







Session 1: Healthy Churches – Leaders Notes

Diocesan Vision Course	Youth Companion
<p>Resources: For this session you will need enough printed copies of the course members’ materials for everyone in your group (it’s worth printing off a couple of spare sets), the vision course DVD, a DVD player, TV and pens. You may wish to use music during the prayer reflection at the end of the session and you will need some means of playing music (CD and CD player, MP3 player or similar)</p>	<p>Extra Resources (in addition to those on the left): Dice Deanery map jigsaws (printed and cut up) Newspapers/Magazines Scissors Glue Large sheets of paper</p>
<p>Session Outline: Welcome Opening Worship and Prayer including Vision Prayer Getting Started Bible Passage DVD Teaching Input Garden Exercise Healthy Church Survey and discussion Our Priorities Prayer Reflection Take it Away Material</p>	<p>Session Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage young people to think about what ‘church’ is and whether or not it’s important that they’re part of it • To discuss what a healthy church might look like • To provide an opportunity for young people to share their opinions about your church and its health
<p>Welcome: (4 minutes)</p>  <p>Welcome people to the group and thank them for coming on the course. Encourage people to participate in the way that is most helpful for them; explain that it’s okay to contribute to discussions or to listen to the thoughts of others. The course is designed to help stimulate ideas and to help the local church come up with some practical ideas. These ideas will help the local church contribute to the diocesan vision of Healthy Churches Transforming Communities. As people come up with ideas and suggestions encourage them to write these down on their handouts. If you find a number of people making a similar suggestion it would be very helpful to pass these ideas on to the Church leadership, PCC and parish priest. Explain that the</p>	<p>Icebreaker Game (4mins): Pass around a dice. Each member of the group says their name, rolls the dice and answers the question corresponding to the number they’ve rolled.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What’s your favourite animal? 2. What’s your favourite flavour of ice cream? 3. What’s your favourite sport? 4. What’s your favourite item of clothing? 5. What’s your favourite time of day? 6. What’s your favourite song?

<p>course is a mixture of group work, discussion, Bible study, input from a short DVD and time for reflection. The session is timed to last between 75-90 minutes. There is a suggested take away activity at the end of the session for people to continue to reflect on the theme of the session.</p>	<p>Introduction Activity (10mins): Deanery jigsaw map Print out the deanery map (appendix 1) onto card (if possible). Cut up the map into 5 or 6 pieces (or cut up all 14 deaneries separately if you want to be mean). Do the jigsaw together as a group (or print several and compete in pairs to see who can do it fastest). Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know what this is a map of? • Do you know which part of the map we're in? <p>Explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a youth group we're part of a church • Churches (Church of England churches) work together in small groups (called deaneries) and in larger groups (called diocese) • Churches in and around the Lancashire area (the Diocese of Blackburn) are trying to work together to be healthier churches and to work to bring about transformation in their local communities • As a youth group we're going to chat about what we think of this vision and how we might be part of it
<p>Opening Worship and Vision Prayer: (3 minutes)</p>  <p>Begin the course in prayer and join together in praying the Diocesan Vision Prayer together. Heavenly Father, we embrace Your call for us to make disciples, to be witnesses and to grow leaders. Give us the eyes to see Your vision, ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.</p>	<p>As a youth group you may wish to start with the prayer on the left or say it together at the end of your session.</p>
<p>Getting Started: (5 minutes)</p>  <p>Use the following introduction: 'Health and wellbeing are a focus to modern life; for example eating 5-a-day, exercise, low fat, low salt, stopping smoking and losing weight.'</p>	<p>Getting Started Game: (10minutes) Play fruit salad - Sit on chairs in a circle. Have enough chairs for all but one person. Label everyone as a fruit (pick enough fruits for there to be three or four people</p>

<p>Then invite people to share their thoughts on the following questions in twos or threes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give an example of someone you would regard as healthy. Why did you choose this person? • If you were able to make one change to your life to be healthier what would it be? 	<p>as each fruit e.g. if there are 12 of you have 3 people as bananas, 3 as apples, 3 as oranges and 3 as pears).</p> <p>Get the person without a chair to stand in the middle and shout out one of the fruits. Everyone who is that fruit must swap places whilst the person in the middle tries to get a chair.</p> <p>Whoever is then in the middle shouts out the next fruit. If at any point the person in the middle shout ‘fruit salad’ everyone in the group should change seats.</p> <p>If you have time you may also want to do a couple of ‘health challenges’ in the group e.g. how many star jumps or press-ups can they do in 30seconds.</p> <p>After playing the game ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, apart from eating fruit, might someone do to be healthy? • What was happening during the game that will help us to keep healthy? (highlight things such as laughter and socialising as well as physical exercise to make the point that health isn’t just about physicality)
<p>Bible Passage: Acts 2:42-47 (10 minutes)</p>  <p>Invite someone in the group to read the Bible passage. It’s a good idea to choose the person before the session starts so that people who are nervous about reading aloud don’t worry that they are going to be asked to read in front of others.</p> <p><i>⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.</i></p>	<p>Bible passage questions: (10mins)</p> <p>Before reading the Bible passage explain that you are going to read a description of the very first church.</p> <p>Read Acts2:42-47 (text in full on the left)</p> <p>After the reading discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think church today is like the description in the Bible reading? What’s similar/different? • Do you think that the church being described sounds like a healthy church? • Why do you think people go to church services? Why do/don’t you go to church services? • What do you like/dislike about church as it’s described in the Bible reading? What about church now? • Do you think we should be part of a church, is it important?

<p>As you study the Bible passage you can chose one of two options for exploring the passage further.</p> <p>Option 1. Which aspects of this passage encourage you, challenge you, inspire you or confuse you? Which aspect of the life of the early church would you most like to see developed in the life of your own church?</p> <p>Option 2 Acts tells the story of how the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread from Jerusalem to Rome. At several key points, and here particularly, the author wants his readers to see what underpins this extraordinary growth of the church in these early years.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 2:42 indicates four priorities in the life of the early church. Why did the first Christians focus their devotion and priorities on these four areas? 2. From the text, what was the result of this level of devotion? 3. What are the lessons for a church that wants to be healthy and grow? 	<p>If your group finds visual aids helpful you may wish to use the ‘In Order (Youth)’ activity from the Learn2Listen website instead of these questions - http://learn-to-listen.org.uk/practical-ideas/listening-ideas-final/in-order-youth</p>
<p>DVD Teaching Input: (8 minutes)</p>  <p>Play session 1 Healthy Churches from the DVD</p>	<p>Watch the DVD in advance to see if you think your group will engage with it. If you don't think they will then skip this activity.</p>
<p>Garden Exercise: (7 minutes)</p>  <p>Using the picture of a garden (appendix 2) invite group members to choose a plant which best represents the health of your church? Encourage them to share their choices in groups of three.</p>	<p>Use the activity on the left.</p>
<p>Healthy Church Survey: (25 minutes)</p>	<p>Creative Activity: (15mins) As a group create an image of ‘church’ (using words or images cut up from magazine/newspapers. The words or images should describe or depict what</p>



Use the following introduction to the next exercise
 ‘A great deal of research has been done to find ways of assessing church health. These include Natural Church Development, Growing Healthy Churches, Anecdote to Evidence and Leading your Church into Growth. Our diocese has combined all this research and has identified six qualities which make a church healthy. These qualities are Worship, Vision, Strong sense of Community, Outward looking focus, Leadership and Discipleship.’

Using the healthy church survey (appendix 3), score your church on a scale of A to F by putting a circle around the appropriate letter for each of the health qualities. Scoring A means being very healthy and F means being very unhealthy. Don’t try to over analyse the score you give a ‘gut impression’ is often the most honest response.

the group thinks would make a healthy church (a church that they might like to go to/be part of).
 You may wish to have sections of your image that are about Worship, Vision, Strong sense of Community, Outward looking focus, Leadership and Discipleship.

- As you create the image you may wish to chat about questions such as:
- What’s in the middle/What’s the core/What’s the heart? (it’s helpful to point out that relationship with Jesus Christ is unites the church)
 - Is every part of the image the same or is it diverse?

If you want to be really creative you could even build a 3D model of a church and decorate that (see appendix 4 for images of the one created at the Diocesan Young Leaders’ Day in July).

*You may wish to create the shape of a building but it’s important to encourage young people to recognise that ‘church’ is the community rather than the building so you may wish to create an image of a group of people or similar

Work together as a group to identify two or three priorities that you can focus on to make a difference to the health of your church and that would help grow God’s Kingdom in your community.

Make a list of the agreed priorities below and, as a leader of the group, make sure these are fed back to the church leadership, PCC and parish priest.

Our Priorities: (8 minutes)



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Sharing Our Opinions: (3mins)

Quickly summarise some of the things that have been put on the picture/model and get an impression of whether it’s something contributed by a single member of the group or whether it’s something that the whole group feel strongly about.

Explain that the image/model will be displayed in church and be shared* with the PCC (group that makes decisions about the leadership and direction of the local church).

*Check this with your church leaders first so that you’re not making promises to the group that you cannot keep

Prayer Reflection: (3 minutes)



Read the following reflection slowly encourage people to sit quietly and to reflect on the words as you read them. It may be helpful to play some gentle music in the background as you read.

Imagine yourself sitting in church

Think about the people who sit near you.

The friends who you meet there. (Pause)

Remember the people who helped to shape and form your own faith in Jesus - Sunday school teachers, friends, family or colleagues. (Pause)

Think of some of the ways your church serves the local community. (Pause)

Think of a worship service that you attend.

Picture some of the spaces in the pews or some of the empty chairs being filled by people who have recently joined the church. (Pause)

Imagine the church as a healthy vibrant community of faith that makes a difference to those it serves. Picture a Healthy Church transforming your community. (Pause)

What part could you play in making this happen? (Pause)

Alternative reflection (5mins)

Introduce a time of reflection by reminding the group that they're part of the church which is a worldwide community of people who know God's love for them and live in relationship with Him made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's good to give thanks to God for this family and to pray for our brothers and sisters.

Listen to 'Build Your Kingdom Here' by The Rend Collective. You may wish to watch a lyric video to help your group to focus on the words of the song e.g. - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcSWpVKKMcs>

As you listen, invite young people to write prayers on or around the pieces of the deanery map from the introduction activity.

Take it Away Material: (2 minutes)



Introduce the take away material and invite people to continue to reflect on the idea of a Healthy Church through the coming week.

Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6 (ESV)

Try to memorise this verse or write it down and pin it up in places where you will see it regularly.

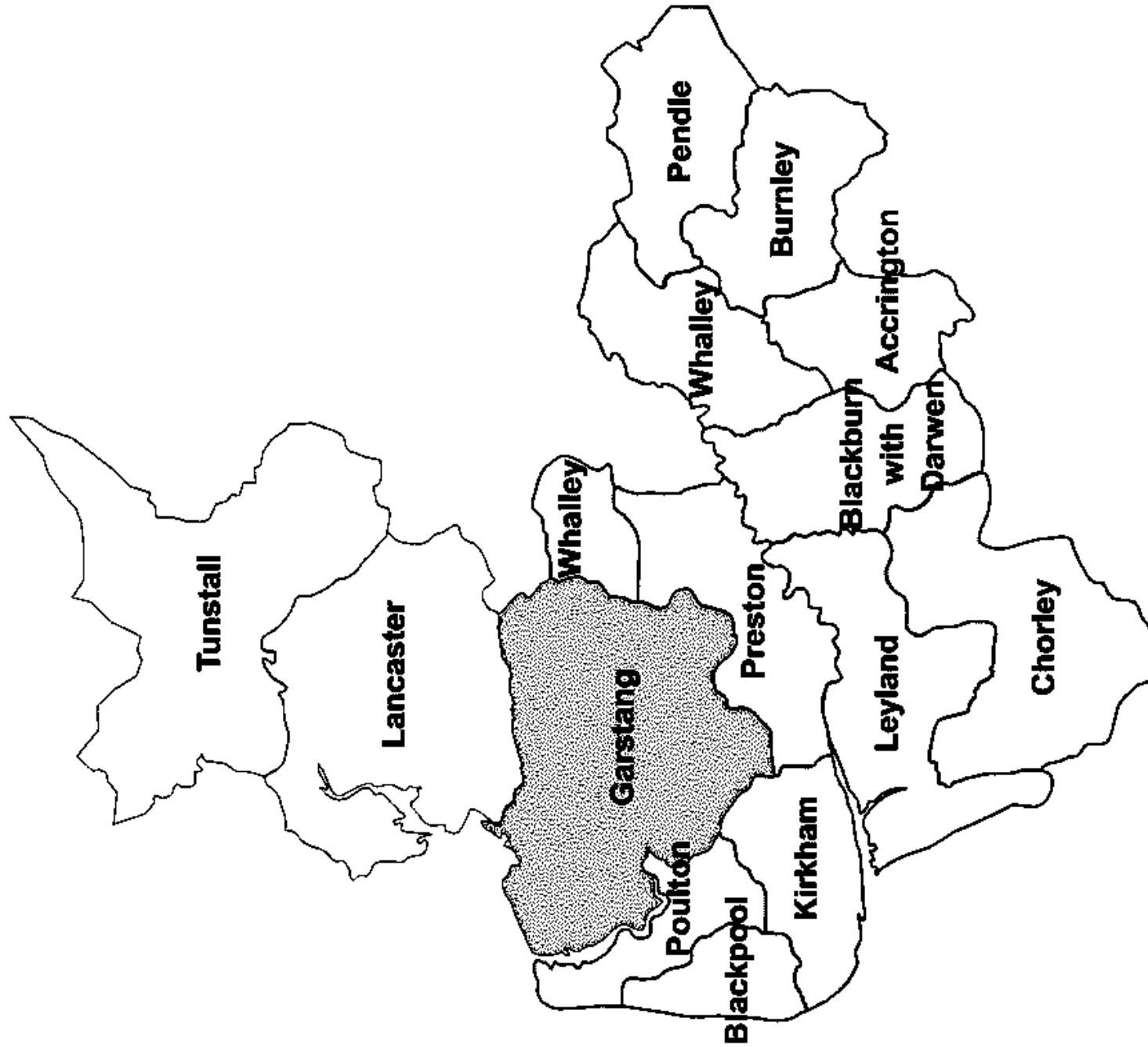
Take it Away Material: (2minutes)

Challenge the group to try and say a short prayer for the health of the church each time they do somethings which makes them think about their own health (e.g. eating fruit or taking part in sport).

Challenge the group to see if, before the next session, they can chat to someone who's part of the church somewhere else and ask them about their experiences of being part of the church community.

<p>We all have a part to play in helping God's Church grow just like Paul and Apollos, but ultimately it is God who brings health and growth. Each time you see a garden, or plants, repeat the verse and ask God to help your church to be a Healthy Church transforming your community.</p>	
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Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Appendix 3:

Write some action points to improve your church health in the box under each of the headings.

1. Worship

A healthy church offers worship which inspires, encourages, has depth and richness, and connects with people and helps them encounter God. A church that has a deep rooted commitment to prayer which is demonstrated in every area of its life.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

2. Vision

A healthy church has a clear sense of purpose and direction, a current Mission Action Plan (or similar), has clear priorities and seeks to build God’s Kingdom in its local communities. A church which seeks to find out what God wants and then does it!

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

3. Leadership and Collaborative Ministry

A healthy church embraces a positive pattern of Christian leadership, promotes collaborative working and encourages all people to find opportunities to put their faith into action. A church that encourages Christian vocations and encourages people to explore God’s call upon their lives.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

4. Active Discipleship

A healthy church actively encourages people of all ages to grow in their relationship with Jesus through prayer, bible study and other devotional activities.

A church that actively encourages people of all ages to find expression for their faith in the church and the world.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

5. Strong sense of Community

A healthy church has a church community that is open, warm, caring and supportive, that nurtures a sense of belonging for people of all ages and backgrounds and that is open to new people joining the life of the church. A church that actively reaches out to others and has a warm and positive relationship with the communities it serves.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

6. Outward looking focus

A healthy church seeks to reach out to the local community and further afield with God’s love and compassion. It is committed to helping people find faith and seeks to build the Kingdom of God in all situations.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

When you have completed the exercise share what you have written.

Appendix 4:

