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This presentation is only for users of the Parish Planning Tool (PPT) pack and in conjunction with the PPT process. Churches outside the Diocese of Oxford and others wishing to use the Parish Planning Tool should first contact

communications@oxford.anglican.org



DEFINE

What is the inquiry and what are we going to explore?

How is God calling us to be a more Christ-like church: contemplative, compassionate and courageous for the sake of God's world?

Every church in the Diocese of Oxford is being asked to explore this key question. We need to hold the question before us all the way through this process.

Your facilitator will give you some background to the Parish Planning Tool and outline its roots in an approach called Appreciative Inquiry.



20 Minutes

1





INTERVIEW

How can we listen to each other well?

We listen well when we intend to understand, rather than just to reply. Listening is a gift to the other person.

As the interviewer, try these prompt questions to keep the conversation flowing for Discover cards A and B:

Tell me more?... Who else was involved?...

How did it feel?... What difference did it make?

For Discover card C, try asking: 'What do you think being Christ-like means?, How was this story for the sake of God's world?'

You may find it helpful for later to take short notes of what your partner is saying.



DISCOVER A

Appreciating the best of 'what is'

What do you most value about your church and want to thank God for?

Whatever the challenges your church faces, there will be positives where God is already at work. This is the first of three questions in the Discover stage, which will help you to identify what these positives are.

This question focusses on your own experience of your church and so there's no one right answer.



10 Minutes

3



DISCOVER B

Appreciating the best of 'what is'

In your experience, what does your church do really well?

Sometimes it's too easy to notice what isn't going right, or to moan about how our church could be so much better.

This question is about noticing and appreciating the good things your church and church community are doing already.



10 Minutes

4



DISCOVER C

Appreciating the best of 'what is'

Tell a story of when you have seen your church being most alive and Christ-like for the sake of God's world.

This is an opportunity to explore what you think it means to be a 'Christ-like church for the sake of God's world'. The smallest story is valuable and could be significant. Again, this is a personal perspective and there are no right or wrong answers.

Think about these questions as you tell your story:

What was the source of 'being most alive'? Is your story about being contemplative, compassionate, courageous or some other value?



10 Minutes

5



SMALL GROUP (SG1)

Listening well to each other's stories

What do the stories from Discover card A have in common?

This is the first of three questions you will explore in a small group of 6 - 8 people.

In your small group take turns to listen to the headlines of the stories from each pair. Draw up a list of what the small group most values about the church.

Write these responses on a sheet of flip chart paper to share with others in the next session.



15 Minutes

6



SMALL GROUP (SG1)

Listening well to each other's stories

What do our Discover card B stories have in common?

In your small group, discuss and draw up a list of what the church does really well and what makes this possible.

Again, take turns to listen to the headlines from each pair and write these responses on a large sheet of flip chart paper for sharing later.



15 Minutes

7

SMALL GROUP (SG1)

Listening well to each other's stories

What are the themes your stories have in common from Discover card C?

In your small group, the person who was listening shares the story/experience they have heard about when the church has been most alive, most Christ-like.

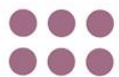
Discuss:

Are there elements of the experiences in common?

What do the group notice about these stories?

What feels significant in what you have heard?

Write each of the key headlines of these responses on separate sticky notes.



15 Minutes

8



WHOLE GROUP (WG1)

Bringing our stories together

What themes do our stories have in common?

Each small group will share their responses with the whole group. Your facilitator will explain how you do this.

At the end of sharing take time to pause, pray and give thanks to God for all that you are and all you have done.



20 Minutes

9



WHOLE GROUP (WG1)

Bringing our stories together

What do these stories reveal to us?

With all that has been heard and shared, which of these key questions is now most helpful to you?

- What strikes us about these responses?
- What do we notice?
- Where do we see or sense God at work?

The facilitator will explain how you record your responses.



20 Minutes

10



DISCOVER D

Beginning to discern 'what might be'

How and where might God be calling us in the next three years?

Discuss in pairs:

It is three years' time. We are celebrating our church being more alive, more Christ-like for the sake of God's world:

- What is different?
- What has been achieved?
- What are the challenges that have been overcome?

Describe it as if it has happened in as much detail as possible.

Your imagining must connect with the positive stories shared in the whole group. This is not about blue-sky thinking or personal agendas. Your vision will begin to emerge from these responses/reflections.



15 Minutes

11



DISCOVER E

Beginning to discern 'what might be'

How might we become the church we have described?

If we are beginning to glimpse how and where God is calling us, what could help move the stories shared in Discover card D forward?

In your pair discuss and agree:

- one small step.
- one creative, innovative or challenging step.

This is a simple list at this stage rather than a detailed discussion. Make sure you record your responses ready for the next small group discussion.



10 Minutes

12



SMALL GROUP (SG2)

Listening to each other's stories from Discover card D

What is the shared story of how and where God might be calling you in the next three years?

In your small group listen to the stories of how and where God might be calling you.

Your facilitator will explain how you record your responses.

As you share together, ask yourselves:

What do your stories have in common?

Are there images, words or metaphors that are emerging from your sharing?



25 Minutes

13



SMALL GROUP (SG2)

Listening to each other's stories from Discover card E

In your small group, make two master lists on flip chart paper of the steps each pair listed in response to Discover card E.

- the small steps
- the innovative/challenging steps.

At this point in the process please resist the temptation to discuss how you might implement these ideas and/or solve the problem - that comes soon!



15 Minutes

14





DREAM (SG3)

Describing our sense of God's call to us

How are you being called to be a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world?

Words often limit our ability to describe God's activity. In your small groups, taking all the words shared so far, engage creatively/intuitively with them to clarify your sense of God's call.

Think about images, metaphors, biblical stories, common themes which convey your shared sense of God's call. Be creative, e.g. draw a road map, design a poster, build a model using Lego/plasticine, create a short drama, write a haiku... Be ready to present your creation to the other groups!



30 Minutes

15

DREAM (WG2)

Sharing our presentations of God's call to us

What story do you want to tell of becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world?

Each small group in turn presents what they have prepared to the whole group. Be sure to encourage and affirm each other as you do this.

Follow with a time to pause, be still and pray - preferably in silence.

If anything emerges from your reflection and prayer that you feel you need to share with the whole group, the facilitator will give a few minutes to do this.



30 Minutes

16



DREAM (SG4)

Taking forward our Dream stories

What do our Dream stories have in common?

Back in your small group, discuss the common threads from all the presentations you've seen. On a flip chart sheet, capture these threads as clearly as you can, for example:

- write a short sentence that sums up each of the threads

OR

- Make a list of key words or short phrases which describe each thread.



15 Minutes

17

DREAM (SG4)

Taking forward our Dream stories

Where is your attention being drawn?

Where do you feel God 'nudging you'?

What energises you?

In your small group, continue working with and discussing the threads and ask whichever of the questions above is most helpful for developing your discussion.

There may be more than one area at this stage where you feel God 'nudging' you, and that's OK. Keep capturing your discussions on your flip chart sheet or sticky notes.



10 Minutes

18



DREAM (SG4)

Taking forward our Dream stories

Where are the points of challenge to us becoming a *more* Christ-like church for the sake of God's world?

Our central question is how is God calling us to be *more* Christ-like for the sake of His world: *more* contemplative, *more* compassionate, and *more* courageous? Building on the previous discussions ask yourselves:

- In what areas are we being challenged in our thinking?
- What new thoughts or actions are being generated?
- Where is the 'status quo' being challenged?

To help, refer back to your list of small and innovative steps (card 14)



15 Minutes

19

WHOLE GROUP (WG3)

Bringing together all our Dream discussions

What do you think God is saying to this gathering about our calling to be a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world?

In this session your hard work will begin to come together as small groups share their key reflections and insights. Your facilitator will explain how this will happen.

Please don't rush this final session and be sure to continue to listen well to each other.

At the end of the sharing, there should again be a time to stop for silence and prayer.



30 Minutes

20





DESIGN

Combining the best of 'what is' (Discover) and 'what might be' (Dream)

What do you *intend* to do in response to God's call?

It is going to be important for you to be able to state clearly what you intend to do to make your Dream a reality.

On flip chart paper, write a 'statement of intention' - a positive, practical, short sentence of what you want to be/do to realise your future, to go forward. This bridges the best of 'what is' with what is emerging from 'what might be'.

Your facilitator will have some examples to help you.



20 Minutes

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DESIGN

Combining the best of 'what is' (Discover) and 'what might be' (Dream)

Have you captured all you want to say in your 'statement of intention'?

Your statement needs to be 'good enough', not perfect. Does it capture what you mean and want to say; is it:

- affirmative, creative, stretching or at all risky?
- stated in the present tense (not 'we will' but 'we are')?

- energising, grounded in real experience?

Consider how you will share this with the PCC and/or others from the whole group. How will you discover if your statement of intention reflects what they have heard?



DESIGN

Combining the best of 'what is' (Discover) and 'what might be' (Dream)

What experiments or prototypes would help us explore this further?

Experimenting and creating prototypes are an excellent way to continue to test your sense of God's call. The language of 'prototype' is intentional - prototypes are 'working models' that help us to learn what might work and what doesn't.

What are three different things that would help you to test your sense of God's call? Which one do you think would help you most?



DESIGN

Combining the best of 'what is' (Discover) and 'what might be' (Dream)

Who else may share our vision?

Your 'statement of intention', experiments and prototypes will help you to see how you can join in with God's mission for the world. If you have discerned that this involves engagement with your community, then consider these questions:

- Are there people in our wider community with similar interests or concerns?
- Have we noticed people/ conversations in our wider community that connect with this vision?
- Are we already in relationship with potential partners?





DELIVER

Creating 'what will be'

How will we deliver our call to be 'more Christ-like for the sake of God's world?'

Consider these key questions for the steering group taking this forward:

- How clear are we about what we are being called to be and do?
- Are we clear enough so we can resist being distracted by other ideas?
Does our 'statement of intention' need to be refined?
- What flexibility might we need to build in to our plan to make this happen?



DELIVER

Creating 'what will be'

How will we deliver our emerging sense of God's call to be 'a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world?'

Consider these key questions:

- What don't we know about our intended action?
- How will we know if we are 'getting there'?
- Do we need to stop something else to do this?
- When do we want this done by?
- Who has gifts this in area or has expressed an interest?
- What other resources will we need?
- How often will we review progress?
- Can the Development Fund help support this work?

