



Session 3: Reimagine

Before the Session

- 1** Watch the film supplied, in which Bishop Dinis Sengulane and Bishop Eleanor Sanderson explore the theology and practice of 'reimagining'.
- 2** Reflect on this quotation from Bishop Eleanor Sanderson. How would it apply to your diocese? You will be guided through application questions in the final part of the live session.

'If you have never known health, fruitfulness, growth, you don't have the internal prompts that make you seek it out. We have to start by naming our reality with grace and grief. Shame will only make us hide and find other reasons to justify the division, the lack of growth and fulness. When we face the music, we can have the courage to dance, with hope and faith. Allow the triggers of shame to become triggers for reimagining.

Like Peter, we also need to trust in God's faithfulness - that God will never lead us down a path that cannot be trusted. Then we need to find ways to explain that path of faithfulness - that invitation to reimagine - to the rest of the Church.'

During the Session

Intro

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, the privilege is ours to be called to share in the loving, healing and reconciling mission of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord in this age and wherever we are. Since without you we can do no good thing,

may your Spirit make us wise;

may your Spirit guide us;

may your Spirit renew us;

may your Spirit strengthen us

so that we will be

strong in faith;

discerning in proclamation;

courageous in witness;

persistent in good deeds.

This we ask through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Anglican Church of the West Indies

Context setting



What is one thing you saw differently in your diocese because of the film?

What did this film say to you about 'reimagining'?

Bible Study

Acts 10:1-48

Feel free to read from your preferred translation

Commentary

"Peter and Cornelius" provided by Dr Julie Gittoes

Peter's puzzlement in the face of the vision is helpful in encouraging us to see 'reimagining' as a process, something he has to think about. Cornelius' response to his vision is at first terror and questioning; he too is on a journey of engagement with someone who is other.

As we witness together, we, like Peter and Cornelius, are coming together out of different contexts and understandings. They each share their stories. The Holy Spirit comes into that space of conversation - as Peter is speaking - and there is both surprise and astonishment at this new thing.

Willie Jennings writes that this narrative 'strains under the weight of the obsessive love of God' (Acts: 2017, p. 102). Cornelius is a powerful man of empire who also feared God, in hope and with prayer. Peter is a man of prayer who is invited to hunger not just for food, but for the other to be enfolded in Christ's love. Both of them experience a vision; both of them question and listen and speak.

In this interplay of hunger and prayer, the Spirit is at work. Witness continues in the interruptions, shared vulnerabilities and in the hopeful journeying together. There is imaginative risk in new visions, questions and relationships. As Jennings puts it: 'the new word that God continues to speak to us is to accept new people, different people that we had not imagined that God would send across our paths and into our lives' (Act: 2017, p. 108). How might this relational logic shape our witness?

This passage of encounter has echoes of Pentecost within it. As we pray and read, listen and speak together, how might our imaginations be enlarged for the sake of God's Kingdom? Might it encourage us in the puzzlements and questions we face - and also shape our witness - as we sit with what we hunger for or hope for? At the heart of this encounter is the claim that Jesus is the defining moment of all history - his body and blood still feed a hungry people. Witness to God's love revealed in Jesus is a Spirit-led life: might listening and speech be sacramental acts?

Read the passage in three parts:

1) Acts 10:1-16 2) Acts 10:17-33 3) Acts 10:34-48

Questions

After each part:

Q What word, image or idea caught your attention? why?

After the whole passage:

Q What were the main issues in the text in relation to 'reimagining'?
What is Jesus calling you to do through this passage?

Strategic and Practical Application

Paths of Faithfulness

Take a moment to reflect on the series:

- 1 How did you arrive?
- 2 What is different now?
- 3 What health, fruitfulness and growth have you found in all that has been shared in the films and the sessions?

Take a moment to bring that before God in prayer.

Take a moment to reflect on your ministry and diocese:

- 4 Where are you most in need of the 'courage to dance' in the light of reality?
- 5 How could what has been shared in this series encourage you?
- 6 What ideas, inspiration and reimagining does that encouragement trigger?

If you are willing, share one idea with the group. (Allow 5 minutes for this sharing).

Take a moment to reflect on what will happen next in your context after the series:

- 7 What are you hoping for? What is the path of faithfulness God is leading you along?
- 8 What is the next step you will take on that path?
- 9 How would you explain that to others in your diocese?

Take a moment to bring that before God in prayer.



Closing liturgy:

Lord! going out from this silence, teach me to be more alert, humble, expectant, than I have been in the past: ever ready to encounter you in quiet, homely ways: in every appeal to my compassion, every act of unselfish love which shows up and humbles my imperfect love, may I recognise you: still walking through the world. Give me that grace of simplicity which alone can receive your mystery.

Come and abide with me!

Meet me, walk with me!

Enlighten my mind!

And then, Come in! Enter my humble life with its poverty and its limitation as you entered the stable of Bethlehem, the workshop of Nazareth, the cottage of Emmaus.

Bless and consecrate the material of that small ordinary life.

Feed and possess my soul. Amen.

- Evelyn Underhill, 1875-1941

After the Session →

- Explore an alternative scripture related to 'reimagining': 'Nathaniel' John 1:43-50. Here we find both surprises and questions - can anything good come out of Nazareth? - as well as the invitation to come and see, to be known and have our imaginations enlarged.
- Visit difference.rln.global to find out more about engaging your diocese with the habits explored in this series.