

## COMMUNITY REVIEW



# DISCIPLESHIP, VOCATION AND MINISTRY TEAM DIOCESE OF GUILDFORD

## 'FAITH4LIVING'

***'Go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples . . .'* Matt 28.19a**

### **Background**

Following the Bishop's reorganisation of Departments, the newly created DVM Team now includes Adult Learning and Spirituality. The Team spent some time together revisiting how discipleship might become more of a central issue in our work. We talk a lot about lay discipleship but the national Church provides no real financial resources for training or educating lay people. Most parishes offer a whole range of opportunities. Some are quite programmatic and organised with groups for every stage of belief and belonging; others have a less formal approach. Some allow almost anybody to do anything and others guard areas of ministry and church life quite closely.

It's relatively easy to get access to a range of courses, books, websites etc (and the diocesan resources pack is on the website.) Jo Walker and a cross-departmental group have produced an interesting discipleship course '***Living your Faith***' and this is available in hard copy or electronically. The Summer School offers an annual opportunity for a range of short sessions open to all.

### **Discipleship Review Tools**

As part of a range of discipleship resources, we are producing two sets of self-review guidelines for use in places where Christians meet – primarily congregations in parishes. One is for individual use (though it might then be shared with others) and one is for community use e.g. PCC, Home Group. The review forms will be available in all kinds of media.

## **DISCIPLESHIP, VOCATION AND MINISTRY TEAM DIOCESE OF GUILDFORD**

It is important to know that this resource is **NOT**

- a data gathering exercise
- a test
- a sneaky way for 'the diocese' to check up on you
- a requirement
- a suggestion that you aren't 'doing discipleship' in lots of ways already
- something which needs to be sent back to somebody
- a statistical analysis
- a full and comprehensive list of everything there is to know about discipleship
- a new course with lots of right answers

This resource **IS**

- an initiative to support the Bishop's 'Common Purpose' ie growing in numbers, growing in spiritual depth and growing in community engagement
- an offering as another way of thinking again about discipleship to supplement what you already do
- some starters for discussion, reflection and thought (individually or communally)
- brief and generalist
- an opportunity to see where your Church might grow, eg are you hot on scripture but not so hot on interpreting scripture for the workplace?
- a balanced look at being a disciple based on 4 key areas (with lots of overlaps)
- a process owned by all of Bishop's Staff

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Whatever your context or tradition, this is an offering for you to use as you choose. Of course, we'd like to hear how it works out for you and others and we'd also be more than willing to come to any event to develop it with a group; but primarily it's meant to be a jumping off point for further development.

We have tried to be holistic and present discipleship as something which affects every part of our lives including worship, prayer, study, work life, leisure and relationships etc - but we have simplified this into 4 themes. Of course, there is a lot of overlap but it has helped us to think about balance and how to open up conversation.

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**The 4 themes are**

**Rooted Faith:** how can we be a disciple unless we study scripture, understand how the Church came into being, know something about the Church of England (if we claim to be an Anglican) or Methodism . . . . , and engage in regular prayer and worship.

**Working Faith:** however we spend our days – in employment, unemployed, volunteering, job seeking, studying, retired, at home with children – and the list is endless - disciples need to be disciples all the time. Does our faith ‘work’ when we are at work? Do we see our ‘secular’ lives as separate?

**Responsible Faith:** the environment, social justice, fairness, equality, stewardship, food production . . . how do we behave responsibly if we believe that God’s world is a gift?

**Sharing Faith:** being a disciple means witnessing to our faith whether that’s by telling stories, having a chat, engaging in direct evangelism, writing articles, being creative – and embodying Christ so that people see our faith and want to share in it.

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### A. Rooted Faith

1. Does your church provide exposure to a range of worship experiences?
2. What kind of opportunities are there for people to grow in their life of prayer? eg retreats, Quiet Days, pilgrimage, prayer partners . . .
3. Do you regularly challenge prejudices and presuppositions – including your own?
4. How would a person in your Church learn about other people of faith, church history and the workings of the Church of England?
5. Where are the opportunities for deeper engagement with Scripture and its interpretation?
6. In what ways do you enable people to make links with the foundations of their faith?
7. How do you encourage people to challenge a 'sacred / secular divide' in their lives?
8. How often do intercessions reflect the real experience of people in the community?

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## **B. Working Faith**

1. In what ways does your Church/group welcome others and extend hospitality – within and without the church community?
2. Do those in full time education have an opportunity to think about how their faith affects their lives – and vice versa?
3. What are the principles on which your Church 'business' is conducted? eg contracts, employees, volunteers, committee management.
4. How do you learn about what people do at work – and how do you support and encourage them?
5. What informs the way you make difficult or ethical decisions – and how do you help others make their own decisions?
6. Just how well do you know about and engage with the social and demographic issues in your local community?
7. How do you care for one another?

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### **C. Responsible Faith**

1. In what ways do you engage with civic and public life? (the press, the Council, government, opinions)
2. How often do you think about/preach about/try to influence environmental concerns?
3. How do you help the whole community reflect on current issues, for example, debt, food banks, self-harm?
4. How green is your community life? (eg Shrinking the Footprint)
5. How often does Christian stewardship feature in the life of the Church?
6. Is the Church demanding too much/too little 'internal' commitment from its members?
7. How outward looking is the Church community? (the next street, the next county, the next continent?)



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### **D. Sharing Faith**

1. What opportunities are there to grow the confidence of the members in sharing their faith?
2. What impression would outsiders have of your church if they looked at notice boards, magazines, websites etc?
3. In how many networks/clubs etc do your members participate? eg golf, music, choirs, cycling, school gate . . .
4. What informal opportunities are there for people to share their own stories? eg 'Points of View', Walk and Talk . . .
5. Is there any kind of person who is excluded from your community?
6. Do you have meaningful relationships with other churches in the deanery, with diocesan events, with other faith communities?
7. How competent are your authorised preachers and teachers?