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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

The Five Marks of Mission



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INTRODUCTION

Our mission is connected to God's mission. As John Stott (1995) said, he is a missionary God before we ever are a missionary church. Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people since God is a fountain of sending love.

Anglican Churches hold a range of views ranging from an emphasis on personal salvation, to an emphasis on development and social change. The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) recognised that neither evangelism nor development alone did justice to the Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19 – 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.' Following much debate, study, and prayer the council identified the Five Marks of Mission - five intertwined parts that together comprise a holistic understanding of mission.

In 2012, the ACC added wording to the fourth mark, to include the need for Christians to challenge violence and work for peace. Some churches abbreviate the five marks to five words: **TELL- TEACH- TEND- TRANSFORM- TREASURE.**

THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION

- ❖ **To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.**
- ❖ **To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.**
- ❖ **To respond to human need by loving service**
- ❖ **To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.**
- ❖ **To strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

While it has been adapted from USPG's publication, "A Heart for Mission", this five-week study guide, seeks to examine the Five Marks of Mission, look at faith in action, and ask how they can strengthen our understanding of mission and consider how our local Parish can put them into action.

A CLOSER LOOK AT ANGLICANISM

Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion is a global network of churches that originated with the Church of England. The Church of England was the first Anglican Church.

Anglican Churches, provinces, and dioceses

There is no single worldwide ‘Anglican Church’, rather there is a self-governing Anglican Church for every province – a province is often a single country but can be a group of countries. For example, the Anglican Church of Canada covers Canada only, which has four ecclesiastical provinces (British Columbia and Yukon, Canada, Ontario, and Rupert’s Land). The Anglican Church of Korea covers Korea only; the Anglican Church of Central Africa covers Botswana, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

There are 42 dioceses in the Church of England (Diocese of Manchester, Diocese of Lincoln, etc.). Each province is headed up by an archbishop/Metropolitan (the exact title may vary); each diocese is headed up by a bishop (the Rt. Rev. Geoffrey Woodcroft for the diocese of Rupert’s Land).

Anglicans worldwide

According to the World Christian database, Todd and Zurlo (2023), postulate that there are currently an estimated 90 million Anglicans around the world. These statistics do not include figures for the Churches in the Indian Sub-Continent as these are ecumenical federations (ibid). The communion has doubled in size in the last 50 years. At the same time, the membership of the Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada has halved since 1970. This is attributed to a massive shift in the communion’s centre of gravity from the global North to the global South.

Be that as it may, new provinces came into being: Mozambique and Angola (2021), and Alexandria (covering North Africa and the horn of Africa) in 2020. So, rumours of the death of the Anglican Communion are an exaggeration. As a parish, we need to talk more about life and a bright future that is possible through our living God. Our congregation has potential for growth, and we just need to be dynamic in our approach to ministry. There is need for a new commitment and humility, being accommodative of others who may need a new expression of faith. Any attempt at “business as usual” will render the Church’s efforts wholly invalid.

The Four Instruments of Communion

The Anglican Communion is given focus and direction by the four ‘Instruments of Communion’. These are: **The Archbishop of Canterbury**, as the “first among equals”; **The Lambeth Conferences**, held every ten years, to which all archbishops and bishops are invited; **Primates Meetings**, to which all leaders of provinces are invited; **The Anglican Consultative Council**, which meets every two years and whose membership includes representatives from throughout the church in every province, including people who aren’t ordained as church leaders.

STUDY 1- TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

The First Mark of Mission reflects the Gospel passages in which Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God (e.g., Matthew 10:5-42, Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 9:1-6). In some ways, this first Mark is a summary of all five Marks as it encompasses evangelism, service, transformation, and renewal.

Opening reflection: The theologian Emil Brunner said: ‘The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith.’

- Does this statement ring true for you? At the outset of this study, reflect on what mission means to you. Write down one or two sentences that summarise your current understanding of mission. At the end of the study, we will have a chance to revisit this definition and see if there are any changes we’d like to make.

Bible reading: Luke 9:1-6

1 Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, **2** and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. **3** He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money – not even an extra tunic. **4** Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. **5** Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ **6** They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Questions:

Just as Jesus was sent by God to be among us, loving us, so we are ‘sent’ to share the good news of life in Jesus with others. We also have the promise that he is with us – and goes ahead of us (Matthew 28:20).

1. The language of verses 1, 2 and 6 can seem strange to modern ears. What do you think these words might mean today?
2. Verse 3 is urging us to travel light. What ‘baggage’ might we be carrying that can hold us back from sharing our faith – whether in word or deed?
3. Verses 4 and 5 seem to be about relationships: about staying where we are welcome and knowing when to move on. Discuss the relevance that words, deeds, and relationships play in mission.

Application: • Thinking individually and collectively as a local church, list the varied ways in which you proclaim God’s kingdom. • What other ways of proclaiming the kingdom might you develop?

Prayer- Living God, your love flows outwards in an irresistible stream through your whole Creation. Help us, with hearts and words and actions, to proclaim this good news, and share your work of transformation in the world. Amen!

STUDY 2: TO TEACH, BAPTISE AND NURTURE NEW BELIEVERS

The Second Mark of Mission uses the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”. The task for the Church is to help new believers to grow in their faith and understanding. How do we do this in a sensitive manner without diluting the power of the Gospel?

Opening reflection:

For many Christians, the Sunday sermon is their only Christian teaching in the week, but we can learn new things in many other ways. Think, for example, about all the creative ways in which young children and adults are helped to learn.

Bible reading: Luke 24:13-27

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, **14** and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. **15** While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, **16** but their eyes were kept from recognising him. **17** And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. **18** Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ **19** He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, **20** and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. **21** But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. **22** Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, **23** and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. **24** Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ **25** Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! **26** Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ **27** Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Questions:

Do we ever have all the answers? Have we ever changed our minds about what we believe? There are many mysteries in our faith that even seasoned Christians struggle with. In some ways, faith is both instantaneous and involves a lifetime of learning.

1. The two travellers are full of questions, and they feel sad (v17). Being a believer can sometimes feel bewildering and disorientating. Examine what Jesus does to support the travellers in their confusion?
2. What for you is the essence of your faith? Does belief consist of head knowledge only or is it something more?
3. How do these insights inform how we might nurture new believers?

Application: Where there is church, there is mission! As water flows from a spring, so mission flows from the heart of God. The church is a channel for God's 'living water'. So, we turn our attention to building up our church, and especially new believers.

- How might you apply in your local church the approaches and techniques for nurturing new believers – of any age – that we have discussed so far?
- What practical steps could you take – individually and as a church – to implement these approaches?
- Baptism welcomes new believers into the Church. Think about how you could make your church more welcoming. Perhaps you could volunteer as a greeter or pastoral care volunteer in the parish or invite new people to participate in worship. Discuss your ideas to make church more welcoming at the next meeting.

Prayer- Lord Jesus Christ, you called your disciples, baptised them, and encouraged them along the way. Grant us clarity in our teaching, Openness in our learning, And commitment in our responding to your call. Amen!

STUDY 3: TO RESPOND TO HUMAN NEED BY LOVING SERVICE

The Third Mark of Mission is concerned with Christ-like loving service. We all have needs, and we all need love. When we feel loved, we are better able to love others. But what is love?

Opening Reflection:

Many times, in the Bible, we are called to love our neighbours. As this study shows, our neighbour is not just the person who lives next door to us and may not even be from the same area.

Bible Reading: Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ **26** He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ **27** He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ **28** And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ **29** But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ **30** Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” **36** Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ **37** He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

Questions:

1. In the light of this well-known passage, think about who your neighbour is. Think of times when you have found it difficult to love your neighbour. Why did you find it difficult? How were you able to overcome this difficulty?
2. We sometimes hear that loving God and others is a Christian duty or responsibility. But if love is a duty, is it genuine love? How can we show loving service to someone we don’t love?

Application- Love cannot be forced. ‘Freely you have received; freely give’ (Matthew 10:8). Individually and collectively as a church, consider how you may begin to share more of your blessings with others?

Prayer- Loving God, help us to be humble servants. May we serve You as we serve each other. Open our eyes to the diverse nature of the Body of Christ and help us to be a blessing to others. Amen!

STUDY 4: TO SEEK TO TRANSFORM UNJUST STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE OF EVERY KIND AND TO PURSUE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The Fourth Mark of Mission challenges us to examine how the gospel can make a difference in the world, not just to individuals, but to the structures and institutions that shape all our lives.

Opening Reflection:

Christians are called to work for justice in a world where the weak are often oppressed by the wealthy and powerful. However, while it is easy to see the outworking of injustice, sometimes the underlying causes are hard to detect. As we reflect upon this study, let us also zoom into the ongoing efforts to achieve reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada.

Bible Reading: Isaiah 35: 1-7

1 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus **2** it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. **3** Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. **4** Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' **5** Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; **6** then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; **7** the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Questions:

1. Think of somewhere currently experiencing great injustice. What would this passage mean to the people in that place?
2. Consider verses 5-6. If people currently experiencing the injustices you've just considered could speak to the whole world, what might they say? What might your response be to this?
3. Which issues is your church engaged with? Are these causes central to the mission of your church? How can people in the Parish get more involved with reconciliation and justice issues?

Application- Identify an area of injustice in your own community, think how your church may be able to address this and think who your church might need to partner with to combat this injustice effectively.

Prayer- Lord God, give us the inspiration to build a community focused on peace, justice, and hope. May we protect the vulnerable and weak, providing food and shelter to the hungry and homeless. Make us salt and light in the darkness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

STUDY 5: TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH

The Fifth Mark of Mission reminds us that God longs for harmony in the whole of Creation, not just in the human family. By contrast, humanity has become proficient in spoiling the planet, poisoning seas, rivers, and land, cutting down rainforests, and endangering plants and animals. It is a terrible legacy to leave to future generations.

Opening Reflection:

God loves people, who are made in God's image. What does the rest of Creation – the planet, the universe, plants, and animals – reveal about God?

Bible reading: Deuteronomy 26 (extracts)

1 When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall **2** take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. **3** You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.' **4** When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, **5** you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor... **6** When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, **7** we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression... **10** So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me... **13** Then you shall say before the Lord your God... I have obeyed the Lord my God, doing just as you commanded me. **15** Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors – a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Questions

1. In the passage, for what reasons did God give the land to the people?
2. The land is given, but with strings attached. What are the conditions that God gives for 'possessing' the land?
3. The Native American Black Hawk said: 'My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. The Great Spirit gave it to his children to live upon. So long as they occupy and cultivate it, they have a right to the soil. Nothing can be sold but such things as can be carried away.' How does this attitude compare with your own attitude to the earth?
4. In what ways do you and the church "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation"? How can this Fifth Mark of Mission be integrated into your church's existing mission strategy?

Application- Choose an ecological issue that concerns you, perhaps energy use, water scarcity, deforestation, oil and mineral extraction, global warming, or climate change. What small thing can you do to better fulfil your duty as faithful stewards of creation.

In conclusion:

- Rowan Williams said: ‘Mission requires a great deal of patience and a degree of awareness that people... move and discover at a different rate.’ How can we balance patience with a sense of urgency to fulfil God’s mission?
- Write down your understanding of mission in a couple of sentences. How does this compare with what you wrote in Study 1? How has your understanding of mission changed? Share any new insights regarding your understanding of mission.
- How might you put any new insights about mission into action? Put another way, how do you think this study will impact upon how you live out your faith? Each person in the group can offer their thoughts.
- Finally, where will you go from here? What are your next steps – individually and collectively? How will you take forward any resolutions you have come to?

Prayer - God of all energy and life Give us such a love for all Your Creation That we may delight in it with our eyes, nurture it with our hands and enrich it with our love, for our world is not our world, but yours. May we seek to better fulfil our duty as faithful stewards of creation.

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