” justification for views or actions
- A way of avoiding hard thinking about difficult questions or side-stepping painful situations

Which of the above descriptions do you find most helpful?

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 1 Theological Reflection 1

Aims To understand theological reflection as discipline

 To appreciate the value of theological reflection

Opening Prayer

5 mins

Reflection from the preparation

15 mins

- What questions did it raise?
- What insights did it give?

A basic 5-step exercise to introduce theological reflection

30 mins

Each person starts with a blank sheet of A4; your tutor will read out the instructions and leave appropriate time intervals for you.

Step 1 Focus on something that has come to your attention this week. It might be personal, or a news item you saw, or an event that has happened. In the centre of your paper, write a short phrase or word to identify it.

Step 2 Begin to fill out the details of that event. Include the people, sights, sounds and what feelings it is bringing to the surface.

Make sure that you spread out over the page with these details, leaving gaps between. You might want to draw pictures or use arrows to show how one thing leads to another. It will probably look messy to anyone else apart from you!

Step 3 Now you are going to begin to find connections between things that you have written down and things about God.

You might want to use a different coloured pen or write in capitals for this step.

These could be:

- A saying of Jesus
- Something from the tradition of the church
- Part of a prayer
- Story from the bible

- Something about the character of God

Add each thing to your paper in the place where it best fits. It might take a while for the spiritual things to come to mind.

Step 4 Look back at what you first wrote. Now you have added step 3, does it change your perspective at all? Allow the reminders and insights from your explorations to help you see afresh. Make a note of anything significant.

Step 5 Write down two or three actions, however small, that your reflection has led you to consider. This will help you to live out what you have discovered.

Group task

- Share with each other your thoughts on this process
- How might this process be used in other situations?

BREAK

In a nutshell, theological reflection is a way in which connections are made between experience, belief and practice.

Four lenses

20 mins

Using the four lenses of scripture, tradition, reason and experience is a way of exploring tough issues and drawing conclusions.

As a group, consider how your church uses some of these lenses to inform their decisions or views.

It would be a bit of a sledgehammer to crack a nut if we applied the four lenses to decide whether or not to show kindness to our neighbour, but it can be a helpful guide in finding sense in big issues such as

Euthanasia and assisted suicide
Same sex marriage
Can war ever be justified?
Should HS2 be built?

The above are huge challenges; below are some more domestic ones:

1. It is election time. Where will you put your cross? Should you vote at all?
2. Your church is facing costly repair and money is extremely limited. What will you say at the church council meeting?

3. "My parents were sort of against me coming here because my exams are going on. And they keep telling me that you can't singlehandedly change the world, you can't go around fighting with everybody about the small things like using plastic bags or wasting water. But I think I can and that's the reason why I'm here". These are the words of an Indian teenager who had joined the global environmental strike led by schoolchildren on Friday 20th Sept 2019. Was she right to miss her exams?

Group task

Work with one of these three scenarios. Although you might have an immediate gut reaction, suspend your instinctive conclusion. Draw in threads from scripture, tradition, reason and experience. How can these inform how you respond?

Challenging some inconsistencies

25 mins

- Luke 1 ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
 but has lifted up the humble.
 ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
 but has sent the rich away empty.

Mary makes this statement during her visit to Zachariah and the pregnant Elizabeth. Has it come true? What issues does this raise for you in your community?

Here are some more inconsistencies between the bible and our 21st century living:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1 Tim 2. 9-15 | Women should remain silent in church |
| Mark 10. 2-12 | Divorce and adultery |
| Matt 6. 25-26 | Don't worry about your life |
| 2 Cor 6. 14-18 | Don't be yoked with unbelievers |
| Mark 16. 17-18 | The signs accompanying those who believe. |

There are numerous inconsistencies between what scripture says, what we teach in the faith and how we live. And in your church or faith community, there are doubtless instances where accepted practice fails to match exactly what the bible tells us and what the church teaches us.

Make a list of as many examples as you can.

What should we do about inconsistencies?

Closing Prayer

5 mins

In the silence offer praise to God for your capacity to think, remember and reflect...

Ask for an increasing ability to reflect theologically and for this to make a positive difference to your life.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

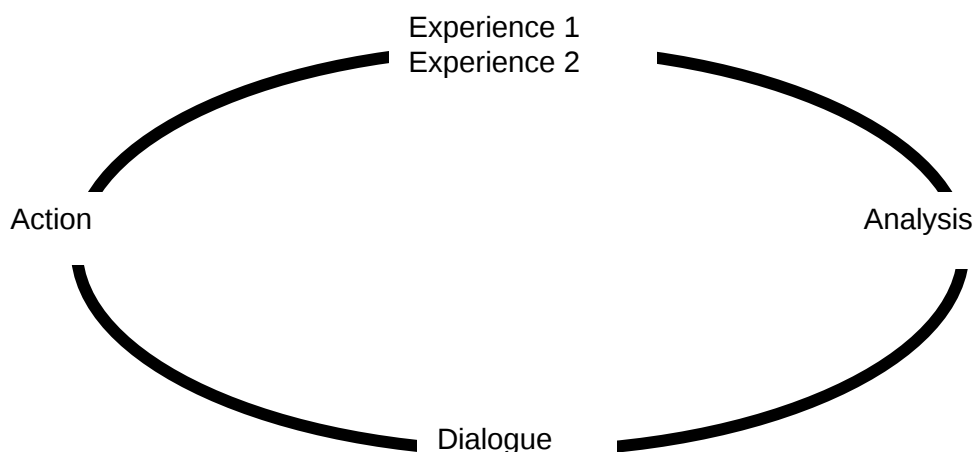
Session 2 Theological Reflection 2 Preparation

There are many ways of engaging in Theological Reflection. In session 1 we used the 5-step exercise and the four lenses of scripture, tradition, reason and experience. In session 2 we will use another method: the pastoral cycle.

The development of the **Pastoral Cycle** is founded on the idea that *theology begins with experience*.

The diagram below may help understand this approach to reflecting theologically, and you will find similarities with the 5-step exercise and the four lenses you used in session 1.

So the 'Pastoral Cycle' begins with current "Experience", goes clockwise to "Analysis", then "Dialogue" and ends with "Action". In fact, the "action" which is the culmination of one cycle becomes the "experience" which begins the next cycle. (Different writers sometimes use slightly different words to express the different stages of the Pastoral Cycle but the stages remain the same.)



Essentially!

1. **Experience:** You do/experience something
2. **Analysis:** You think about what happened, using questions about the facts and feelings in order to identify the issues involved.
3. **Dialogue:** This is a conversation in your head – you bring into your thinking wisdom from scripture, tradition, theological writing, secular writing, history, the world of science, experience and reason.

4. **Action:** The result of this should be that you become aware of new insights that will lead you to fresh understanding and different action (that becomes the “experience” that begins the next cycle.)

It is really important that you don't miss any stage out. It might be very tempting to go straight from the experience to an analysis and then immediately on to what action we shall take. Or we might be so keen to understand that we leap from an experience straight into dialogue without really having clarified what actually was going on.

In session 2 we will work our way around the Pastoral Cycle. So think about a situation you might want to use, such as:

- a) a major decision your church had to make
- b) a surprising experience that you had which changed your understanding of God
- c) an issue or dilemma that you have faced

The example should be in the past and ***not current for you.***



Experience

This way of doing theology begins with an experience such as

- a situation arises to which we have to respond
- someone behaves unexpectedly, and we wonder how to react
- a decision of policy needs to be made, and those responsible want to make the right decision
- a problem arises which needs to be solved
- we find we cannot do something or cannot act in a certain way when we would like to

We begin the pastoral cycle by describing the experience – we can think of this as ‘telling the story’. Useful questions to consider are: who, what, where, when and how. We should avoid the ‘why’ question, to avoid making any judgments at this stage

Analysis

This involves seeing and identifying the issues and questions which arise out of the description of the experience and the feelings associated with it. It moves on to the *why* questions, such as:

- Is this a change? What has changed?
- What are the most important events?
- What influence does money have in the situation? Why?
- Who makes the most important decisions around here? Why?

- What are the most important relationships people have here? Why?
- What are the most important traditions of the people? Why?
- What will things be like in 10 years if they keep going in the same way? Why?
- What are the most important causes of the way things are today? Why?
- What is going on under the surface of things? What are the 'hidden agendas' and assumptions of people involved?

Additional factual information may be needed – *e.g.* demographic statistics from the local Council.

Dialogue

The central element in the pastoral cycle is a “conversation” around the issues identified under “Analysis”. This is where we can take what we have experienced and analysed and begin to see within it the presence of God.

You could draw on the resources of the Christian tradition and external sources. The relationship between the experience and the tradition is a complex one. For example, the tradition may help the researcher interpret the experience and work out an appropriate response, but the experience may also illuminate - and *even change* - the researcher's understanding of the tradition, as may secular knowledge. It is all helped by prayer.

Dialogue with the Bible, Tradition and other sources

i) Dialogue with the Bible

Here are some of the ways we might go about dialogue with the Bible:

- A. Is there a similarity between your experience and a story from the bible?
- B. Do any of the characters in your experience resemble anyone in the Bible, and – if so – does the resemblance help you to understand them better? For example, a question might be ‘who is it who is acting like the Pharisees here?’ Me?
- C. Your experience and analysis may look like one of the big themes of the bible. For example:
 - God's promise to do a saving work for his creation which begins in Genesis and will be completed in revelation. Is there a creating/falling/saving work going on here?
 - God seems to work so often in an incarnational way: the good news is embodied, it's worked out in human life. Does the image of being Christ's body fit with your analysis?
 - There is the resurrection hope of death never being the end which might resonate in your dialogue.

- Other themes may apply such as slavery, the idea of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah; exile; Covenant; mediator; principalities and powers; judgement; the “City”; priesthood; alienation; witness; hope.
- E. Asking the question: “What would Jesus Do?” may be fruitful....and this is not as simple a question as it sounds. We need to remember Jesus was living in a very different time to ours!
- F. The Kingdom of God was central to the message of Jesus. Any scenario being examined from a theological perspective should be set alongside this benchmark.

ii) Dialogue with Tradition and other sources

Here are some of the ways we might go about this:

- A. Do any Christian doctrines help you to interpret the experience? These might include humanity made in the “image of God”, sin, incarnation, atonement, the Trinity, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit etc. You may find that there is variation within your JiF group as to how to interpret these!
- B. How could you pray ‘Thy Kingdom come’ in this setting, and what would it mean?
- C. Do the laws and customs of this country (many of which are based on our Judaeo-Christian heritage) give guidance?
- D. how might someone from a different cultural background view this? What would our sisters and brothers in the worldwide church say about it?
- E. Does any secular expertise shed light on any of the issues identified? E.g from economics, sciences, sociology and anthropology, psychology or the arts.
- F. Has anyone written about this in a way which would help?
- G. How would a Christian in a different tradition to you see this? (evangelical, liberal, charismatic, catholic)

Action

It is essential that the stages of the pastoral cycle lead to a response.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 2 Theological Reflection 2

Aims:

- To experience an Examen
- To understand and use the Pastoral Cycle as a whole

Opening prayer: 5 mins

Checking our understanding of the Pastoral Cycle 20 mins

Make a list on a flip chart of all the questions raised by group members in their preparation. It might be possible to group them into sections. They can then be discussed at this point or addressed as you work through an example or two.

Theological Reflection on one of the group's examples 45 mins

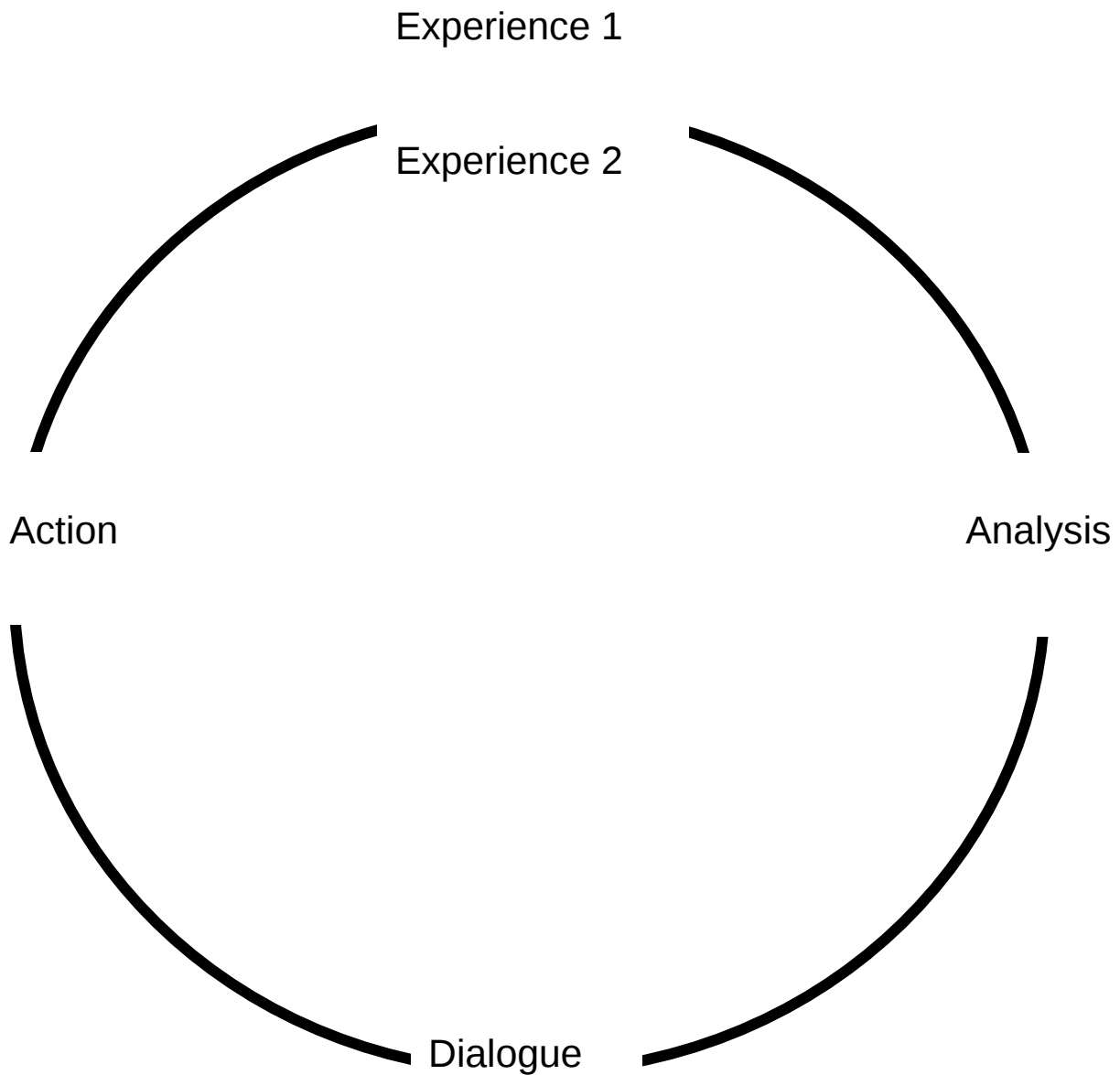
Together, as a whole group, work round the Pastoral Cycle as far as possible on a chosen example / experience offered by someone in the group.

- It might be helpful to appoint a “chair” to move the discussion along and a timekeeper.
- The person introducing is only asked to outline the experience, problem or issue (i.e. tell the initial story) – ***not what was done about it***
- Allow 5 minutes to check over the “experience” stage to remind yourselves of the situation
- Then together, try to complete the cycle (– Analysis → Dialogue → Action) however rushed it may feel. The group may, and hopefully will, come up with a different way of dealing with the issue than in the volunteer's reality – remember we are looking for change and transformation from this reflection.
- **It is *vital* in this exercise that the Pastoral Cycle is not overlaid on the scenario as it actually happened for the volunteer!**

A framework diagram is provided overleaf.

As time allows, repeat the pastoral cycle with other starting experiences; try to get a broad mix of local, professional, issues involving many folk or just a few..

The pastoral cycle does not pretend to be an infallible tool. On the contrary, it is a straightforward



and common sense way of letting God's word speak to our experience and of letting our experience speak to God and to one another.

BREAK

A lived example

10 mins

Allow time for group members to read through this account for themselves.

Laurie Green (Let's Do Theology, p37-38) recounts the experience of a group of Christians in a needy area of Birmingham:

...(They) set about the study of the parables of Jesus, only to find themselves propelled by these stories and the exploration of the needs of their neighbourhood, into the establishment of a Community Advice Centre at their church. But having once got the whole project up and running, and after years of preparation, they found to their horror that nobody came to their centre for information or advice. Had they only been a church action group, the whole project might well have faltered and collapsed at that point, but instead of this, they dutifully continued round the pastoral cycle once more into a fascinating exploration and reflection upon their new situation. It looked and felt for all the world as if they had failed and had been left of the shelf, but rather than close the project there, they reflected on how it felt to be under-used, and from that basis they came up with an amazing spare-part-on-the-shelf theology, a theology of unemployment, old age, disability and marginalisation. In addition to this, they found that the bible could point them to a more positive ways of understanding their waiting and 'stuckness', for when they remembered that Jesus too had been led out into the wilderness prior to being allowed to begin his ministry, so they realised that they too should use their waiting time constructively in preparing themselves more profoundly for the ministry that lay ahead. This time of reflection led the group into new responses so that eventually visitors came flooding to their advice centre project. Thus both they and the wider community found empowerment.

But even when the advice centre project seemed to be so successful, the group's theological reflection did not end there but moved on to consider new things. They journeyed round the cycle once again and found themselves moving into fresh exploration of the experience they were now having. As they did so, they began to perceive that their new-found 'success' was only superficial. Their information service was easing symptoms but it was not touching the underlying causes of the issues that were evident in their community. On one occasion they might find themselves rejoicing that they had helped an elderly person gain the health care they had so eagerly awaited; but at the next moment they would realise that thousands of others were still waiting in the health queue. While they had helped one, it was only at the expense of those who would still have to wait at overcrowded hospitals. Through constant reflection on their actions, they came to realise that they were in reality still quite powerless in the face of such issues. They had recourse to look carefully at the trial scenes of Jesus and his crucifixion. They read magazines and newspapers about power, saw films, hear what theologians of old had said about evil and powerlessness, and from all this reflection they were led once again into new commitments to their community and to God.

What this illustrates for us is the value of seeing the process of reflecting theologically not as completed after a single cycle but as a spiral which loops round again and again. On the first loop they reflected on community need, on the second cycle they reflected on their experience of failure, later they went round the cycle again reflecting on the true nature of apparent success

Closing Prayer

10-15 mins

The closing worship for this session will take the form of the Examen. Someone can lead the group through the questions leaving space for silent reflection.

1. **Where have I seen a glimpse of glory?** – in the ordinary stuff of life where have you noticed something of God and give thanks for it?
2. **What has troubled me?** – think about your feelings, reactions, energy levels and then offer these things to God.
3. **What one thing do I hope for tomorrow?** – keep it simple and realistic!

Spend a few moments aware of the loving presence of God around you.

Look ahead: next preparation

5 mins

Note: The preparation for next week is not “text based”, but involves researching and collecting data from people! As suggested in the notes, before next week’s session speak to at least 5 people about what ‘spirituality’ is. Take a moment to think about how you will go about this at this point – as it may need some planning.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 3 What is Spirituality? **Preparation**

Meditation

Find a place where you can be relaxed. Decide how long you are able to give to this meditation and time it on your phone so you are not distracted. Read through this meditation slowly spending time in silence in each section.

Imagine you have been invited by Jesus to sit with him by the fire, feel its warmth; watch the flames.

God is here and this is Holy Ground.

Prayer

In the company of the Holy Trinity- maker, redeemer and sustainer.

In the warmth of the fire may I find peace

In the flames of the fire may I find mercy

In the presence of Christ may I know myself to be the beloved.

The heavens declare the glory of God

Call to mind a place of incredible beauty – think about its sights, fragrances, sounds and the feelings this generated within you.

Think about God as creator of all that is, seen and unseen

What are human beings that you care for them...

What does it mean to be made in the image of God, to be known and treasured by him before creation.

You have been called and chosen by Jesus – you have been invited into the heart of the Trinity. The Spirit is pleased to make a home in you.

Yet, fear and shame can drive us to hide our true selves and, so often, we hide behind masks that may make us feel secure but prevent the real self from flourishing and being able to offer our unique selves to God and others.

Lord God, my maker, redeemer and friend show me the masks I unwittingly wear and help me to be just as you need me to be – set me free to look up and catch your eye and see you smile.

You may want to read this meditation a second time.

Jot down any responses in the box below:

What is spirituality?

Try to speak to at least five people this week and ask them **'What is spirituality?'**

It would be good to ask a range of people, some who profess a faith and some who don't.

Note down their responses.

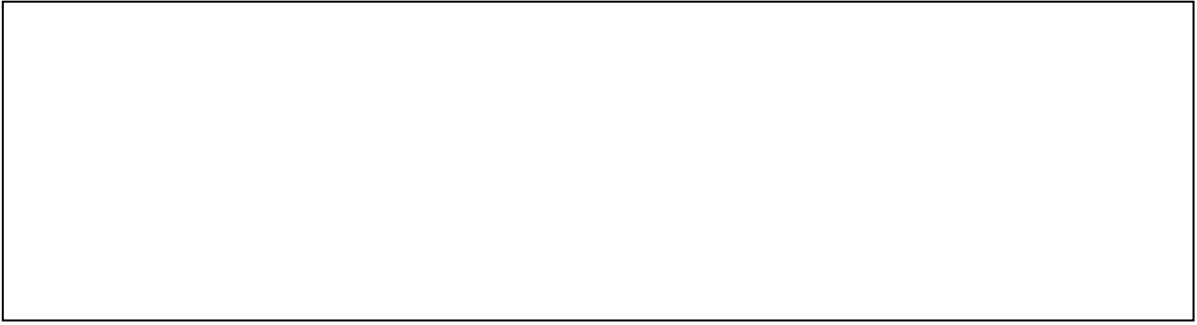
- ⇒ What has surprised you?
- ⇒ What have you learnt?
- ⇒ Is there a difference between people of faith and those of none?

Have a go at expressing what you mean by Spirituality in the box below after reading some of the following: Spirituality is...

'being open to the Spirit of God transforming the world.'

'concerns the way in which prayer influences conduct, our behaviour, and manner of life, and attitudes to other people' – from The Dictionary of Christian Spirituality.

'about letting Christ be Christ in us . . . if it is genuine it must always be developing, and there will always be a variety of spiritual practices suited to different ages, temperaments, circumstances and cultures of Christians throughout the world' - Gerard Hughes, author of 'God of Surprises'.



Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 3 What is Spirituality?

Aims: To explore spirituality and our 'being'

To discover how God uses our strengths and weaknesses

Opening Prayer

5 mins

Lord, where shall I find you?
High and hidden is your place.
And where shall I not find you?
The world is full of your glory.

I have sought your nearness,
With all my heart I called you
And going out to meet you
I found you coming to meet me.

Judah Halevi

Reflection on the preparation

15 mins

Group task

- Share your experience of the meditation used in the preparation
- How did you find it?
- Do you have any other experience of meditation?

Thinking about Spirituality

30 mins

Share with the group the findings from the interviews on a flipchart

- What did you learn from your interviews?
- What surprised you?

Group task

- Try to write a definition of 'spirituality' in one sentence

Share each group's definition

Understanding strengths and weaknesses

5 mins

Most of us feel uncomfortable expressing our strengths or weaknesses – hence the appeal of masks! How have you been made to feel in the past?

- Excluded?
- Ridiculed?
- Shamed?
- Unnoticed?

Spirituality is, at its heart, the call to stand naked before God without shame. For this we need to learn to be at ease with our strengths and weaknesses and find healing from past experiences.

The comedian, Rowan Atkinson, has made his living speaking in front of thousands of people on stage and making them laugh. His particular style arose because he had a speech impediment and to overcome it, he spent considerable time speaking in front of the mirror learning to articulate his words. His weakness has become his gift.

After his resurrection Jesus' wounds remain visible but they have become glorified. This opens the possibility that our weakness and wounds could also be the very things the world is in need of.

Bible reflection

15 mins

Group task

Read **1 Corinthians Chapter 1 verses 20 – 31.**

What does this passage have to say about weakness?

BREAK

Making use of our strengths and weaknesses

15 mins

Spend some time individually with the SWOT sheet at the back of the Module Handbook.

Praying with others

10 mins

Each person is invited to write a short one sentence of prayer and put it in a bowl.

Pass the bowl round the group, each person is invited to select a piece of paper and read it out as a prayer – if this is something that will make you anxious, simply pass the bowl to the next person.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 4 God at work in me Preparation

In session 4 we will consider the way in which different people receive different gifts and abilities from God and identify our own gifts. We will think about the process of discernment - the ways in which we hear God's call to us in the light of the gifts we have received - and how we might respond.

Gifting

Take a few minutes to read and ponder these words and the accompanying picture:

*There is an old Christian tradition
That God sends each person into this world
With a special message to deliver
With a special song to sing for others
with a special act of love to bestow.
No one else can speak my message
Or sing my song
Or offer my act of love.
These are entrusted only to me.*



Look at the SWOT analysis you may have completed (in your Pathways supplement) and the 'Strengths' quadrant. Is there anything you would now like to add (or remove) from the list?

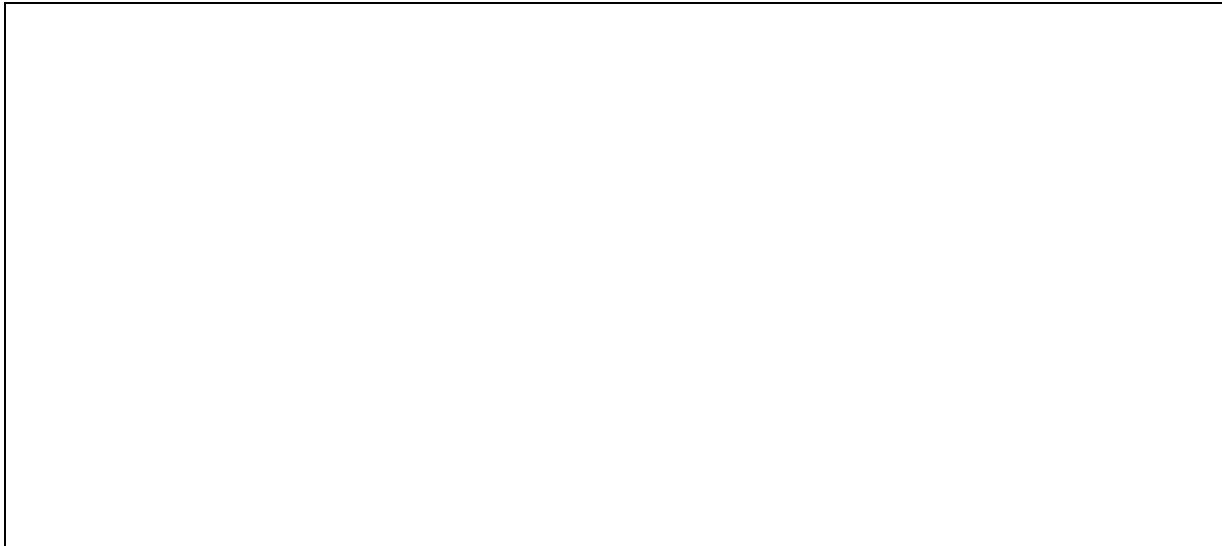
Make a list of the gifts/abilities you think you have. You will not be asked to share this.

Ask a few people you know and trust what gifts they see in you and add those to the list.

Now think about people in the New Testament, for example, Mary, Philip, Priscilla, Paul, John the Baptist...

Make a note of some names and the gifts you would say each shows.

- What did God ask of each person you have noted?
- How did each respond?



Discernment

Each of us has been uniquely created by God, with gifts and opportunities that no other person has. However, in the busy-ness of our lives it is easy to let God's still small voice get crowded out in the clamour of day-to-day activities. The result can be both exhausting and dispiriting. We want to serve God, we want to be available to him, but how do we choose what to do from the myriad of jobs to be done?

There is no fool-proof method for working out God's will for us as individuals but there are a variety of ways in which God works in us and a variety of experiences and encounters which help us to understand what it is that God might be drawing us to.

Read of some examples of calling in the Old Testament

- (a) Moses in Exodus 3.1 – 4.11 (nb 4.10 – 12). Moses expresses a reluctance, rooted in his perceived lack of giftedness for the tasks envisaged. Are we reluctant? Is this reluctance rooted in fear? Incredulity? Lack of faith? Or is it because we are genuinely not called?
- (b) Samuel in 1 Samuel 3.1 – 21. Samuel shows a lack of awareness of God's will for him but there is a gradual nagging, and a waking up literally and metaphorically of Samuel to God's calling. Is this something of our experience or not? Is there something which keeps nagging at us that we feel we haven't yet responded to?

- (c) Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1.4 – 10. Jeremiah argues for his unsuitability for the task at hand. Do we have a sense of our suitability or unsuitability for roles and tasks we might feel called to? Are we equipped for such tasks or able to be equipped or not?
- (d) Jeremiah in Jeremiah 20.9. Jeremiah senses a compulsion to respond to God's will. Is there for us a sense of feeling compelled by something deep within us or beyond us and is this a compulsion which brings with it a sense of freedom or not?

Are there any points at which you can identify with any Old or New Testament character or experience?



Roots and Branches

You might want to look at the Roots and Branches exercise in the appendix.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 4 God at work in me

Aims To consider the way in which God gifts, calls and equips each person in the revealing of the Kingdom of God and think about our own gifting and calling.

To reflect on the process of discernment - and how we might respond to God's call.

Opening prayer 5 mins

Reflection on preparation 15 mins

Share your responses to the preparation material on gifting.

- How easy was it to identify your own gifts? Why do we so often struggle with this kind of reflection?
- What was the response to the suggestion that each of us has a unique place in God's mission plan?

Gifting 25 mins

Group task

- Share what you discovered on the New Testament examples of people gifted by God
- What did you learn about gifts and calling

In one large group share what has been learned about God's gifting and calling.

Gifts in the letters of Paul 20 mins

We find a number of 'lists of gifts' in the writing of Paul.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Group 1 | Read Romans 12:3-8 |
| Group 2 | Read 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 |
| Group 3 | Read Ephesians 4:11-13 |

Then discuss the following questions

- What link does Paul make between gifting and faith?
 - How do you understand the connection?
- What are the implications for the way we act in relation to our gifts?

NB You might also consider Galatians 5:22-23

BREAK

Discernment

30 mins

Hopefully by now we can agree that God enables and equips us with gifts and abilities, in order that we can live out our unique calling as disciples.

But how do we hear a call?

- Consider what you learned from the examples of calling in the Old Testament that you looked at in preparation for the session and share your findings.

Do you know of any other stories of people knowing God's call?

There are some examples below you might want to read through.

Ignatius of Loyola

As a young man in the 16th century, the Roman Catholic, Ignatius was wounded in battle and spent some months convalescing in bed. While there, he considered two future courses for his life. On the one hand, courting a particular noblewoman who attracted his attention, and on the other hand, the possibility of a calling to the priesthood. As he imagined himself into each of these possibilities, he found interesting differences. While courting the noblewoman caused him initial excitement intoxicating him, nevertheless, in the long run, it left him listless and restless. However, while the prospect of priesthood failed to yield such intoxicating heights initially, it did leave him with an enduring sense of peace as he imagined himself into this role. Ignatius did become a priest. In his writings, one way he recommends discerning the will of God is to imagine yourself into the role you think God might be calling you and observe how this affects you in terms of feelings, thoughts and residual emotions.

Dame Cecily Saunders

Cicely Saunders qualified as a nurse during World War II but a back injury put an end to her career. Working as an Almoner at St Thomas's Hospital in London, she observed many people dying in considerable pain which hospitals were ill-equipped to deal with.

One particular patient was a catalyst. David Tasma had escaped the Warsaw ghetto. He had terminal cancer and believed his life had been worthless. Cicely recognised that his pain had multiple components, one being the loss of his Jewish faith. Cicely helped him return to the faith of his fathers. She noticed that if spiritual issues and other worries were relieved patient's symptoms were also relieved. This was the germ of the idea for holistic palliative care.

Cecily's Christian faith underpinned a sense of calling that she had to do something. She was told 'doctors desert the dying' so she retrained as a doctor and went on to study pain control and symptom management. She then established the hospice movement.

Dame Cecily noticed what was before her, she had a vision, sought advice from others, responded to a sense of calling, she got the right training, formed a team of like-minded people with a range of gifts and experience. She then inspired and enabled others to do the same and has changed the experience of the dying around the world. She said "If one man from a poor village in India dies without pain because of what I have done, it will all have been worthwhile."

Rowan Williams

There is a connection in the Old Testament between calling and creating; for example, in Isaiah 40.26 God calls the stars into being precisely by naming them. In baptism, we name those who embrace new life in Christ. Rowan Williams points out we are called to be the bearers of our true names. So in terms of vocation the questions we need to ask include:

- is this call about wearing a mask or is it really me?
- Is it avoidance, escape, denial or fulfilment?

And we need to ask other too - how do you see me?

Rowan Williams quotes the example of a nun who once said that she could imagine being a wonderful wife and mother but, for her, that would be playing games with a tame reality she could control. She knew her true life needed to be realised through a different path. Of course, for others the convent may be a place of escape, avoiding reality and not becoming one's true self. In all of this, Rowan Williams says the issue is about becoming the bearers of our true names.

Come back together as a whole group for any brief feedback or response

Closing Prayer

5 mins

Module Two God's Call and Our response

Session 5 God at Work in the World Preparation

For this session we are going back to basics and think about some of the building blocks of the Christian faith.

There are three questions we want to look at:

1. Who is God?
2. What is God's relationship with the world?
3. What are the implications of all this and where does the Church fit in?

1. Who is God?

The answer of the Christian faith to this question could be summed up in three words: creator, sustainer and redeemer.

We must not separate God's redeeming activity from that of his creative activity.

What does it mean then to believe in God as creator?

Jeff Astley (2000: 2) points out that when attributed to God the idea of creation can be explained thus:

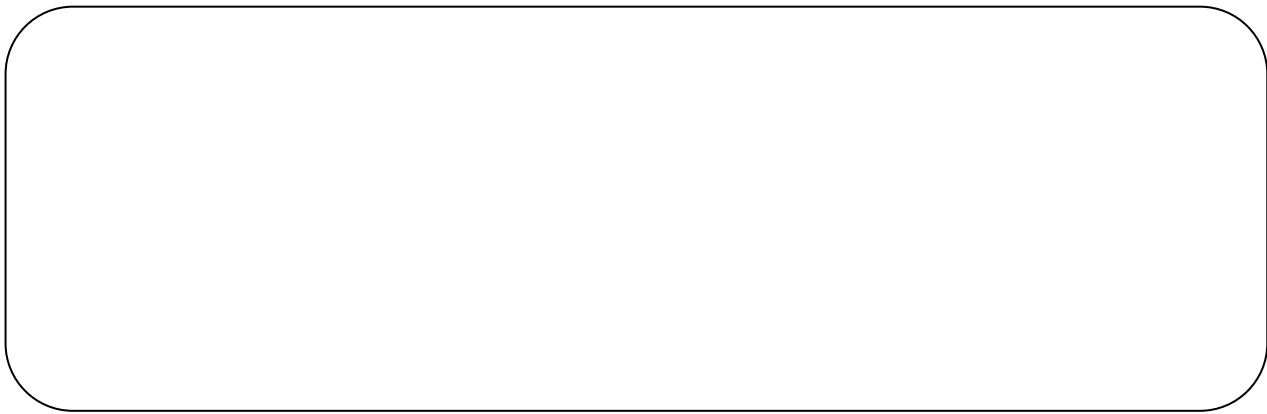
- a) that the universe was once brought into being by God out of nothing
- b) that it was, and is, and always will be absolutely dependent on God for its existence

This is a 'personal and purposeful' explanation of the world as contrasted to a 'scientific – causal' explanation of the world.

In the Bible the idea of God as creator, rather than God as a belief to be held, is taken as read. The implications of this are that God is the one who:

...creates, sustains and redeems me, and the whole people of God, [and] is also active beneath every atom of matter and erg of energy throughout the whole universe.

It might be worth taking a few minutes here to contemplate these ideas if they are new and compare them with how you think of God. You could jot any notes you want to make in the space below.



2. What is God's relationship with the world?

Find the meaning of the following words:

Pantheism

Deism

Theism

Panentheism

Which of them could be used to describe a Christian view of the way in which God relates to the world?

The idea of creation implies that God has made something 'other' than himself and relates to this 'other' in a personal way because God is personal. This relationship between God and the world is characterised by God being present and active in creation. This means that God is a **missionary** God before anything else.

The idea of God as missionary (which is called the *Missio Dei* in Latin or 'the mission of God') has grown in importance in the worldwide Christian Church in the last 50 or so years. Of course, there are criticisms of the idea, but we will see how it can drive our understanding of the mission, ministry and vocation of all God's people including ourselves.

It seems God is at work in the world as the missionary God. Our task then as the *laos*, God's people, is, as the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams says, to:

"find out what God is doing in the world and join in"

And since God is working, 'doing' in all creation, there is nothing and no place that is beyond the scope of our attention as God's creatures and his stewards and co-creators.

Theology of Work

We are now able to develop some theology about work. If work is co-creation with God then it can be 'very good' – but often our experience of it is the opposite!

Three men were working in a quarry cutting stones and each was asked what they were doing. The first (A) replied "oh, I hate this job, bruised fingers, chips in the eyes, same thing day in day out, there's got to be something better". The second (B) was a little more positive: "Well, I am here for my family's sake, the pay keeps us and I hope my children will do better than me – just a quarryman". The third man (C) looked up and simply said: "Oh, that's easy, I'm building a Cathedral".

"Some people work to live and others live to work". This statement speaks about how some people treat work as an instrument, a means to an end e.g. a way of getting the money they require for the lifestyle they want. Others pour all their energy and effort into their work such that their identity becomes tied up with what they do – retirement does not come easily to such people!

- What roles do you have in your life?
- Write each in a series of circles below (they may include being a spouse, parent, carer, dog owner, employee ect)
- Outside the circles write words that describe how you feel about these roles.
- Spend some time reflecting on them prayerfully and you might want to add what you think God might be saying about them.



The implications of God as creator, redeemer and missionary

The "theological and ethical consequences of creation" are listed by Jeff Astley (2000: 20-21) and some are summarised here as follows:

The world is a unity, since God is one. Therefore there can be no dualism (belief in two primary, separate forces – usually good and evil and thought of as equal and opposite).

The doctrine opposes the prejudice that the material world is evil. No – creation is ultimately ‘very good’ – Gen. 1:31 NRSV.

This means that we cannot easily divide the world, as we often do into the “sacred and the secular” or the “holy and profane.” These divisions have their basis in Greek philosophy rather than Jewish or Christian theology.

The world is a gift and we, as human beings, can only respond to it in gratitude as well as taking seriously the mandate to care for it as good stewards (Gen. 1:28).

God as creator is *transcendent* over (different from, other than) the creation. But, as creator God is also necessarily *immanent* – that is intimately involved with creation – how else could God sustain every atom moment by moment? The doctrine of creation holds the concepts of transcendence and immanence together.

Take a few minutes again to think about these statements.

- Which of them surprise you?
- Do any make you feel uncomfortable?
- Which ones confuse you?

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 5 God at Work in the World

Aims: To understand the idea of the *Missio Dei* and their implications

To evaluate the Church's response to 'work'

Opening Prayers 5 mins

Reflection on the preparation 20 mins

From the preparation

- What needs clarification
- What seemed controversial
- What do the group think about God and the *Missio Dei*?
- What did you make of the definitions of pantheism, theism, deism and panentheism?
- Which are Christian ideas and which not.

Sacred and Secular 20 mins

Option 1

List on one sheet all the things the group considers to be 'sacred' and on another all those considered to be 'secular'. What criteria are used to distinguish between the two?

Option 2

Tutors bring in a range of random objects for groups to assign as sacred or secular.

As a whole group share the experience of this exercise and what conclusions you came to.

BREAK

On a flip chart make a list of the roles that people in the group have and the jobs and work that they do as well as their feelings around 'work', as in quarry workers A, B or C. (15 mins)

For the Church of England report *"Called to New Life: The World of Adult Discipleship* (London: CHP, 1999) a survey was undertaken of 200 lay Christians from various age groups and walks of life (no doubt it would apply equally well in other denominations). They fell into six categories when asked about how the church supported them from Monday to Saturday. Here are examples of the kind of people who might be in each category.

1. Those who feel that the church does not or could not understand the issues they face.

Leroy is a prison officer in a demanding environment where swearing, back-biting and sometimes violence are taken for granted – no-one at church seems interested.

2. Those who want to escape from their Monday to Saturday lives and want the church to be a haven for Sunday that does not remind them of the pressures and difficulties they face during the week.

Joanna is a management accountant working 60 hours a week – she looks forward to the rest and quiet of her favourite Sunday evening service.

3. Those who see the Church as their real work and paid employment in some other organization as the means by which they can afford to do it.

Geoff is a postman during the week but he is a home group and youth group leader, Church Council member and on the Welcome team on Sundays. Because of his work he has the time in the week to put in to prepare for his 'ministry' as he sees it.

4. Those who long for support and help in identifying a Christian perspective on issues that arise in their lives.

Rose is a magistrate and struggles with the dilemmas that participating in the judicial system brings up – especially when young people are in trouble and have to be sentenced.

5. Those who lack the confidence to be adult disciples because the Church seems to tell them that they have to be accredited before they may speak of their faith or raise questions that may lead to spiritual, moral or ethical debate.

Phyllis has been visiting church members and others in her village for many years – no-one asked her to do it, but she's not sure whether anyone (especially the 'official' ministers) really values what she does.

6. Those who feel that the Church has much to say about what is perceived as the 'softer places of work' e.g. service industries, work at home, caring professions etc....as opposed to the 'tougher world' of business, commerce, manufacturing industry.....

George makes money, he's always been good at it and as a businessman sees it as important – after all he's an employer as well, but sometimes he thinks people at church think it's all a bit dirty.....

Group task

In your groups think about the categories of people mentioned above.

Spend 10 minutes preparing a one minute speech to the church leadership about how church might enable them to live out their faith in their work lives.

What learning arises from this exercise:

- ⇒ How can the Church support the work life of its members?
- ⇒ How might we encourage one another to live out faith in the various spheres of life?
- ⇒ How can we develop a theology of work?

Closing Prayer

5 mins

Make a list of the work-places represented in the group
Pray for each of them

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 6 Knowing God, Knowing the Way Preparation

A life of Pilgrimage

We have come across this passage from Psalm 84 before but spend some time reflecting on it afresh.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
'till each appears before God in Zion

Our Faith Journeys

The Christian life is often likened to a *journey*. Jesus claimed to be the “way” (John 14:6) and the first Christians were called people of “the way” (Acts 9:2).

This course is designed to help us to continue our journey but it is important to think about how we got to where we are today. In your 'Pathways supplement there is a graphic entitled 'Journey of Life'. If you have not already done so, complete this graphic.

Whatever our journey has been it is unique to us and worth sharing with others. Take time to draw your journey. The graphic asks you to highlight the 'joys' and the 'sorrows' – perhaps your journey was an 'uphill struggle' or you got 'stuck' at some point? Or, at a certain place you really grew spiritually and reached 'the high places' or at other times you had some help from companions on the way.

If there are things you would rather not share but are important to mark from your journey, then draw another diagram that you are comfortable for others to see.

Don't forget to bring it to the group session – and be ready to speak about it for about 5 minutes – which is not long, but everyone will need to have a chance to share.

How we are led by God on the journey of faith?

Anyone who is a member of any church cannot but be aware of the different traditions or spiritualities within their church (perhaps more so in the “C of E” which encompasses the broadest range of traditions). You could find services of Mass, traditional liturgy with organ and hymns or

worship using contemporary songs, some may have mainly non-communion services with the emphasis on the sermon.

The reasons for this diversity are incredibly complex, but setting aside a good deal of church history, they could be understood as arising from four different strands of authority for the Christian. In many ways these strands are like the cords which make up a rope.

Every Christian through the ages has asked the following questions.

1. As a follower of Christ - by what authority do I believe?
2. As a follower of Christ - how do I relate to God?
3. As a follower of Christ - how am I led by God on my journey?

There have been four general ways of answering these questions, which are like particular lenses, namely:

1. The Bible – “Evangelical”

*Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.*

People who emphasise the Bible in their relationship with God are often described as ‘evangelical’. Worship in this tradition is often dominated by the sermon. What part does the Bible play in your life and your church?

2. Church tradition – “Catholic”

This could also be understood as a sacramental tradition. In this understanding it is the continuity of God’s leading of the church down the centuries that is important along with all the accumulated teaching that has developed over that time. The Creed and the Liturgy are essential in the catholic tradition and it is expressed particularly by the Eucharist or Mass. The sacrament is the primary place of encounter with God. This is distinct from the ‘Roman Catholic Church’, you can find catholic traditions in many denominations.

3. Experiential – “Charismatic”

In the charismatic tradition the appeal is made to the believer’s experience of God which can manifest itself in various ways. Charismatic worship is often characterised by an expectation of the believers to encountering the presence of God. There is an emphasis on the supernatural gifts of the Spirit such as worship in tongues, healing, words of knowledge and prophesy.

4. Reason – “Liberal”

Particularly for the last two hundred or so years the liberal church tradition has evolved which emphasises the need to submit our faith and practice to the critique of human reason (which is nevertheless God-given). This often leads to openness to other ways of thinking as well as scientific theories and the light they throw on the Christian faith (biology, psychology and

sociology are all therefore important, to give just three examples). The social justice agenda of the world or the local context is often important in the liberal approach.

Try to connect the Church Traditions with your 'Journey of Life' graphic. Have you spent more time in one strand than another? Have you spent all your time in one Church? If so, has this Church changed over time? If you have only recently begun to follow Jesus, can you see any influences from earlier in your life that you either rejected, or found influential?

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 6 Knowing God, Knowing the Way

Aims To understand the different traditions, authorities or spiritualities within our churches
To fit our own spiritual journey within these traditions and share them together

Opening Prayers 5 mins

Especially that we might be open to one another and the different traditions that we represent.

Reflection on the preparation 15 mins

Spend some time clarifying the four traditions or authorities within the church.

Share what we have learned, what surprised us and our own experience of these traditions.

Sharing Our Journeys 35 mins

Group task

Each member has 5 minutes to talk about their spiritual journey – the other group members listen for that time.

After each person has spoken the group can reflect on what has been shared for a further 5 minutes.

The co-tutors are not exempt from this exercise!

Each group then prepares a summary of their discussions – without “naming names”
Are there common themes that can be picked out from the stories shared?

The groups can each share a summary of their conversations.

BREAK

Using the four lenses

20 mins

There is a famous Indian proverb of the blind men and the elephant. Each believes they can describe a whole elephant from the particular part they have encountered. Thus, their conclusions are that an elephant is:

- ⇒ a rope
- ⇒ a wall
- ⇒ a tree
- ⇒ a spear
- ⇒ a snake

They then proceed with a protracted argument about the truth of an elephant and never reach agreement.



The four lenses provide us with a variety of perspectives on an issue to help us gain a broad understanding and deepen our experience of God.

Group task

Using one of the themes below have conversation about how the different lenses might give perspective:

- ⇒ Environment responsibility in your household
- ⇒ PCC decision on their parish giving
- ⇒ Preparing an act of worship

Groups can feedback the themes of their conversations

How does God guide us?

20 mins

The accounts of the call of many people in the bible seem quite clear but we can find it difficult to know what God might be saying to us. So how do we know? We can express the lenses in other ways to help find the guidance we need. Here is one such approach:

- ⇒ What does my head say?
 - What do I know about myself?
 - What makes sense?
 - What are the pros and cons?

- What do I know I am good at?
- What opportunities are emerging?

⇒ What does my heart say?

- What gives me energy?
- How am I feeling about each option?
- What are my dream and passions?

⇒ What does my spirit say?

- What is happening in worship?
- Are there particular bits of scripture that are speaking to me?
- How am I feeling when I pray?

⇒ What do others say?

- What do those people who know me best say?
- Who might be a wise person to talk to?
- What is the experience of others who have faced the same situation?

Closing Prayer

10 mins

Each member of the group can share a time when God felt especially close to them or they heard God speak to them.

Spend some time thanking God for these experiences.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 7 Everyday Faith Preparation

Below is a list of a number of ministry organisations. Choose one or two and find out as much as you can about them. Note down your findings in the box below such as:

- Their story
- Their calling
- Their values

L' ARCHE (www.larche.org.uk)

The Acorn Christian Healing Trust (www.acornchristian.org)

The Industrial Christian Fellowship www.icf-online.org

London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (licc.org.uk)

The Iona Community (www.iona.org.uk)

Corrymeela Community (www.corrymeela.org)

The Church Army (www.churcharmy.org)

The Church Mission Society (www.cms-uk.org)

The Trussell Trust www.trusselltrust.org

A Rocha UK www.arocha.org.uk

What is ministry?

Write your own definition in the box below.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 7 Everyday Faith

If you have guests involved in lay ministry visiting for this session, please do quiz them on their opinions, experience and learning!

Aims: To define ministry

To describe approaches to ministry

Opening prayer of Thanksgiving for Baptism:

5 mins

The following prayer is taken from the Anglican service of Baptism. You may know of other equivalent prayers or customs.

Heavenly Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit you give to your faithful people new life in the water of baptism. Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit, that we who are born again may serve you in faith and love, and grow into the full stature of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit now and for ever. Amen

Reflection on the preparation

15 mins

What did you learn, what did you find interesting, puzzling or enlightening?

Baptism and ministry

30 mins

Read Mark 1:9-15, the story of Jesus' baptism.

- What did you notice from this passage about call and vocation?
- Where was this vocation grown?

Jesus discovers his identity as the 'beloved' and this forms the real bedrock from which he can discover his vocation in the desert (vv12-13) before he begins his ministry at the right *kairos* time (v15).

Imagine for a moment your own baptism – you may remember it or you may have been too young – think about the word of God spoken to you too:

"You are my child, the beloved, in you I am well pleased"

How can we hear this word above the other 'voices' around us that tell us otherwise?

In baptism every Christian is called to be a minister of the Gospel as part of the body of Christ.

Read the sentences below which come from the Church of England's Baptism service:

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love...

The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising prayer and support for the future. (CW p 345)

"May God who has received you by baptism into His Church pour upon you the riches of his grace, that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory". (CW p 357)

In baptism God invites you on a lifelong journey
together with all God's people
you must explore the way of Jesus
and grow in friendship with God,
in love for his people and in serving others. (CW p 359)

- What is the individual and what is the corporate nature of this calling?
- How do you experience the corporate nature of the church's shared calling?

BREAK

Approaches to ministry

20 mins

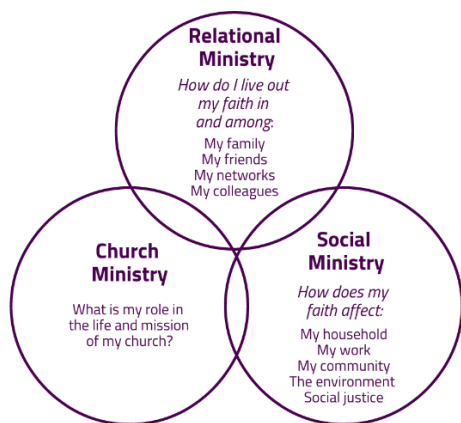
Using the preparation work looking at different organisations offering "ministry" in different areas, discuss the group's findings.

Group Task

In groups try to come up with your own definition of 'ministry'

Ministers of the Gospel in the world

20 mins



As the baptized people of God we are each called to live out our faith in the whole of life. Remembering that we carry the indwelling Spirit into all the spheres of our lives.

We looked at this diagram in Term 1.

Spend some time individually looking at it and some time thinking about what God might be saying to you in the many spheres we each inhabit.

Collaborative Ministry

20 mins

Both Ephesians 4 and 1Corinthians 12 contain the idea that Christians are baptised into a 'body', a corporate entity. This implies that ministry is shared and collaborative; that all members have a role to play.

Take some time to discuss how a definition of ministry can be both corporate and collaborative and what affect that might have on the way churches work and worship.

Closing Prayers

5 mins

Collect for Ministry

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

Look ahead: next preparation.

Note that for next week you will need to interview three people. Leave enough time!

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 8 Vocation and Calling Preparation

For the next session you will need your copy of the 'Pathways Workbook'. For your preparation spend some time completing your workbook, or reflecting on the things you have already included.

Vocation and calling

Find some people who have a sense of vocation or 'calling', and talk with them about it.

Talk with three or four people representing different sorts of 'vocation/calling'. Be prepared to share your findings in the group.

The type of people you may wish to talk to may be:

- Someone doing a role or act of service they feel called to
- Someone feeling called to a particular way of life, e.g. a foster mother, a single person, a politician.
- A calling to a particular area of work

Try to discover how they came to be aware of their 'calling' and what difference they believe that makes to how they act. Here are some suggestions for questions:

1. How did you feel called?
2. When you felt called, what were your immediate thoughts and feelings?
3. If the call was from God did it change your relationship with Him?
4. How did others react?
5. What difference does it make 'being called'?
6. Do you ever wish you had not been called?
7. What did you do about your sense of call?

Write up your findings to share with the group.

How would you describe your own direct experiences of the presence and call of God?



Calling in Scripture

We have looked at some accounts of calling in the Bible before but you may want to look up one or two you are less familiar with.

Genesis 6:9-22	Noah	Genesis 12:1-9	Abraham
Genesis 28:6-22	Jacob	Exodus 3:1-12	Call of Moses
1 Samuel 3:1-10	Call of Samuel	Jeremiah 1:4-10	Call of Jeremiah
Book of Jonah		Matthew 19:16-22	Rich young man
Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus	Luke 10: 38-42	Mary & Martha
John 1:35-42	First disciples	Acts 9:1-20	Conversion of Saul

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 8 Vocation and Calling

Aim: To introduce the idea of vocation and evaluate different approaches to it.

To look at the various ways in which God has called his people as recorded in the Bible and throughout history, and to explore our own responses to these stories.

Opening prayer

Reflection on the preparation 15 mins

What did you learn, what did you find interesting, puzzling or enlightening?

Guest interviews 20 mins

- Tell us about your ministry
- How did you experience God's call?
- Questions from the group

Sharing of reflections on calling from your interviews with other people. 15 mins

BREAK

Biblical examples of God's call 20 mins

Group Task

Each group can look at a few of the stories of calling from the bible found on page 47.

Have a conversation around the biblical examples, what you have heard from the ministers interviewed earlier and what you have learnt from your interviewees.

Share with one another if you have ever experienced hearing from God.

The Scope of Vocation and Calling

10 Mins

God has primarily called each of us to fullness of life - to live to our full potential as his 'beloved'.

In his book '*A Call to Live*' Steve Walton suggests that there are four main uses of 'call'. Read these through

1. **Called to belong;**
 - Personal relationship with God
 - To the community of His people
 - To a particular local community/church
2. **Called to be;**
 - To accept our humanity
 - To rejoice in our relationships
 - To be holy—distinctive in the world reflecting the character of God
3. **Called to let God be God;**
 - Right attitudes & actions towards God
 - Worship—God is worthy of adoration & reverence
 - Acknowledging His sovereignty in all things
 - Acknowledging the Divine mystery. We can only know God in as far as He chooses to reveal himself.
 - Humility.
4. **Called to do;**

What is your response to them?

End of module service

20 mins

Next week is our final session before the Easter break. In the preparation you will all be asked to bring something that symbolises the experience of this JiF group for you, it could be:

- an object
- a piece of music
- a piece of writing
- your own thoughts.

As a whole group prepare an act of worship around the theme of

Equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12)

This should include:

Call to worship & opening prayer

Scripture Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Luke 1:46-55

Song or music (optional)

Symbols of the group – from the preparation for this session

Closing responses

You will be given time next week to complete your preparations.

Closing prayer

5 mins

Module Two: God's Call and Our Response

Session 9 Variety of gifts Preparation

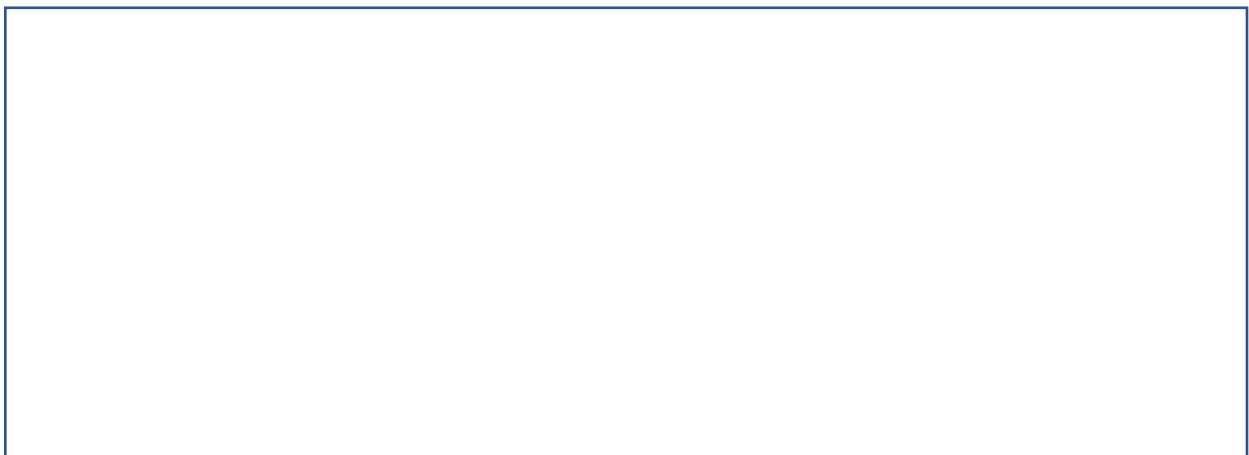
Refer to your 'Pathways Workbook'. Continue to develop and reflect on the content of the book you are creating. Make a note of times when you were very aware of God and when God seemed absent or far away.

Before the next meeting:

Look back over the course so far; refresh your memory of the previous module

- What has challenged you?
- What has inspired you?
- What has changed you?

Write down your reflections.



Symbol of your Journey in Faith experience

Think of something that symbolises the experience of this JiF group for you and be prepared to share it at the next meeting. Be as imaginative and creative as you can, it could be:

- an object
- a piece of music
- a piece of writing
- your own thoughts.

Although there is another module to complete, some group members may be beginning to think about what is next.

As this module comes to a close, many feelings may be coming to the surface, even if it is simply relief! Throughout life, rituals are important and it is appropriate that we conclude with worship. The final session will provide an opportunity to reflect on the past module, an opportunity to: celebrate the life of this group - its ups and its downs; affirm and encourage one another; dedicate our future lives and ministry in the service of God's Kingdom.

Module Two God's Call and Our Response

Session 9 Variety of Gifts

Aim:

- To explore our own gifts, talents, abilities, weaknesses and experience, in order to begin an ongoing process of reflection & discernment of God's call.
- To recognise the gifts we have from others and to practise affirming and encouraging each other.

Opening prayer and reflections

10 mins

Read Luke 1:46-55 The Song of Mary

- What word or phrase do you notice?
- Share your word or phrase with the person next to you

Life journey

25 mins

Thinking about your Pathways Workbook or your reflections from the preparation, we will now spend some time listening to each other in pairs. Listening attentively to another is a profound act of love – we are not there to advise or provide a 'fix'. The task is simply to listen and allow God to be present.

Pairs Task

Listening

Allow 5 minutes for the first person to share what they wish to from their Pathways Workbook. The second person should just listen attentively.

Responding

At the end of the 5 minutes the listener may like to reflect back one thing they noticed or ask one simple open question. For example...

- I noticed you became really animated when you said...
- I wonder what God might be saying in this?
- I wonder what is coming to life right now?

The speaker does not need to respond to the comment or question.

When you have finished, swap over.

Plenary

15 mins

How did you find that exercise?

BREAK

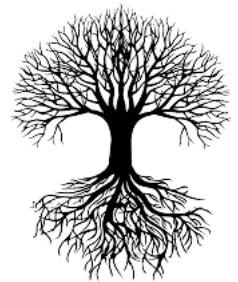
Preparation for end of module service	20 mins
End of module worship	20mins

Appendix 1

Life Signs

These exercises are designed to help us tune into what God might be saying through the stories of our lives, the prompting of our hearts and using our imaginations.
To prepare, find a comfortable place and spend some time in quiet prayer—you might want to light a candle as a reminder of the presence of Jesus with you.

Roots and Branches



What you need

- Large sheet of paper
- Coloured pens

Exercise

In the centre of your paper draw the trunk of a tree. Take some time to be quiet and then draw a network of branches labelling each with those things that require your energy, time, gifts, love and attention. You could add fruit and leaves representing the things that are flourishing and fruitful but also difficulties and disasters which will have also shaped your life. Take your time and add anything that comes to mind however seemingly small or insignificant. Then look at what you have drawn and ponder what it reveals and how your feelings are responding.

Next draw a network of roots representing all the things that have nourished you in the past and are sustaining you in the present. These might be spiritual habits, people, places and times of significance, a book or a memory. Take your time to reflect on what you have drawn.

Reflection

Now look at the whole image and see what you notice. To grow healthy and to withstand storms trees need their roots to mirror their branches.

- How balanced is your tree?
- What might you need to prune or add?
- Who could you talk to about this?
- What one thing could you do next?

Trees are fed not only through their roots but by absorbing the sun and the rain—the constant gift of God poured out for us. Spend some time soaking in the presence of God with thanksgiving.

*Tool taken from **Listening to your Life** Julia Maurant (2016) Canterbury Press*

Appendix 2

A Brief Glossary of Church Jargon

Anglican

The Anglican Communion is a world-wide fellowship of churches that derive from the missionary efforts of the Church of England. The Anglican Communion includes the Episcopal Church in the USA, the Church of Ireland and a range of expressions of Anglicanism across the world. More recently the influence of Anglicans from Africa and Asia has shifted theological approach to a more evangelical flavour since Lambeth 1998. This is creating tension with North American Bishops for whom a liberal approach is important ground to occupy in their different faith context.

Anglo-Catholic

Part of the Church of England that stresses continuity with the [Roman] Catholic Church. An understanding that the Reformation was a correction within one church, not a schism. Characterised by an emphasis upon sacramental expressions of faith and order. There is a great variety of Anglo-Catholicism, ranging from the ultra-conservative “Forward in Faith” who, whilst recognising the value of women and their ministries, cannot accept that women are able to be ordained as priests and bishops (generally they would accept women to be ordained as deacons). Other, more ‘liberal’ Catholics, e.g. “Affirming Catholicism”, campaign strenuously for women bishops as once they campaigned for women priests.

Cathedral

The mother church of each diocese is where the diocesan bishop has his Chair (cathedra). The senior ordained minister of the Cathedral is the Dean, who is the most senior priest in the diocese after the Diocesan Bishop. S/he is assisted by a number of Residentiary Canons, based in the cathedral church. They often have responsibilities in the wider diocese or Church of England.

Diocese

The Church of England is the Established Church for England. Every square inch of England is divided into small units called parishes. Traditionally each parish has a church. Over time, as patterns of settlement and attendance have shifted, these are often merged into groups such as Team Ministries or Benefices. Parishes come together in a larger local unit called a Deanery for local administration and fellowship. The Church of England is led by bishops who are responsible for a larger unit based around a county or a city and called a diocese.

Ecclesiology

The study of what it means to be the Church – from the Greek for church [ekklesia] and thought/[logos]

Evangelical

Evangelicalism is characterised by the following features:

- Primacy on the authority of the Bible
- The need for personal conversion for salvation
- An emphasis on the ministry of evangelism – to bring others to conversion.

The word comes from the Greek [euangelion] meaning “Good News” and is a double referent to the Gospels and evangelism.

There is a great variety within evangelicalism, and not only within the Church of England but in other denominations. The range will be from the ultra-conservative (within Anglicanism represented by the group “Reform”) who do not accept women in positions of leadership/headship (in authority over a church and especially over men in the church). Evangelicals will often be uncomfortable with the term priest, believing it to be an unreformed view of ordained ministry. There are those who describe themselves as “Open Evangelicals” (Liberal being a pejorative term in evangelical culture in a way it isn’t in most Anglo-Catholicism) who will be quite happy to accept women in leadership and be more relaxed about various cultural issues whilst still holding to the evangelical ethos.

Evangelicalism is not to be confused with **evangelism** – all Christians are called upon to be evangelists, not all need be evangelicals.

Liberal

Christians whose theology is influenced by the Enlightenment, which emphasises free will, reason, and the ability of human beings to make progress in all things including religion; and also in romanticism which insisted on feeling and intuition as essential to human life. Liberal Christians are characterised by a willingness to interpret scripture without any preconceived notion of the inerrancy of scripture or the correctness of Church dogma. They view the Bible as not a collection of factual statements but instead a record of the human authors' beliefs and feelings about God *at the time of its writing*—within an historic/cultural context. Liberal Christianity looks upon the Bible as a collection of narratives that explain, epitomize, or symbolize the essence and significance of Christian understanding. Liberals will often prioritise social justice and see this as a significant movement for mission of the church.

Ordination

The Church of England has a three-fold pattern for ordained ministry:

Deacon (from the Greek for steward) who is licensed to lead worship and preach and teach but not to celebrate the Communion, offer absolution (forgiveness of sins offered in Christ’s authority) or a blessing

Priest from the old English word for elder, being the translation of the Greek word presbyter who can offer ABC – absolution, blessing and consecration.

Bishop like ‘priest’ an Anglo-Saxon corruption of a Greek word episcopos, meaning overseer. Diocesan bishops lead dioceses and may be assisted by a Suffragan bishop and senior priests called Archdeacons

Reformation

A reform movement in Europe that began in 1517 with Martin Luther. It began as an attempt to reform the Church from false doctrines and malpractices particularly involving the teaching and sale of indulgences. Other radicals, such as Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin and John Knox, soon followed Luther's lead. The Church beliefs and practices which they attacked included Purgatory, devotion to Mary (Mariology), the intercession of and devotion to the saints, most of the sacraments, the mandatory celibacy requirement of its clergy (including monasticism), and the authority of the Pope. Reformed and Lutheran Churches are found all across the world and form the third largest group of churches after Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.