

## SESSION 6

### GO! DISCERNMENT AND WHAT'S NEXT

In this sixth and final session, we work on Go! Discernment and What's Next and practice ways of going into the world to bless and be blessed by others.

#### Highlights to Remember

Jesus was always inviting people to come follow him and to go. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

He knew it was a risk and that it wouldn't make people popular or successful. He knew it might feel awkward and uncomfortable, but he knew it was worth it. Jesus invited them into an ever-deepening relationship with God. And then he invited them to carry that love into the world, so people everywhere could fall in love with God and follow his way of love, forgiveness, hope, and healing.

Lots of Episcopal churches are comfortable with service and compassion for others. However, sharing our faith, being vulnerable, and going public about faith are harder and riskier. Thankfully, the followers of Jesus can take risks together.

Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple once said, "The Church is the only society that does not exist for its members." Jesus never intended for God's love to stop at the doors of a beautiful temple or upper room. He was out, among people, and he brought disciples with him to share in words and deeds the life-changing love of God. He's still pulling us out, beyond what we know and who we know.

#### Exploratory Exercise: Who Is My Neighbor?

Draw four concentric circles on a piece of paper. Then, explore the circles.

- **Innermost Circle:** Get to know JERUSALEM (your closest neighbors, family, friends). Whom has God placed around you? Especially call to mind people in your closer circle who are not part of a faith community but seem to yearn for MORE.
  - Family
  - Friends
  - Acquaintances
  - Work/School colleagues
  - Volunteer groups
  - Social groups
  - Civic affiliations
  - Hobbies/Special interests

- **Second Circle:** Get to know JUDEA (the neighborhood/physical community around your church or your own home).
  - Where and among what people has God placed you and your church?
  - Is it a residential area? Commercial? Mixed?
  - What are the civic centers or businesses around your church?
  - Are there schools or other faith centers?
  - What is God up to in the neighborhood?
  - Who lives or regularly inhabits the area near or surrounding the church and your own home?
  
- **Third Circle:** Get to know SAMARIA (the margins of your community: groups, cultures, and generations with whom you do not have relationship, or from whom you or your church have been alienated).
  - Where are the social, racial, or economic rifts or divides in your community?
  - What groups are most separated or alienated from your church?
  - Through what unlikely groups might God speak, teach, or bless you with their gifts?
  - Who on your margins is waiting to hear good news? What might that good news be?
  - How could you find out what “good news” sounds like to them?
  - Whom are you connected with, and whom can you connect with, in your SAMARIA?
  
- *(Optional)* **Outermost Circle:** Explore the ENDS OF THE EARTH (the many places and groups that are truly outside your own experience and familiarity – far physically or far because of experiences and attitudes).
  - How could you open yourself to even see these new groups?
  - How could you learn and share with them?
  - What challenges might you face if you seek to connect with and get to know one another?  
*Note:* You might not have a solid picture of who is in this outer circle. The point here may be exploring your willingness to go with Jesus beyond your imagining.

As you notice who and what is in each of these concentric circles, ask:

- What is God up to in their midst?
- How can you build relationship with the people and communities you are discovering?
- What are their needs and longings? How can you bless and love them?
- What are your needs and longings? How could they bless you?
- If Jesus met this person or group, what would he do?

## Discussion & Reflection Questions

You may not have time to discuss each question in depth, so consider taking time to reflect on these questions on your own.

Look back at your concentric circles. Who is in your circles?

Is there a particular group or community you are most yearning to connect with? How can you bless and love them? How could they bless you?

If Jesus met this person or group, what would he do? How could you follow his footsteps?

## Close with Prayer

*Participants gather in a circle.*

Around the circle, offer prayers to God:

- Round 1: thank God for one important experience in this time of learning and practicing together.
- Round 2: name one step you commit to take – a person you will talk to, a place you will go, a story of God's goodness you will share, etc.
- Round 3: ask for God's help in whatever way you need for this next step as you prepare to Go.

Conclude with the Lord's Prayer, as below or in the words and language of your heart:

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,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*Thank you for participating in Embracing Evangelism. For additional Episcopal Evangelism resources, please visit [episcopalchurch.org/evangelism](http://episcopalchurch.org/evangelism)*

## Notes