



Session 3 – Do not be afraid

Notes:

- This outline order of service is provided to assist parishes where the provision of small groups does not, for whatever reason, prove possible in Lent. (It could, if so desired, be used in addition to small groups – this is a local decision.)
- The use of this outline is another way to encourage people to engage with the filmed conversation between the two bishops and move, from that and the gospel passage, into some reflection on the ministry, mission and unity of the Church.
- As it is an act of worship consideration should be given to the use of silence and music both of which can be inserted at various places in the celebration. Local custom and the availability of resources will dictate the musical provision but – please try to use some as it introduces another dimension to the assembly.
- The use of silence should be considered particularly in relation to reflection following the filmed conversation and around the use of the suggested areas for thoughtful reflection and/or discussion.
- Local circumstances, numbers attending and current regulations and restrictions will all need to be considered by those planning the service.

Before the session begins, place a large stone in a central position. Also a supply of stones at the entrance so that people can select one for their use.

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

We are a temple of God's indwelling Holy Spirit,
yet we have grieved him.
The temple of our bodies does not belong to us,
but was bought at the price of Christ's precious blood.
So we come, in sorrow yet with confidence,
to ask forgiveness of our Father in heaven.

Zeal for your house has eaten me up
and the taunts of those who taunt you have fallen upon me.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

The Lord will defend your coming out and your coming in
from this time forward for evermore.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Holy God,
our lives are laid open before you:
rescue us from the chaos of sin
and through the death of your Son
bring us healing and make us whole
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Readings from the Bible and 'The Church: towards a common vision'

John 2:13-22

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰ The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

[*New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised*]

The Church: towards a common vision

33. The Church is an eschatological reality, already anticipating the kingdom, but not yet its full realization. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent in establishing the kingdom and in guiding the Church so that it can be a servant of God's work in this process. Only as we view the present in the light of the activity of the Holy Spirit, guiding the whole process of salvation history to its final recapitulation in Christ to the glory of the Father, do we begin to grasp something of the mystery of the Church.

34. On the one hand, as the communion of believers held in personal relationship with God, the Church is already the eschatological community God wills. Visible and tangible signs which express that this new life of communion has been effectively realized are: receiving and sharing the faith of the apostles, baptising, breaking and sharing the eucharistic bread, praying with and for one another and for the needs of the world, serving one another in love, participating in each other's joys and sorrows, giving material aid, proclaiming and witnessing to the good news in mission and working together for justice and peace. On the other hand, as an historical reality the Church is made up of human beings who are subject to the conditions of the world. One such condition is change, either positive in the sense of growth and development or negative in the sense of decline and distortion. Other conditions include cultural and historical factors which can have either a positive or a negative impact on the Church's faith, life and witness.

We listen to the Bishops' Conversation for this session.

Discussion/thoughtful reflection around the following questions (they have been taken from those provided for use by groups).

If it were to be acknowledged that we really are in a missionary situation where should we as a Church (congregation, Diocese, CofE to begin with) place our resources and efforts? Are the present 'structures' (synods, PCCs, committees etc) effective in building up disciples for a united journey into God's wonderful future? How might they be changed for the better?

The bishops in conversation refer to the challenges of being a Temple of the Holy Spirit. They also ponder how uncomfortable it is to be cleansed! What of repentance and forgiveness in your life – both individual and corporate?

Bishop Ruth raises the question of the corporate holiness of the Church. How is this affected by divisions?

Note: Holiness = the most basic use of the word "holy" in the Bible is applied to God, and refers to God's apartness. God's people are to be "holy" because God is "holy". They are "set apart" from all that is alien to God's righteousness. This has clear moral implications, but it is important to remember this background and not regard "holiness" as merely a matter of moral rectitude. The ethical way of life that should characterize Christians follows from the fact that they have been "set apart"; it cannot be properly understood apart from it.

This Thanksgiving should be celebrated with the stone as the focus.

How awesome is this place.

**This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gateway of heaven.**

I saw a ladder which rested on the ground
with its top reaching to heaven,
and the angels of God were going up and down it.

**This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gateway of heaven.**

You will see greater things than this.
You will see heaven wide open,
and God's angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

**This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gateway of heaven.**

You are the temple of the living God,
and the Spirit of God dwells in you.
The temple of God is holy, and you are that temple.

**This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gateway of heaven.**

Psalm 48.9

Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.

Response

*Spend some time looking at the stone you chose and the one at the front or centre. You could pick up your stone and hold it, feeling its irregularities and weight. While you do this, ponder the following verses from the Bible. Each stone has a unique shape just we are unique. How are **we/am** I called to be part of God's holy temple, the Church?*

‘Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes”?’ [Matthew 21:42]

‘like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’ [1 Peter 2:5]

Intercessions are offered.

The risen Christ is here in the midst of us.

We bring our prayers to him as Lord of the Church.

For the Church universal,

of which our buildings are a visible symbol,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For **this/my** congregation,

as we remember your promise

that when two or three are gathered in your name

you are there in the midst of them,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For **our/my church building**, that we may be still and know that you are God,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the fulfilling of our desires and petitions as you see best for us,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For your blessings in the past and for a vision for the future,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the gift of the Holy Spirit and new life in baptism,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the pardon of our sins when we fall short of your glory,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For a foretaste of your eternal kingdom
in the sacrament of the eucharist,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the blessing of our vows
and the crowning of our years with your goodness,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the faith of those who have gone before us
and for grace to persevere like them,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the benefactors of this place who have died in the peace of Christ
and are at rest,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For a sense of our fellowship with **[St Richard of Chichester, St Wilfrid]** and all your saints,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

(Either)

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.**

Amen.

(or)

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

O God, from living stones

you prepare an everlasting dwelling—a place for your majesty.

Grant that in the power of the Holy Spirit

those who serve you here

may always be kept within your presence.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.