

## OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Everyday faith - Christian Formation and Discipleship**Update on progress across the diocese in this focus area**

Everyday Faith is about where and how we encounter God as we go about our daily lives, helping us to notice where God is calling and sending us. Our new website gives this whole aspect of our work and faith significantly higher profile and provides inspirational stories and practical steps on how we can support people in their [everyday faith](#).

The focus area group is chaired by +Steven and shaped by representatives from each Archdeaconry of the diocese, across church traditions. Our focus is **to enable the whole people of God to feel confident and equipped to become more Christ-like for the sake of God's world.**

The group discerned that a 'one size fits all' approach to formation and discipleship would not suit our diocese. We therefore share what is working well in different places and offer flexible support, which is adaptable to the differing contexts in which we find ourselves. We reflect together on what we can learn and share about how we Gather, Listen, Equip and Send out disciples to be more Christ-like for the sake of God's world. We are all 'called and sent' and our vision is that each person recognises their own gifts and calling, the part they play in the body of Christ.

The contributions and participation from this collaborative group approach have been particularly helpful when adapting to support parishes through COVID. Many churches who have offered Alpha, Christianity Explored and Pilgrim before the first lockdown successfully adapted courses to an online platform and have continued to adapt well to an online/hybrid approach over the last 18 months, welcoming new people to faith.

Come and See

Come and See, offered for the first time in 2021, invites new people to discover Christ and helps those with an established faith on their discipleship journey. It was offered on the basis that many church leaders were exhausted at this point in the pandemic and welcomed the additional support. We invited people to participate in Come and See during Lent through a series of films, emails, teaching and contemplative prayer resources designed to connect with

- ✓ People who've never been to church
- ✓ Anyone who has drifted away from church
- ✓ People who were connecting to church online during COVID, with questions of life and faith
- ✓ Members of the congregation – old and new who want to explore faith and go deeper

In 2021 around 1000 people participated and nearly 200 ordained and lay leaders used the leader resources. We evaluated feedback

- **81% of participants would recommend it to others**
- **70% said it had a positive impact on *inviting others to faith***
- **72% said it encouraged them to find out more or go *deeper in faith***
- **47% were offered a Personal Discipleship Plan or someone to *encourage them on their faith journey and to increase confidence***

- **18% of leaders indicated that 'Come and See' led to new baptisms or confirmations in their church**

In November 2021 the Bishops led a series of Webinars for church leaders to listen to how people were feeling and ask how they would like to be supported during 2022. The basic message from church leaders was that they were 'tired, pressured but hopeful'. We asked 'what support would you like for Christian formation and discipleship'? The response was the need to provide more flexible resources for Come and See 2022 and to pay particular attention to: increasing support for the invitation stage; considering the rural church; creating materials suitable for families; and providing earlier access to resources with maximum flexibility so that they could be used in multiple formats and on Sunday, e.g. as a sermon, in small groups, at home, or individually.

In response to this we have launched [Come and See](#) 2022 based on the **Lord's Prayer**. Leader resources were made available in early January and expanded to include a small group guide suitable for those new to faith and people who want to explore faith more deeply, Contemplative Prayer practices, Family resources for individuals and church groups and Collective Worship and RE lessons in schools. 175 leaders had signed up by mid-February. We ask you to pray with us that Come and See 2022 will increase the number of people coming to faith and growing in faith across all ages.

### [Listening and encouraging in our Everyday Faith](#)

We began developing our [Gifts for everyday faith](#) and [Personal Discipleship Plans](#) in response to the Setting God's People Free report which called for 'ordained and lay to work together, to form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel'. More support for identifying the gifts and calling of all God's people was asked for. The church has been accused of being inward looking and showing more interest in 'vocation' when it discerns a calling towards ordination and licensed ministry. The [PDP](#) offers equal encouragement to every baptised Christian on our journey, in the whole of life. 'Encourager' training is continuing steadily, we have trained nearly 500 Encouragers across the diocese. Feedback has been incredibly positive and we are noticing a renewed interest in discipleship as we slowly emerge from the pandemic.

### [The Everyday faith portal](#)

We have taken a leading role in the development of a new national digital platform; you can sign up using the link above. We are excited at the opportunities it offers us to integrate and connect our faith with the whole of life and we hope it will become a core resource in our everyday faith toolkit. It will include resources which can be shared for Parenting, Politics, Relationships, Business, Justice, Climate Change and the Arts. This allows people to connect with Oxford Diocesan content, and national content. Our own **Personal Discipleship Plans, Gifts for Everyday Faith** and **Come and See** will be offered through this platform.

To discuss please contact me at [tina.molyneux@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:tina.molyneux@oxford.anglican.org)

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