

Session 2: Transforming Communities – Leaders' Notes

Resources:

Course members' materials (plus some spares), Vision 2026 Study Course DVD, DVD player, TV, a map of your local area, pens, post-it notes, and sachets of mustard or small packets of mustard seeds. You may wish to use music during the prayer reflection at the end of the session so you will need some means of playing music (CD and CD player, MP3 player or similar)

You could get a map of your local area from an OS Map, order from the OS website, use Google Maps or from a local A-Z guide.

Session Outline:

Welcome
Opening Worship and Prayer including Vision Prayer
Getting Started
Bible Passage
DVD Teaching input
Magnificat
On the Map (you will need a map of the local area for this exercise)
Our Priorities
Prayer Reflection
Take it Away Material

Welcome: (3 minutes)



Welcome back those who came last week and any new members to the group, and briefly recap last week's session.

Opening Worship and Vision Prayer: (3 minutes)



Begin the course in prayer and join together in praying the Diocesan Vision Prayer.
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.

Getting Started: (5 minutes)



Get two people in the group to read out the following quotations.
'Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty. We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.' - Mother Teresa

'I was challenged by the poverty and deprivation in Manchester and the chaos in people's lives. I was gutted at how little the church was doing to engage with people. I felt this crazy, slightly arrogant, naive vision well up in me to make a difference in young people's lives. Manchester for years and years had been like the fag-end of Christianity, the steepest church decline, the church leaders weren't really getting on. And God started

to do something, not just through The Message, but other things, other ministries were born, and the spirit of God was working. It's amazing.' - Andy Hawthorn – Founder of 'The Message Trust'

Invite people to discuss what motivated these people to say what they said and to act in the way they did?

Bible Passage: Matthew 5.13-16 (11 minutes)



Invite someone in the group to read the following passage and then explore the Bible passage using either Option 1 or Option 2 below.

¹³ *'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

¹⁴ *'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Option 1

The church is sometimes accused of hypocrisy because our words and our actions don't match.

Do you think these comments are fair? In what positive ways can we live out our faith in words and actions?

Option 2

At the start of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), Jesus outlined the characteristics of the believer and the blessings that follow. He follows this immediately in the passage above with two images that describe the transformative impact such a life will have.

1. From the images of salt and light how important is it for the People of God to be different from those around them?
2. What is it that makes Christian disciples different, or have we lost our saltiness?
3. Share examples of ways in which Christians being salt and light has had a transformative impact on the wider community

DVD Teaching input: (5 Minutes)



Play session 2 Transforming Communities from the DVD

DVD Presenters: Bishop Philip North – Bishop of Burnley, Jamila Hounslow

Magnificat: (10 minutes)



Invite someone to read out the Magnificat – Mary's song of praise.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed; the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered the proud in their conceit, casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to remember his promise of mercy, the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children for ever.

Mary's song of praise speaks of the transforming power of God's love. It points to God's Kingdom of justice and mercy transforming the world. Underline some of the phrases that particularly strike you and share together how it might be possible for Mary's song to become a reality.

On the Map: (18 minutes)



Take a map of your local area/parish.

Write on post-it notes:

- The things that you like and value about your local community.
- The challenges and difficulties that your local community faces.

And place the post it notes on the map.

Discuss as a group:

What are the common things that people have mentioned as either likes or challenges?

Are there any comments or observations that surprised you?

Our Priorities: (14 minutes)



In groups of three or four, think of ways in which your local church/churches can make a difference and help to bring transformation to the area and to people's lives.

Are there any groups or organisations that you could work in partnership with?

You might like to pick some of the ideas listed below or you might like to write your own suggestions where it says other...

Some suggestions:

Acts of Random Kindness - doing something kind for other people

Planting bulbs

Organising some faith sharing outreach events

Litter pick and prayer walk

Active involvement in community life

Community festival – a celebration of community life

Running enquirers' courses

Building relationships with people of other faiths

Supporting Street Pastors

Helping people explore the Christian Faith for themselves

Getting involved in an environmental project

Foodbanks

Supporting or working in Charity Shops

Connecting with local schools

Encouraging recycling and energy efficiency

Campaigning for justice on national or international issues

Providing a drop in centre for people to come and chat

other...

other...

other...

Pick two or three suggestions that your church could do over the next year or so and, as a leader of the group, make sure these are fed back to the church leadership, PCC and parish priest.

Prayer Reflection: (3 minutes)



Use the following reflection

Leader: In the face of poverty and deprivation

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: In the face of affluence and opportunity

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: In towns, cities and villages

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: In lives of young and old

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: In hope and despair

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: Through joy and strength; sorrow and weakness

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: In nations and individual lives

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Leader: At all times, in all places

All: Your kingdom come Your will be done.

Take it Away Material: (3 minutes)



Invite people to use the take away material to help them continue to reflect on the theme of Transforming Communities in the coming week.

When you watch the news on TV, listen to the radio news or pick up a newspaper use the phrase 'Your kingdom come Your will be done' as a prayer when you encounter stories that move or touch you.

Mark 4:30-32

³⁰ Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?

³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.'

You might like to carry a sachet of mustard (or a packet of mustard seeds) around in your pocket and whenever you feel the sachet in your pocket you might like to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom.