



INTRODUCTION

The Casting the Net initiative has very much raised the profile of mission in our Diocese. Yet mission is a subject which whilst being at times inspiring and rewarding can also equally be confusing and intimidating. The Casting the Net Action Group felt that there was the need to help congregations have a meaningful and productive discussion about mission, its meaning and implications. This series of studies, based largely on the material contained in the book **Mission Shaped Spirituality** by Susan Hope has been written with the aim of enabling churches begin to have just such a conversation. The Mission Shaped Spirituality book was written very much with a Church of England context in mind and so these studies have tried to adapt the material to our setting in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This study is designed to be used by a small discussion group. Experience seems to suggest that a group of 6-10 is the range that allows people to really get to know one another and at which individuals can participate at a level where they feel included and involved. However every group is unique and smaller and larger groups have worked.

Here are some key rules that help discussion groups run well:

1. Create an environment that's conducive to good group dynamics.

Whether it's held in a church hall or home make sure that there is adequate comfortable seating available and that the temperature is neither too hot nor cold. Arrange the seating so that people can easily see one another. Sharing refreshments does seem to relax people and create a good relaxed atmosphere.

2. Begin the study on time.

If people know the study begins on time, they will work harder to arrive on time.

3. Explain that the studies are meant to be discussions, not lectures.

Encourage everyone to participate, but realize some may be hesitant to speak during the first few sessions. Don't put people on the spot by asking them direct questions.

4. Encourage more than one answer to each question.

A good question should have more than one possible answer, and each person has his or her unique perspective. So, if possible, allow several people to respond to each question.

5. Affirm people's answers.

People often are reluctant to express their view so make sure that when people share their viewpoint that their contributions are valued and not belittled in any way.

6. Don't be afraid of silence.

It usually seems longer to the leader than to the other members of the group and is often an indication that a question is particularly important or sensitive.

7. Don't be legalistic in using the questions.

The aim is to have a meaningful discussion not work your way through the questions. Feel free to miss out questions if they wouldn't be helpful in your group or to concentrate on particular questions that are provoking a lot of responses.

8. End the study on time.

People will be more likely to keep attending groups which set a finish a time and stick to it.

It is not vital that every member of the group has read the Mission Shaped Spirituality. However the discussion is likely to be deeper and wider ranging the more people who are familiar with the material in the book. The leader of the group should be aware of the contents of the book in order to help facilitate the discussion.

If you have any questions about the study or how to facilitate a small group discussion group please get in touch with the Casting the Net Officer, **James Petticrew**, castingthenet@standrews.anglican.org

Study One: THE FOUNDATION OF MISSION

When do you feel most loved by God?

Have someone read the following account of Jesus' Baptism to the group.

Matthew 3:13 NIV

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? 15 Jesus replied, Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness. Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was

baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said,

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. "



This important event when Jesus is baptised and the Holy Spirit comes and rests on Him marks the launch of His public mission and ministry.

1. Why do you think it was important for Jesus to personally hear these words from God the Father, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" before He began His public mission of demonstrating and proclaiming God's love?"

In and through His baptism, Jesus committed Himself to the mission God had called Him to and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit He was enabled and guided in accomplishing that mission. The Gospels go on to describe how Jesus demonstrated and proclaimed the love of God that had so powerfully come to Him in His baptism. His mission of sharing God's love was the natural outflow of His loving relationship with God the Father.

2. How might God call on us to share His love by what we do and say? What stories do you have about how you have done that as an individual and as a church?

3. Do you feel that sharing God's love comes naturally to you as an individual or your church?

4. Which comes more naturally to you and your church sharing God's love by your actions or with your words?

MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

5. ***"Preach the gospel always, if necessary use words."*** ~ St. Francis of Assisi.

How would you express St Francis' sentiment in your own words?

6. **What would help us feel more confident in responding to God's call to share His love?**



What do we need to pray about as individuals and as a church given what we have discussed?

SUGGESTIONS

End with a time of prayer appropriate for the group.

This could include:

- Lighting a candle and silently meditating and praying about the issues raised.
- Having a time of prayer during which those who wish to can pray spontaneously
- Share pieces of paper on which people can write their prayers and these could be read by someone in the group

NOTES

Study Two: MOVING FROM “COME” TO “GO”

The questions in this study broadly cover the material in chapters 1-4 in Mission Shaped Spirituality.

“The word “come” could be said to have defined our mission as a Christian community. Here we are. Come to us, we’ll baptize your babies, marry you, bury your dead. And if you want to know a bit more, if you are interested in the Christian faith, why not come along to a confirmation group? And so for years they have come. Not in droves but in a steady trickle Yet increasingly, they are not coming to us. As the report Mission Shaped Church makes patently clear, “The reality is that mainstream culture no longer brings people to the church door ... Instead of “come to us”, this new approach is to “go to them.”

“Mission Shaped Spirituality p2

If this is true, why is it like this in contemporary culture?

Between p23-32, Susan Hope gives a series of stories of what moving from a mission marked by “go to them” rather than “come to us” might be like. Have different people read the various stories to the group.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Which of the stories you have just heard do you find inspiring? Why?**
- 2. Which of the stories do you find challenging? Why?**
- 3. What stories could your congregation add about “going” in mission either as a church or from your experience as an individual?**

In chapter 3 Susan Hope says *“Going in mission for some, if not for all, can be a fearful prospect.” P19*

- 4. What sort of fears does mission provoke in churches and Christians?**
- 5. Can these fears be addressed or allayed or they an inevitable part of mission?**
- 6. What sort of steps could a congregation make to move the emphasis in their understanding and practice of mission from “come to us” to “go to them”?**



Spend a few moments thinking about these words from Jesus.

Matthew 9:36

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Based on these words of Jesus what do you think we should pray for in relation to mission?

SUGGESTIONS

End with a time of prayer appropriate for the group.

This could include:

- Lighting a candle and silently meditating and praying about the issues raised.
- Having a time of prayer during which those who wish to can pray spontaneously
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Study Three: A MISSIONARY COMMUNITY

In chapter 5 and 6 Susan Hope focuses on the values and relationships that are the foundation for a congregation wishing to become a missionary community.

JUST LIMITATION OF LUGGAGE?

Luke 9:3

"³ He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money-- not even an extra tunic".

Read the story of St Johns in Sheffield on **page 39**.

- **If your church building was condemned and you could only rescue 5 items what would they be and why would choose them?**
- **In what ways do you think your Church building helps you in mission?**
- **In what ways do you think your Church building hinders you in mission?**

In chapter 5 the author shows that Jesus' instructions to his disciples when he sent them out in mission amounted to more than a just a limitation on their luggage.

We could perhaps summarise the implications of Jesus words in her view with three words:

- **Dependence** ... On God not on our own resources.
- **Distinctiveness** ... We have to embody the distinctive lifestyle of the Kingdom of God not simply reflect the culture around us.
- **Openness** ... To those we go to, openness to building relationships with them and openness to presenting the Gospel in a way that is appropriate and accessible for them.

Read the **NARTHEX PROJECT** story on **page 36**

- **Can you think of similar story from your church's life when you had to really depend on God to help you reach out to others?**
- **What lessons did you learn as a church through that experience?**

On **page 37** Susan Hope says something quite controversial and challenging, she writes that:

"I wonder if 21st century Western Christians are living lives that are clearly distinctive and free as regards possessions?"



MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

Her point is that many Christians are just as materialistic as people with no faith, so our culture doesn't see the distinctive lifestyle of the Kingdom of God that Jesus intended his followers to display.

- **Do you agree with her?**
- **In what other ways do you think the Gospel of the Kingdom of God calls on us to live distinctively as God's people?**

Jesus instructions would have entailed his first disciples going, meeting and building relationships with people in the wider community,

- **In what ways are you doing this a church? Personally?**
- **What is challenging and rewarding in building these relationships?**
- **Can you think of ways in which you might be able to do this more effectively?**

GROWING COMMUNITIES GROW IN COMMUNITY

Luke 10:1

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go."

The main focus in chapter 6 is on the importance of Christian community in mission. Christian community as it embodies serves and proclaims the Kingdom of God makes that Kingdom tangible and accessible to those around it.

Read the story of Debbie on page 54

- **In what positive ways has your church community impacted your life, enabled your faith and drawn you closer to God?**

Susan Hope comments that:

"The invitation to "belong" before "believing" is, in fact, the invitation to come and discover the truth of the Gospel by living in the company of those who believe it." P55

- **How easy is it for an outsider to become an accepted part of your church community so they can "belong" before they "believe" like Debbie did?"**
- **What could you do as a church to make it easier for people to do what is described in the book as "travelling into community?" That is moving from having a superficial welcome from the church to developing significant relationships in the church.**

The author ends by saying:

“Building community is actually about sharing life, and sharing life is essentially practical. ... It means loving in deed as well as in word”.p60

- **What has helped to build community among you as a church in the last year?**
- **What could you practically do as a small group to help build community in your church over the year to come?**

Read this prayer by Paul for a church community

Philippians 1:1-11 NLT

“1:1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. It is written to all of God's people in Philippi, who believe in Christ Jesus, and to the elders and deacons. 2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 I

always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy 5 because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6 And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again. 7 It is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a very special place in my heart. We have shared together the blessings of God, both when I was in prison and when I was out, defending the truth and telling others the Good News. 8 God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. 10 For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns. 11 May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation-- those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ-- for this will bring much glory and praise to God.”





MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

- **What could you give thanks for to God for your church community?**
- **What could you pray for specifically for yourself as a community?**

- **Invite people either silently or publicly to pray for what you have written down**

Study Four: PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

These words end chapter 7 which is mainly about the role of prayer in mission

“So it’s likely that an apostolic church, a church sent into the world, will be a church with its sleeves rolled up when it comes to prayer. And that could be very good news for the church”p73

- **In what ways as a church do you support the mission locally and globally in prayer?**

1 _____ 5 _____ 10

If on the scale above **1** was being apathetic about prayer and **10** was “having its sleeves rolled up” when it comes to prayer

- **Where would your church be on the scale?**
- **Where would it have been on the scale 3 years ago?**
- **If you didn’t mark your church as a “10” what could you do as a church to collectively roll up your sleeves in prayers?**

Susan Hope argues in chapter seven that prayer is so important to mission because it practically expresses:

1. **DEPENDENCE ON GOD ...** In prayer we recognise and express our weakness
2. **OPENNESS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT ...** In prayer we seek the Holy Spirit’s presence and power
3. **CONCERN FOR THE WORLD ...** In prayer we express our concern for the need of the world and so commit ourselves to being part of God’s answer

Which of these three dimensions is

- **Most clearly expressed in the prayer life of your congregation?**
- **Least clearly expressed in the prayer life of your congregation?**

CONTROVERSIAL?

Read this quote:

“In talking about the fullness of the Spirit, I am not arguing that all people should become “charismatics” in the sense of embracing the particular tradition that has become known as the charismatic movement. But I am convinced we should all become charismatics in the sense of having a healthy, robust, and living experience of the power and presence of the Spirit of God in our everyday lives and in the everyday lives of our churches” p71

- **What is your honest reaction to Susan Hope’s words here?**

MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

- **Have you ever attempted to do anything as an individual or together as a church which would have failed without the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit?**
- **Is there any part of the Church's liturgy and worship which you feel makes you particularly open to the Holy Spirit's presence and power?**
- **What might a church do to go from a theoretic to a more practical reliance on the Holy Spirit?**

"The church of God has as many stories as it has members. Some of them are very simple: "I go to church and find it helpful." Others tell dramatically of lives changed from darkness to light. The stories of some people, like Peter, are of great moral failure and of restoration; those of others, like Zacchaeus, of being set free from addiction to money. Some of the most fruitful are about us as a church not just about me. The group stories have a particular power to enable others to join the story. All are at their most powerful and life bearing when they are told in the context of great suffering. It is time for the stories to be told. They can be told with confidence because they are non-coercive and they have their own inner integrity. They are not the last word on the Christian message, but they will very often be the first" p82

Those words remind us that especially in our contemporary culture the greatest resource any congregation has to share its faith are the stories of the faith of its members.

- **Invite as many people as wish to, to simply and succinctly share their "faith story." It could be the story of how they came to faith or what having faith in Christ means to them in their life right now**
- **What do you think those "faith stories" say about you as a church?**
- **In what kind of ways and places could the people of your church more effectively share their stories of faith with others?**

In chapter 9 Susan Hopes deals with the difficult subject of healing and its role in mission. She tells several stories, some of which are about people receiving physical healing and recovering from life threatening conditions and others about people who despite prayer and care of the church died of their conditions. Healing is never simple or formulaic it's a subject which whilst being a vital part of mission must also be dealt with through great pastoral sensitivity.

Read Margaret's story on p95

- **Do you think Margaret was "healed?"**

Earlier in the chapter Roland Allen's words that acts of healing are *"sermons in act", words of the Kingdom written in the stuff biological and natural life.*" P93 are quoted

- **What would you say was the main message of the sermon of Margaret's experience of cancer would be to her church? To those who didn't share her Christian faith?**

Mark 9:17-29

17 Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." 19 He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." 20 And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you are able!-- All things can be done for the one who believes." 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" 26 After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. 28 When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."

- **What lessons and implications do you think this story might have for a church that wanted to develop a healing ministry?**

"For all healing, ecological, communal, social, individual, emotional and physical is an issue of spiritual healing, of restoration. We do not have a social gospel and a spiritual gospel, with an option of choosing one over the other"
p87

Those words helpfully remind us that the Church's ministry of healing shouldn't just be confined to prayer for physical healing from disease. The Church is to be an agent and sign of salvation so it should always be seeking to bring and to offer integration, wholeness and healing in every sphere of life.

MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

- **Apart from praying for people for their healing from disease, what might the other areas be in your community and our world that you as a church could seek to be an agent of healing in?**
- **Are there any areas where you are already doing that?**



PRAYER

- Have some “post it” notes or pieces of paper ready with pens or pencils
- Invite people to write down people or situations they would like the group to pray for healing for.
- Have someone in the group read each completed note and then allow several moments after each one has been read for

people to pray silently

- You could perhaps light a candle to help you focus on God's presence.
- Invite people to take one of the notes to pray for throughout the week

You could end with the following prayer

Through Jesus, whom we confess as Lord,
we give thanks and praise to the Father,
calling on him who is judge of all:
Father, your kingdom come.
Father, your kingdom come.

For all the peoples of the world;
that they may know you as the God of peace,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For nations, for leaders and governments;
that integrity may mark all their dealings,
we pray to you O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For all who labour for righteousness;
that your presence and help may give them courage,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For communities torn by dissension and strife;
that your forgiveness may bring them healing,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For the anxious, the lonely, the bereaved;
that consolation and peace may be theirs,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.



For the Church, your household and family;
that she may be firm in the confession of her hope,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For David our Bishop, and for all who bear Christ's name;
that their lives may proclaim your glory,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

For those who are separated from us by death;
that theirs may be the kingdom which is unshakeable,
we pray to you, O Lord:
Father, your kingdom come.

O God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great Shepherd of the sheep:
make us perfect in all goodness to do your will
and to be what you would have us be;
through him to whom be glory for ever,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Study Five : THE CHALLENGE OF ADVENTURE

Susan Hope in chapter 5 is very honest about the experience of those who are committed to mission. She says that mission is often hard to sustain because those involved face hard work, disappointment and difficult situations which can easily make them dispirited and despondent. There is no doubt that this true for every church and will be true for you and your church at some point.

A key question for churches and individuals who want to become more missional is how do you sustain mission, how do you persevere through the tough times?

Read the following passage which describes some of the earliest days of Jesus' mission

Luke 5:1-16 ^{NLT}

5:1 One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. ² He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. ³ Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets, and you will catch many fish." ⁵ "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, we'll try again." ⁶ And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! ⁷ A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. ⁸ When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me-- I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." ⁹ For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him. ¹⁰ His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" ¹¹ And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus. ¹² In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he fell to the ground, face down in the dust, begging to be healed. "Lord," he said, "if you want to, you can make me well again." ¹³ Jesus reached out and touched the man. "I want to," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. ¹⁴ Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened. He said, "Go right to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy, so everyone will have proof of your healing."

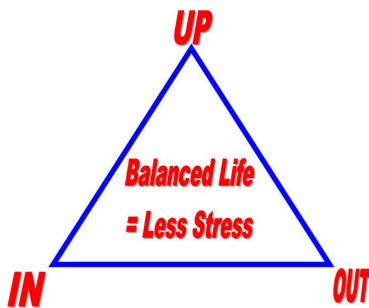
MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

¹⁵ *Yet despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases.*

¹⁶ *But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

- **Can you identify any activities or choices from Jesus in this passage that would help Him to sustain His mission when things got tough later on and he faced opposition and disappointment?**

St Thomas' Church in Sheffield has developed a way of helping people think about whether they are developing and keeping a rhythm in their life like the one that sustained Jesus in his mission.



UP = Upward dimension of life, reaching up to God through, worship and prayer

IN = Inward dimension of life, reaching out to others in community and healthy relationships

OUT = Outward dimension of life, reaching out to others in loving service and mission

- **Read the passage again, can you identify moments when what Jesus did illustrates either the UP, IN or OUT dimensions of the rhythm described above?**

We get more easily dispirited or disappointed when we “*get out of rhythm*” when we let one aspect of life, either the UP, IN or OUT dominate our lives to the neglect of others

- **Which aspect of this “rhythm” do you tend to get out of balance on?**
- **Think about your church life together, how do you think it does in balancing these three dimensions?**
 1. UP to God in worship,
 2. IN to each other in fellowship and community
 3. OUT to the world in service and mission
- **How might the life and worship of your congregation help you get a better balance between UP, IN and OUT?**

Read the following paragraph from chp11:

“What the Church of England could with possibly more than anything else at present is an adventure. Settlement has brought many blessings, but it has left us bored. And bored churches become boring churches. Western secular culture is also bored. When you’ve got everything, there’s not a lot left to do, except to get more. The two things – the boredom of the church and the boredom of the culture – are probably not unrelated. But what Christ calls us to is an adventure. An adventure where the risks are real and the stakes are high. A big adventure, where there is no going back and where the outcomes are not predetermined. This adventure grows people up faster than anything else: it stretches them and pushes them into shapes they didn’t know they could have. One of the discoveries they make along the way is that stretching doesn’t break them, it develops them: they grow to like themselves more and they become more confident” p 108

- **What one word sums up your reaction to Susan Hope’s words here?**
- **Do you think she is fair in inferring that churches which are not actively involved in mission get bored and so become boring?**

It is argued in the rest of the chapter that for mission to become an adventure there must be a willingness on the part of God’s people to cross barriers and take risks

- **When was the last time that you as a congregation took a risk or crossed a clear barrier in mission? What kind of experience was it for you?**
- **Discuss together that if money was no barrier and personnel and facilities no problem what risky adventure in mission would you most like your church to embark on?**
- **What is preventing you from embarking on that adventure at the moment?**

SUMMING IT ALL UP

In a book called “**Mission Shaped Parish**” the authors talk about the importance of “values” in mission. They liken a congregation to a clock, the clock face is the public side of the church, its activities and ministries, the clock’s mechanism are what make the “church tick” that is the values that inspire and determine what it is committed to doing. They comment that “*we do what we value and we value what we do*” p1

The values of a church are often unstated but become very apparent when any proposed change in congregational life threatens or contradicts them.

MISSION SHAPED SPIRITUALITY: DISCUSSION CATALYST

Thinking back to read the Mission Shaped Spirituality book and your discussions on it:

What sorts of values do you think you as

- **A congregation**
- **An individual**

would need to hold on to in order to be active in joining God in His mission to the world?

- **What do you think the Casting the Net initiative tells us about the values of our Bishop and Diocesan leaders?**
- **How widely held do you think those values are held in local churches?**
- **What could you as a congregation do to develop the values that motivate and sustain mission?**
- **Looking back to these discussions and to reading Mission Shaped Spirituality: What is the most inspiring thing you have heard? The most challenging thing you have learned? The most practical implication you have seen an example of?**

PRAYER**Lectio Divina Exercise on John 20:19-23**

A Prayer Before the Reading of Any Part of the Holy Scripture: *“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts and minds of the faithful servants, and inflame them with the fire of Your divine love. O God, who by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of your faithful servants; grant us in the same Spirit, to discern what is right, and enjoy His comfort forever, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns, one God, with Thee and the same Spirit, world without end. Amen.”*



John 20:19-23

19 That evening, on the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. 20 As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his side. They were filled with joy when they saw their Lord! 21 He spoke to them again and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven."

