



**Diocese of Argyll  
and The Isles**

*Living our Vision:*

*Education for  
Mission*

**Year 3  
Participants' Guide**

## Living our vision: Year 3

The theme for this year is **Education for Mission**. The Revd Richard Tiplady, Director of Mixed-mode Training at the Scottish Episcopal Institute, was the keynote speaker at the Diocesan Conference 2019, with the title: Education for Mission: Confidence in the Gospel.

This material is in two parts.

**Part 1** is based on the questions discussed at the conference. Leaders and members of your congregation may have been at the conference and involved in discussing these questions. This is an opportunity for the wider membership of the church to think about these.

**Part 2** focusses on preparation for mission – (as individuals and as a church) how are you already prepared and what other preparation/education do you need?

The material in Part 1 is drawn from presentations at the Diocesan Conference 2019 by Revd Richard Tiplady, Director of Mixed Mode Training at the Scottish Episcopal Institute and provided for educational use in the congregations of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles.

Material in Part 2 and the opening and closing worship was authored by Dr Ros Brett for the use of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles.

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## Opening Worship

*You may like to light a candle*

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own insight.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practise it have a good understanding.  
His praise endures for ever.

Psalms 111:10

*Silence is kept*

*Prayer*

God of mission, who alone brings growth to your Church, send your Holy Spirit  
To give vision to our planning  
Wisdom to our actions, and  
Power to our witness;  
Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you,  
and in service to our local community.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord

**Amen**

## Part 1: Growth

### Dream...

Your history as a church can be a very precious and valuable thing. But it can also hinder the future. Imagine your church in the future looking back on its history (ie now!)

- *What is your vision for the 'future history' of your church?*

*Note – not “what’s wrong?” nor “why we can’t do anything?” Dream. What are you longing for? What would you love to see happen? What would it look like if God turned up in your church and in your community?*

### Prayer

It all starts with prayer:

“Your kingdom come, your will be done” (Matt 6:10)

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be” (Matt 6:21)

- *What are you praying for? What do you really care about?*

### What do we have to offer?

Prayer for growth is not just numerical. It’s also about the quality of our lives together as Christian communities. Notwithstanding all the talk (and reality) of shrinking or struggling churches, people are still looking for something:

- ❖ A connection to the mystical, the sacred, the spiritual (God)
- ❖ Healing and wholeness
- ❖ Community, friendship, acceptance, love
- ❖ The ability to make a difference in the world

If we are Christians, and involved in a church, we obviously think it has something to offer. What is that?

- In pairs, discuss:
    - Why are you (still) a Christian?
    - Why are you (still) involved in a church?
- In both cases, what do you get out of it?*

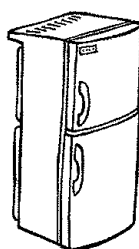
## Building a culture of welcome

Churches that grow tend to have a welcoming 'front door' that is wide enough to walk through. This entails making a few friends at that church in the first few weeks (people increasingly tend to belong before they believe. The love of God is encountered in the love of his people).

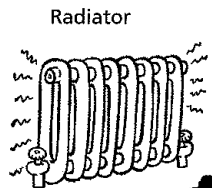
- *How welcoming is your church? As individuals, use these exercises to explore that question, then share your thoughts.*

### Exercise: Warm or cold

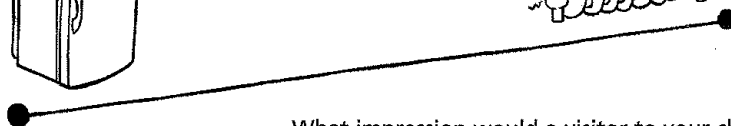
How do the relationships in your church feel to you? From your experience, does your church to you feel 'warm', 'cold' or 'medium'? Put a cross on the line to represent the 'temperature' in your church.



Fridge



Radiator

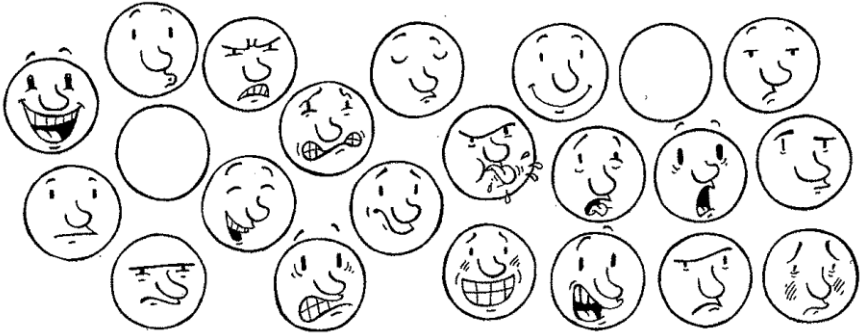


What impression would a visitor to your church have?

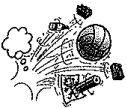
## Exercise: Mood faces



Which facial expressions best represent the relationships in your church (you can pick a maximum of three and you can use the blank faces to draw your own 'church' expression)? Share your ideas with a partner.



## Exercise: First time at church...



Discuss the following questions in threes.

- Who first invited you to church?
- What did it feel like?
- Have you ever thought of inviting someone to church?
- If you have invited someone, was it easy or difficult?
- Would an annual invitation target of 50 personal invites (for a smaller church) up to 250 (for a larger church) be realistic for your church?
- How do you react to the suggested target?

## Other things to bear in mind

Identify receptive groups and individuals: new residents; visitors to your church; those experiencing crises or major life transitions; children, young people and families.

- *Which of these are opportunities for your church?*
- *Discuss as many of the following questions as are relevant to you.*
- *How could you:*
  - *Notice new arrivals in the community and provide a broad welcome?*
  - *What can be done to make things easier for a potential visitor? Who can be invited to visit your church and offer feedback on their 'visitor experience'?*
  - *What resources can your church develop/offer to provide support for those in crisis or major change in life situation?*
  - *What opportunities are there in your area to connect with children and families?*

### Service time

Results of a survey of churches experimenting with times for new services:

"The service time most likely to attract was 4pm-5pm on either Saturday or Sunday. This allowed people to continue with their busy weekend lives and to go out in the evening. Early teatime was especially favoured by parents because the children are freer from other activities and may be getting a little difficult to handle by that time of day. Usually people would like the service to last less than an hour so they can go home for tea and still have an evening."

(Bob Jackson, *The Road to Growth: Towards a Thriving Church*, Church House Publishing, 2015, p51)

- *Could you change your service time to be more attractive to the people you would love to come?*
- *Alternatively, can you start an additional service at some other time than Sunday morning?*

## The building

Your building matters less than what you do in it.

- *But does your building genuinely hinder growth? If so, what change could help?*

## **Adopting an outreach strategy**

Leading your Church into Growth\* recommends something like the following strategy:

1. Prayer
2. Presence - networking / contact-making / invitation, or church social events
3. Proclamation- large-scale invitational / social events (including the major Christian festivals) (with a short Christian talk)
4. Persuasion - invitation to learn more through an informal study course in a small group

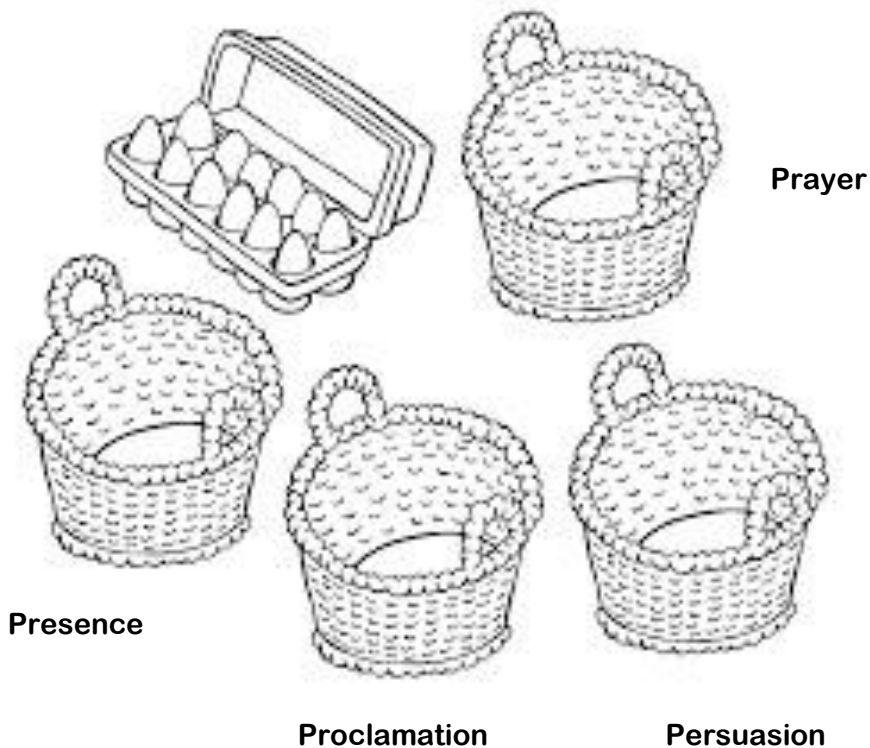
\* <https://www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk/>

*Which of these are already features of your church life?*

*What needs to be added to your church? What needs to be subtracted?*



- Exercise: You have twelve eggs and four baskets representing prayer, presence, proclamation and persuasion. Divide the eggs into the baskets according to how your church devotes its time, energy and resources with respect to outreach.



**What could we do?**

Reflecting on these thoughts and your discussions –

Could you identify what 2 or 3 (even small) changes would really help your church in growth?

Record them.

## Part 2: Preparation and Education for Mission

Part 1 has taken us through some of the blocks which make mission difficult for us, and some of the creative ways in which we can engage in mission. “But I couldn’t possibly... I wouldn’t know how to go about it...” How can we be prepared and educated for mission so that we have confidence to reach out?

### Bible studies

- Choose one or more of the following people and discuss:

*What was their mission and calling?*

*What in their background and life before their call prepared them for this mission?*

Moses (Exodus 2:1-3:10)

Paul (Acts 22:1-21)

Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

Philip with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

- Whichever you choose, include this study:

**Whose ministry?** Apollos, Paul, God... (1 Cor 3:5-9)

## **This is the story of one woman's preparation for mission...**

We knew her first when she had just starting teaching secondary maths. She didn't enjoy her job. She moved to another school; that was not more satisfying. She worked for a time in a Christian young people's activity centre, which was nearer to her heart, though it wasn't always easy. She then did a conversion course for primary teaching. This wasn't right either. She followed this with a mix of things: maths tutoring, managing a church café and temporary work in the Christian activity centre. At various points in her life she also volunteered for a year at a residential female drug rehab and worked in a project in a housing Estate in East London. She had a background in Guiding as well.

Then she went to visit a friend in South America who was running a Christian centre for slum children. The centre was taking them to the centre's country site for outdoor and sports activities and telling them something about Jesus (and incidentally keeping them out of the way of drugs, alcohol and violence which were part of slum life). Since that visit, she has been working for several years in the centre. She has cooked and been involved in the housekeeping, she has overseen activities and been involved in the worship in the centre. School is a difficult issue for some of these children, so the centre started to put on homework sessions for the children, and our friend is particularly involved with this. She is now on the management team.

She speaks of "feeling that I had completely lost my way - only to find out that absolutely everything is useful here. Each year that I'm here, I marvel all the more how God had intricately planned it all!"

Did she need any further education for this mission? Well, yes... In order to communicate with the kids, their families and with the local staff, she has had to learn a foreign language she never studied at school...

## Some questions to consider 1) as individuals 2) as a congregation

- *What is God calling you to at this time?*
- *How has God prepared you for mission already?*
- ***What education and training do you now need? Do you know how to access it?***

**Please record the answers to this last question. We would like to have this information so we can help you get the resources you need.**

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## Closing Worship

The Lord be with you.

**The Lord bless you.**

*(Ruth 2.4)*

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15: 1, 4-5

### *Prayer*

God of all trust,

may we who confess your faith prove it in our lives, with abundant joy, outrageous hope and dependence on nothing but your word alone, through Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

Janet Morley

*The Grace*

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