

Pause . . . for Prayer

October 2020

Theme: The Five Marks of Mission

The Five Marks of Mission have been developed by the Anglican Consultative Council since 1984. Since then they have been widely adopted as an understanding of what contemporary mission is about. The marks were adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in 1996 and many dioceses and other denominations use them as the basis of creative mission ideas. Some churches abbreviate the five marks to five words: TELL; TEACH; TEND; TRANSFORM and TREASURE.

Please spend some time thinking and praying today of how these marks can be implemented by yourself personally and St John the Baptist Church, Bodicote generally. This may seem daunting but be reassured by Jesus' charge to his disciples (John 15 v.16):

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

Let us quiet ourselves and consider Bishop Steven's Common Vision Prayer for our Diocese at this time:

God of gentleness and love
Draw near to us as we draw near to you
Dwell in every heart and conversation
Fashion in us the likeness of your Son Jesus Christ
Help us to discern together all that you are calling us to be
And all that you are calling us to do.
Assist us, by your Spirit, to become a more contemplative,
more compassionate and more courageous Church
For the building of your kingdom and the glory of your Son.

First Mark: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (TELL)

God of every generation, as we serve you in the present help us commend your mighty acts to those who are following on; that they may be envisioned for all that lies ahead.

God of every generation, fill us with faith for the future. We pray that we will play our part in equipping those who are following on, to continue to share the love of Christ and to build God's Kingdom on earth. Amen

Ideas for prayer: pray for our Church and any form of outreach it is involved in, or could be involved in; to those who have to answer for their faith in the media or other setting; for friendships with people who do not share our Christian faith, naming specific people, if you wish; for ourselves as we strive to be children of the Kingdom of God.

Second Mark: To teach, baptise and nurture new believers (TEACH)

Lord Jesus Christ,
alive and at large in the world,
help us to follow and find you there today,
in the places where we work, meet people, spend money and make plans.
Take us as disciples of your kingdom to see through your eyes, and hear the questions you are asking,
to welcome all others with your trust and truth,
and to change the things that contradict God's love, Amen

Ideas for prayer: pray for all those who have been baptised and all those thinking of bringing themselves or their children for baptism, for Sarah and Claire who prepare families; for people who are finding their way into faith; for a culture of encouragement in the church and an awareness of those seeking some spiritual path during the pandemic.

Third Mark: To respond to human need by loving service (TEND)

Love ever stands
with open hands
And that is love's prerogative
To give and give and give

Cease to do evil.
Learn to do good,
Search for justice,
help the oppressed, the poor, the starving, the elderly, the lonely, the imprisoned,
be just to the orphan and all those who are mentally or physically unwell,
plead for the refugee and the immigrant.
Let us serve the Lord,
in the name of Christ, Amen

Ideas for prayer: pray for Christian Aid, the Children's Society and other agencies; Christians in positions to influence political action for the poor and the refugee. Pray for local initiatives in serving the community - food banks and the Banbury Young Homeless Project, for example - and guide us individually and collectively to seek ways to help our neighbours. Pray that Christians may be recognisable by the depth and quality of their caring.

Fourth Mark: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation (TRANSFORM)

God of peace, look in mercy on all your children, and increase the spirit of sympathy and understanding between different races. Strengthen the love of justice and liberty among all peoples, and bring the whole earth to acknowledge your sovereignty of love and truth. Amen

Ideas for prayer: pray for the prophetic role of church leaders in current debates. Pray for campaigning organisations pursuing justice. Pray that we may all be prepared to act symbolically for justice in our own lives and decisions, even on the smallest scale.

Fifth Mark: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth (TREASURE)

God of all creation we thank you for your many good gifts; for fresh air, pure water and earth's bountiful resources. Help us to nurture your world with love, to care and to share, to use only what we need whilst respecting and appreciating all living things. Empower us to work with love as we aim to live responsibly for the wellbeing of creation for this and future generations. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Ideas for prayer: pray for greater awareness of environmental issues. Pray for our Diocese now that it has declared a climate emergency. Pray for a Christian critique of over-consumption and genuine internationalism in political debate. Pray for vision to sustain the struggle for the future of the earth.

To end our time of prayer, we pray:

God, send us into the world to accept the cost and to discover the joy of discipleship. Therefore let us go, carrying with us the peace of Christ, the love of God, and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing. Amen