



Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way

Guiding Principles for World Mission

A Four-Week Study for Individuals and Groups
Offered by the Standing Commission on World Mission

Editors: Grace Burton-Edwards and Judy G. Quick

BECOMING A WORLD WHERE LOVE IS THE WAY

Guiding Principles for World Mission

Copyright © 2022 by The Episcopal Church
The Episcopal Church
815 2nd Ave
New York, NY 10017

Prepared by the Standing Commission on World Mission.
Edited by Grace Burton-Edwards and Judy G. Quick.

Learn more about the Global Mission Digital Toolkit at
www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/digital-toolkit/.

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible,
copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the
United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



THE STANDING COMMISSION ON WORLD MISSION

2018-2021

Ms. Martha Gardner, Chair

The Rev. Elizabeth Frank, Vice-Chair

The Rev. Grey Maggiano, Secretary

Ms. Emily Badgett

The Rev. Grace Burton-Edwards

Ms. Grecia Christian Reynoso

Canon Judith Conley

The Rt. Rev. Francisco Duque

The Rt. Rev. Alan Gates

Mr. Matt Gobush

Ms. Helena Mbele-Mbong

Dr. Martin McCann

The Rt. Rev. José McLoughlin

The Rt. Rev. Rafael Morales

The Rev. Judy Quick

Ms. Denise Reovan

Ms. Angela Smith

The Rt. Rev. William Stokes

The Rev. Irene Tanabe

Mr. John Tull

The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Ex Officio

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, Ex Officio



INTRODUCTION

The members of the current Standing Commission on World Mission (SCWM) offer this resource to The Episcopal Church as a gift.

One part of our mandate for discussions during this triennium (2018-2021) was “to envision future directions for the church’s global engagement.” We recognized that many individuals, congregations, and dioceses may still be approaching global mission from a “do for” mentality instead of a “do with” mentality. We embraced the idea of developing a “message to the church” (*Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way*) and offering a set of Guiding Principles for World Mission. We hope this message and these guiding principles help inform the church’s global engagement in the years ahead. We welcome your feedback.

The SCWM has offered a resolution to the 80th General Convention (July 2022) asking the church to *Adopt, Study, and Promote Guiding Principles for World Mission*. In addition, we realized that the guiding principles could be a helpful starting point for individual and group discussion.

A combination of factors led to the development of this resource. One, the SCWM partnered with The Episcopal Church Office of Global Partnerships and the Global Episcopal Mission Network (GEMN). Together, we received a Constable Grant to develop a Global Mission Digital Toolkit, available at www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/digital-toolkit/. The toolkit makes this and many other global mission resources readily available across the church at no cost. Second, the SCWM was blessed with a wonderful group of members this triennium – bishops, priests, deacons, and lay members from across the globe. We were able to use their varied voices and perspectives in developing this resource.

The SCWM is deeply grateful to two of our members who served as the editors: The Rev. Grace Burton-Edwards serves as rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Columbus, Georgia, and is a member of the Global Mission Commission of the Diocese of Atlanta and a board member of the Global Episcopal Mission Network. The Rev. Judy Quick is a deacon in the Diocese of Alabama and chaired its Companion Diocese Commission. SCWM members wrote individual devotions for each of the guiding principles. The editors added questions for reflection, ideas for action, and daily prayers. The Rev. Burton-Edwards wrote the group discussion guides.

The resource can be used in several ways, for individual learning or for group study. Group study may be done in person or online. Each session is designed to last 45 minutes to one hour (or longer). A group may choose to do the study over four weeks or as a one-day retreat after group members have completed the daily reflections individually.

It is our hope and prayer that this resource will help individuals, congregations, and dioceses move toward “*Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way: Crossing Boundaries, Listening Deeply, Living Like Jesus, Together.*” May it be so.

Ms. Martha Gardner, chair of the Standing Commission on World Mission, serves as missioner for Networking and Formation in the Diocese of Massachusetts.

BECOMING A WORLD WHERE LOVE IS THE WAY:

Crossing Boundaries, Listening Deeply, Living Like Jesus, Together

Crossing Boundaries

Following the example of Jesus, who sent disciples into all the world, the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement is a global church. We gather dioceses in North, Central, and South America, in Europe, and in Asia. We are part of the Anglican Communion. We work with ecumenical and inter-religious partners. We cross global boundaries at home through relationships with migrants and refugees. When we cross boundaries with love, we are sharing in God's mission.

Where is God calling us?

Listening Deeply

As we cross boundaries, with the help of God, we strive to listen deeply to one another and to the Word of God in Holy Scripture. We discover and honor sacred differences in cultures and people. We repent of harm caused by failing to listen and failing to honor one another. We hear the Spirit calling us to renounce evil powers that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

Whose voices need to be heard?

Living Like Jesus

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God's reign of love in this world. Episcopal Church mission priorities of evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care have global dimensions. Following Jesus in the Way of Love calls us to work with global partners to address racism, environmental degradation, human migration, challenges to human rights, poverty, and the need for sustainable development — all while proclaiming God's love, mercy, and hope.

What would Jesus say or do today?

Together

God's mission is to make us one together, to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We have far to go, but as we walk together, God is at work among us. We trust that God has poured out gifts on the whole Church. We seek mutual, interdependent relationships — offering and receiving gifts, respecting differences, sharing joys and sorrows, learning from each other, living into God's Beloved Community, Becoming a World Where Love is the Way.

How will we walk more closely together?

*The Standing Commission on World Mission presents
this Message to the Church with the Guiding Principles for World Mission
as a description of the dreams, goals, and purpose of world mission relationships today.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WORLD MISSION

Jesus affirmed the Greatest Commandment and its corollary: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Jesus also gave a New Commandment: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

Jesus’ final act was to give the Great Commission: to bring his Word to all nations.

Our dream is of a Beloved Community where all of God’s children are included; where the gifts of all are honored. In baptism we are called to be companions, which means standing with, traveling with, and sharing bread with one another. We are members of a global community, beginning with ourselves – the Domestic and Foreign Mission Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church – the Anglican Communion, Christians, and people of other faiths or no faith throughout the world.

World mission is living into God’s mission of reconciling love in a global context, crossing boundaries of differences, meeting Christ in one another, as we walk the way of Love together throughout the world in true relationship.

World mission implies being present with others, as Jesus became incarnate and was present with us. As companions in mission, we are open to one another, learning from one another, and through that experience being transformed as we reach a deeper understanding of what it means to be Christians together, even across boundaries that might otherwise divide.

Every baptized Episcopalian has vowed to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of all human beings. Jesus’ Way of Love invites us to “GO” beyond our boundaries, our comfort zones, beyond the Red Door of our Churches. How do we live into this call in a global context?

The catechism of the Episcopal Church teaches that the mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. How do we live into this mission in a global context?

Living out the Way of Love throughout the Global Beloved Community in the 21st Century involves:

- Emphasizing evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care
- Working with partners of all ages and abilities to respect the dignity of every human being
- Serving as a prophetic voice to keep before The Episcopal Church engagement with God’s Mission in the world
- Transforming with grace and humility the culture of world mission engagement beyond historic transactional relationships from a position of power towards mutual models of mission as companions

- Celebrating various models of God’s mission and embracing the full diversity of the Body of Christ in person, online, and in spirit

Jesus sends us into the world to be His disciples of love: “Just as the Father has sent me, so I send you.” (John 20:21)

Therefore, as followers sent by Jesus, we are all invited to follow these Guiding Principles:

- Think and imagine a world where love is the way
- Commit to world mission that is incarnated in personal presence, meeting Christ in all whom we encounter, in our backyard or around the globe
- Go the Way of Love: cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus
- Walk humbly the Way of Love with our companions in mission, in mutual discovery and deepening of God’s reconciling love, learning together, praying together, worshipping together, as we transform and bless each other
- Excite, inspire, and engage others to discover the joy of God’s mission
- Honor and embrace in mutual discovery the God-given gifts of all individuals, parishes, dioceses, their partners, and their communities
- Nurture relationships to develop avenues for cross-cultural mission, local/global/pilgrimage, for all ages and abilities
- Advocate for structural changes to support global mission issues, including promoting the dignity of all and honoring refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers everywhere
- Honor our sacred differences while we unite as Beloved Community around God’s table
- Support missionaries, from discernment, during their service, and upon their return
- As we walk this Way of Love, address together the many issues of poverty, violence, oppression, threats to global health, and environmental degradation, often in a time of global upheaval
- Remember that to “Go” can also mean “Go” by building relationships, learning, listening, encouraging across space through virtual presence and communication from where you are
- Encourage all dioceses to have a Diocesan Global Mission Advocate

God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer

WEEK ONE

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Following the example of Jesus, who sent disciples into all the world, the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement is a global church. We gather dioceses in North, Central, and South America, in Europe, and in Asia. We are part of the Anglican Communion. We work with ecumenical and inter-religious partners. We cross global boundaries at home through relationships with migrants and refugees. When we cross boundaries with love, we are sharing in God's mission.

Where is God calling us?



WEEK ONE

Day 1

“A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’ Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’

“Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I have ever done.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.’”

John 4:7-14, 39-42, NRSV

Question

Some boundaries, of course, should never be crossed. But some boundaries are artificial, imposed by people to encourage division and hatred. What boundaries were crossed in the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman? What differences were overcome as part of God’s mission of love?

Action

Journal or write about how you have crossed boundaries in your ministries and what challenges you have faced in doing so. What artificial boundaries do you feel called to cross at this time?

Prayer

Hear our prayers, Holy God. Breathe your Spirit over us and all the earth, that barriers would crumble and divisions cease. Make us more fully your co-healers of the broken world. Unite us with all people in bonds of love, that the whole earth and all its peoples may be at peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect from Prayers of the People with Confession for Racial Reconciliation and Justice
Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, 2018

WEEK ONE

Day 2

Why Mission?

Over the years, I have engaged in a lot of strategic planning work. It has often included the development of a “mission statement.” More than once, I have thought this work superfluous. We Episcopalians have a common mission statement. The Book of Common Prayer (1979) states, the “Mission of the Church” is “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ” (p. 855).

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was fond of reminding Anglicans, “The Church doesn’t have a mission; *God has a mission* and a Church to carry out that mission.” He was reflecting a consensus about the *Missio Dei* (mission of God) that has developed in recent years. In his book, *Transforming Mission*, Missiologist David J. Bosch writes, “To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people, since God is the fountain of sending love.”

“God is love,” we are taught in the First Letter of John (4:8,16). Love is God’s essence and nature. Love is also the purpose and mission of God. God *loves* – “God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.” God loves. God sends forth for the sake of love: sends his Son, sends each one of us. As Bosch observes, “Since God is a missionary God, God’s people are missionary people.”
O Love, how deep, how broad, how high...

The Rt. Rev. William H. (Chip) Stokes is the 12th bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey.

Question

When have you encountered God’s sending love in your life?

Action

Set a timer for three minutes. Write down as many key people and stories from the Bible as you can remember. After the timer rings, review your list and circle all the people or stories in which God sends someone to carry out God’s mission of love.

Prayer for the Mission of the Church

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 100

WEEK ONE

Day 3

Imagine a World Where Love Is the Way

Think and imagine a world where love is the way.

The reality of the world, especially of our countries so called “in development,” is demanding that today, more than ever, we leave our places of comfort, we cross boundaries, and we extend our arms. That is to say, our mission is to receive so many sisters and brothers who for multiple reasons wander in the world as “sheep that have no shepherd.” And for this, what better example is there than that of Jesus, an itinerant missionary who traveled along the roads and to the villages and cities of his land. Upending tradition in this Jewish town whose residents do not associate with Samaritans, he enters this region and his first encounter presents him with a woman who needed water. In this simple but profound conversation, Jesus accomplishes what is asked of us today: to spread the good news of the Gospel. People everywhere heard of this physical, loving, friendly presence of Jesus, and they understood that they, too, could participate in the love and goodness of the God of Jesus. Many believed in Jesus, not because of a conversation or specific words; they believed in Jesus simply because he was present in the midst of them, and his presence filled them with joy and hope.

Today, we Episcopalians in the Anglican Communion have the same challenge: to leave our comfort zone; to break every type of barrier and border; and to be present in the midst of those who suffer and fill them with joy, faith, and hope. So may it be.

The Rt. Rev. Francisco Duque is fourth bishop of La Iglesia Episcopal Anglicana - Colombia, the Episcopal Diocese of Colombia.

Question

The writer reminds us that the welcoming presence of Jesus communicated the love and goodness of God. Recall a time when you encountered the welcoming presence of Jesus in another person. How did you know that you were welcomed? What would our world be like if everyone demonstrated the welcoming spirit of Jesus?

Action

Create art that illustrates what the world looks like when love is the way. If you are doing this study with a group, take a picture of what you create, or plan to bring it with you when you meet, so that you may share with others.

For Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

WEEK ONE

Day 4

Meet Christ in All

Commit to world mission that is incarnated in personal presence, meeting Christ in all whom we encounter, in our backyard or around the globe.

In response to the pandemic, hate crimes against Asians throughout the world spread as fast as the virus itself. What is happening to Asians today is like the experience of the Samaritan woman at the well.

Some see the Samaritan woman as an immoral woman, but Jesus did not judge her. Jesus saw her as someone with worth, value, and significance. Yes, she was marginalized. She was a Samaritan, not a Jew, a woman, not a man. She was also excluded by the women in her village, drawing water alone in the heat of the day and not in the early morning when all the other women drew their water. Like the Samaritan woman, Asians today are misunderstood, excluded, and mistreated.

When we experience or witness injustice, we get angry. The Samaritan woman must have been angry about her circumstances, but she did not hoard the living water, storing it in her water jar for her own use. She left the jar – like others in the Gospel who leave their nets, their boats, their parents. She ran to tell others, so they might also be freed.

Jesus freed us, not to an indulgent kind of freedom that provokes anger, but to a transformative freedom that comes from recognition that God *sees us*, no matter our race or nationality. Through Christ, we have been freed from that which enslaves. *We have seen the Messiah and we are free.*

The Rev. Irene Tanabe is priest and rector of All Souls Anglican Episcopal Church, an English-speaking congregation in the Diocese of Okinawa in the Anglican Church in Japan (Nippon Sei Ko Kai).

Question

The writer presents the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman as a model for how we are to encounter one another in mission. We are to meet Christ in one another, as Jesus welcomed this woman and as the woman encountered Jesus. When we commit to seeing Christ in others, we find that God sees us and frees us to live in love. Can you recall a time when you were misunderstood, excluded, or mistreated but knew that God saw you? Can you recall a time when you met Christ in someone who was misunderstood, excluded, or mistreated? How did these encounters set you free?

Action

Take a moment to educate yourself about hate crimes. Look up information about violence against Asian Americans or other crimes against particular groups of people. Imagine a world where hate is transformed into love. That is the goal of our global mission efforts.

Prayer for Mission

O God, you manifest in your servants the signs of your presence: Send forth upon us the Spirit of love, that in companionship with one another your abounding grace may increase among us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 125

WEEK ONE

Day 5

Go the Way of Love

Go the Way of Love – cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus.

My first border crossing involved a family trip to Niagara Falls. This crossing was simple: slow down and wave at the Canadian border official. I was disappointed to find few differences (stamps and money but little else) on “the other side.”

Now, I recognize that not all borders are boundaries. Boundaries challenge us. Boundaries take us out of our comfort zone. Crossing boundaries leads us to abandon a perspective of “us vs. them” and see the light of Christ shining in others.

The Diocese of Ohio and the Anglican Diocese of Belize have a partnership that has inspired many of us to cross boundaries and collaborate in mission. I remember a Belizean priest’s visit one snowy day. Gathered at the Episcopal Service Corps house in Cleveland and wrapped in blankets, we shared stories. Soon laughter warmed the room. The visiting priest suddenly declared: “I have never laughed like this before!” As she unpacked her discovery, I made my own: Only when we truly open our hearts to another can we cross boundaries and share God’s love.

The Rev. Beth Frank served as vice-chair of the Standing Commission on World Mission and interim rector with several congregations in the Diocese of Ohio. Rev. Frank died unexpectedly in January 2022.

Question

The writer draws a distinction between “borders” (lines of demarcation between nations) and “boundaries” (lines of demarcation between people). We often cross borders in world mission. What boundaries do we also cross? How has crossing boundaries between people enabled you to see the light of Christ shining in others?

Action

“The Way of Love” is a model of Christian discipleship shared at General Convention in 2018 in Austin, Texas, and used widely throughout The Episcopal Church to promote Christian practices that make a difference in our world. Can you name all seven steps in the Way of Love? Visit www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/ to remind yourself of these foundational Christian practices.

Prayer for Mission

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 101

WEEK ONE

Group Reflection (45-60 minutes)

Gather (5-10 minutes)

Invite group members to share their names and any mission work or relationships with which they have been involved, either now or in the past. As an option, you may wish to have art supplies available and invite people, as they gather, to create art depicting how they imagine a world where love is the way, to share later in the session.

Pray (1-3 minutes)

Invite the group into a moment of silence. After a sufficient time, offer one of the prayers from the reflections of Week One.

Review (5 minutes)

Our readings this week laid a foundation for understanding what we mean when we speak of mission.

- Day 1: In meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus crossed boundaries of culture and suspicion to offer a welcoming and loving presence.
- Day 2: Mission is God's sending love, which has been present from the beginning of creation and in which we are privileged to participate.
- Day 3: In mission, we follow the example of Jesus, leaving our comfort zones to be present with those who suffer.
- Day 4: Mission calls us to meet Christ in all people and to recognize that, when one group of people is hurting, Christ suffers still.
- Day 5: Mission sends us across boundaries of difference to live like Jesus.

Invite those who read the readings to share any comments, impressions, or questions they might have about them.

Discuss or Do (10-20 minutes)

Considering the gifts, learning styles, and experiences of the people who are likely to participate, choose some of the following questions or activities to use with your group.

- **Discussion: Which people or stories in the Bible reveal God's sending love?** *Activity: Form subgroups of two or three people. If meeting online, use breakout rooms. Assign each subgroup one of the following parts of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, stories of the Kings, Psalms, Prophets, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation (you do not have to assign them all). Set a timer for two minutes and ask the subgroups to list examples of God's sending love in their assigned part of the Bible. Then have them share these with the larger group.*
- **Discussion: Recall the seven steps of the Way of Love (Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest). When you imagine a world where love is the way, what does that world look like?** *Activity: Invite people to share any art they created this week or during the gathering time that shows what they imagine the world looks like when love is the way.*
- **Discussion: One of the readings for this week challenged us to consider hate crimes in our world. What other painful situations are there in our world, locally and globally, in which Christ suffers still?** *Activity: Before meeting, gather images of people who are suffering and share them with the group in some way, perhaps on a screen, by holding up the photos for all to see, or by scattering several pictures on a table and inviting participants to focus*



on one. Then ask the group to enter into a time of silence during which they are invited to see Jesus in these people. Debrief the experience together.

- **Discussion: What does “living like Jesus” look like for us or for our community in our current context?** *Activity: Invite the group to name aloud people in their wider community (not part of the group or congregation) who are good examples of “living like Jesus.” Ask them to commit to reaching out in some way this week to thank those people for their witness.*

Reflect (10-20 minutes)

We began with the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. Jesus and the woman both reached across boundaries of culture and custom to be present to one another. From that encounter, the woman was sent in love on a mission to her family and neighbors.

Invite the group to reflect on your shared mission relationships locally and globally. Assign someone to take notes from this conversation. Keep the notes to continue the conversation in future weeks.

- What are the boundaries across which God’s love is sending us?
- What is our dream for these relationships? When love is the way, what does life look like for all of us? How can this relationship be used to build up love in the world?
- How are we meeting Christ in one another?
- How do we hope we will go the Way of Love together?

Close

Read aloud this week’s theme, together if possible:

Crossing Boundaries

Following the example of Jesus, who sent disciples into all the world, the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement is a global church. We gather dioceses in North, Central, and South America; Europe; and Asia. We are part of the Anglican Communion. We work with ecumenical and interreligious partners. We cross global boundaries at home through relationships with migrants and refugees. When we cross boundaries with love, we are sharing in God’s mission.

Where is God calling us?

WEEK TWO

LISTENING DEEPLY

As we cross boundaries, with the help of God, we strive to listen deeply to one another and to the Word of God in Holy Scripture. We discover and honor sacred differences in cultures and people. We repent of harm caused by failing to listen and failing to honor one another. We hear the Spirit calling us to renounce evil powers that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

Whose voices need to be heard?

WEEK TWO

Day 1

“Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’”

- Luke 10:38-42, NRSV

Question

In this encounter with his friends, Martha and Mary, Jesus praises Mary for listening deeply. Do you sense that Jesus also listened deeply to Martha? What does Jesus say and demonstrate about the importance of listening? How can listening inform action?

Action

Before rushing off to deal with the tasks that are before you, take a few minutes to listen to the Holy Spirit. Place your feet flat on the floor. Breathe in and exhale deeply. Try to sit quietly for at least five minutes. Listen for the Holy Spirit to speak. If thoughts of tasks invade the quiet, simply say to yourself, “There is need of only one thing.”

Prayer for After Worship

Grant, we beseech you, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through your grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honor and praise of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 834

WEEK TWO

Day 2

Mutual Discovery

Walk humbly the Way of Love with our companions in mission, in mutual discovery...

“Mutuality” and “sharing” were key words when the Diocese of Alabama discerned a new companion relationship. As we pondered our hopes for the relationship, we sought:

- A positive and vibrant relationship of mutuality, partnership, give and take, sharing at multiple levels, a relationship of “being” as well as “doing”
- Mutuality of need, an understanding of real needs
- Shared worship, shared experiences, transformation for all partners
- Opportunities for full diocesan, parish, and individual involvement
- Parish-to-parish connections
- Faithful prayer partnership
- Occasions to learn about each other through a sharing of information and culture
- Mutual visits, pilgrimages, and mission trips (both ways), during which all ages could experience mission

The Holy Spirit led the Diocese of Alabama to a companion relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands. To many, it seemed an odd choice as the typical “mission trips” were to Honduras or Kenya. Previous companion relationships had been with Haiti, Namibia, and Brazil.

Yet it worked beautifully. Our two dioceses discerned youth engagement, lay/clergy leadership development, and spiritual deepening as our overarching goals. Youth groups came together for fun, for worship, and for service. Alabama parishes partnered with parishes on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and the British Virgin Islands. Virgin Islands clergy came to the Alabama clergy retreats at Camp McDowell. Alabama clergy visited Virgin Islands parishes and led vestry retreats. When Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck, Alabama was present.

The Prayer for Our Companion Relationship, which the Virgin Islands partners wrote, guided our humble walk: *Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we ask your blessings and favor upon our Companion Relationship between the Diocese of Alabama and the Diocese of the Virgin Islands. May we fully commit to praying diligently and unceasingly for the success of all our missions, that through this relationship we are bound to share our love of Christ and of each other, to share our knowledge and resources, to further the understanding of the reconciliation of all Christians to God, to support and to help those who are in need, and to nourish the spiritually deficient for the furtherance of God's kingdom. Amen.*

The Rev. Judy Quick serves as a deacon in the Diocese of Alabama and chaired the Companion Diocese Commission with the Virgin Islands.

Question

What excited or inspired you about this story of mutual discovery?

Action

Is your diocese currently part of a mission companion relationship? Try to find out and learn more about it today.

A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

WEEK TWO

Day 3

God's Reconciling Love

...and deepening of God's reconciling love – learning together, praying together, worshipping together, as we transform and bless each other.

O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by your great mercy sent your Son to the world to bless each one of us, giving your precious Body and Blood to die on the cross, by this great reconciling love of God you taught us that each one of us can be reconciled in your presence with you and with our neighbor, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, NRSV

The Word of God teaches us many things. This biblical text concerning reconciliation tells us how Jesus came to humanity so that we could reconcile with one another and also with God. Reconciliation is a ministry that calls us to change, to become completely new, and never to separate ourselves from the works that God has done. We have an invitation to come toward God. We are sinners yet God still loves us. We should proclaim reconciliation, confessing with him. We have to turn to God in the faith that we profess, which always keeps us strong and moving forward. We cannot reconcile with God without being reconciled with our brothers and sisters.

Dr. Grecia C. Reynoso serves as chancellor, president of the Constitution and Canons Committee, deputy to General Convention, and lay minister for the Diocese of the Dominican Republic. She always stands ready to work for The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Dominican Republic in Province IX.

Question

The writer points to a majestic passage from II Corinthians to remind us that reconciliation is God's love in action. In order to know God's reconciling love, we must share that reconciling love with our neighbors. Do you find it easier to practice reconciliation with people close to home or far away? How do your mission relationships reveal God's reconciling love?

Action

As you pray, name before God people or groups with whom it is difficult for you to practice reconciliation. Commit to praying for these people this week.

A Prayer for the Church, from Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Ordination Liturgies

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 280

WEEK TWO

Day 4

The Joy of God's Mission

Excite, inspire, and engage others to discover the joy of God's mission.

Listening can be difficult, especially when cultural or language differences challenge our understanding. Sometimes, political and religious differences get in the way when we encounter divergent perspectives or disagree vehemently with someone. It becomes more difficult when we focus on “otherness” rather than “oneness.” Listening deeply is an act of love. Done with a joyful heart, seeking Christ in every person we meet, we hear differently. We open our hearts to understanding. We honor the sacred in every person.

The Rt. Rev. Martín Barahona, the first Anglican Episcopal bishop of El Salvador, taught me to cross some disconcerting boundaries while joyfully embracing those people I would encounter as God's own. He sent me out to places to meet with people living on the margins. He sent me to meet with people seeking justice through social and political action that was risky. I felt vulnerable. Joy was not my “go-to” emotion. Fear was.

Yet his mandate for me was simple and consistent. Go joyfully. Listen deeply to God's children. He didn't ask me to “do” anything else. I learned in the face of vulnerability that the act of listening deeply, with a joyful heart for mission, is a faithful step toward fulfilling our Gospel calling. It leads us to solidarity with our fellow human beings. As I sat with former guerrilla soldiers, union activists, gang members, and truce facilitators, I was not only obeying Bishop Martín's mandate, but God's. To live into our Gospel mission, we must listen deeply.

Ms. Angela Smith is a perpetual student of peacebuilding and human rights who has served professionally and missionally throughout Central America for more than 15 years, often partnering with and accompanying The Episcopal Church.

Question

Often in mission, we want to “do.” Here, the writer was told to “listen.” How did listening deeply lead her to discover the joy of God's mission? How can her story inspire you and others to engage in God's mission?

Action

Review pictures or notes from your own mission experiences. What experiences or people helped you become excited or inspired to share in God's mission? How have you been able to share that excitement and joy?

Thanksgiving for the Mission of the Church

Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours, for ever and ever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 838

WEEK TWO

Day 5

God-Given Gifts of All

Honor and embrace in mutual discovery the God-given gifts of all individuals, parishes, and dioceses and their partners and communities.

Of course we all knew the cautionary tale of the missionary Nathan Price, profiled in Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Poisonwood Bible*, who attempts in the Belgian Congo to impart his superior knowledge of cultivation by bringing seeds from home. But the African soil is wrong, and the monsoons wash away the seeds, and the poisonwood tree trunks he clears away give him a brutal rash. The locals, of course, could have told him all that, had he but asked. But he was not there to ask. He was there to tell.

We were certain we could avoid such pitfalls of paternalism by bringing 15 members of our two mission partner congregations outside Cape Town to visit us in our U.S. parish. Yet even the "reverse mission" structure of the visit did not prevent us from falling into a pattern of showing others "how it's done."

Soon enough, however, we realized how much our friends' testimonies about their experience of apartheid had to teach us about race relations in our own city. Soon enough, we found ourselves drawn into the end-of-day reflections their leaders had shaped for the visiting pilgrims. Soon enough, we were confronted with the racial profiling in our own neighborhoods when two of our visiting youth were stopped by police while riding their host family's bikes.

As we shifted from the Martha-posture of busy tour hosts to the Mary-posture of listening deeply to our visitors, our experience was transformed and deepened beyond measure, and our "mutual discovery" was blessed.

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates is the 16th bishop of Massachusetts, having previously served parishes in Massachusetts, Illinois, and Ohio, with particular mission partnerships in South Africa and Tanzania.

Question

The writer shares how he and others discovered that they had much to learn from their mission partners in South Africa. Everyone had God-given gifts to bring to the relationship. How do you, your congregation, or your diocese honor the God-given gifts of your mission partners?

Action

Reflect on your mission engagements. Review notes or pictures from a mission encounter. Recall times when you failed to honor the gifts of your partners or felt that your partners did not honor your gifts. Recall experiences in which all gifts were honored.

Collect for All Christians in Their Vocation

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 256

WEEK TWO

Group Reflection (45-60 minutes)

Gather (5-10 minutes)

Welcome participants, especially those who may be new to the group. Remind the group of this week's reading from Luke about Mary and Martha. Invite group members to share their names (if needed) and identify whether they tend to be more like Mary or Martha.

Pray (1-3 minutes)

Invite the group into a moment of silence. After a sufficient time, offer one of the prayers from the reflections of Week Two.

Review (5 minutes)

Our readings this week recognized that mission involves listening deeply to one another, to Scripture, to our sacred differences, and to ways we have harmed God's children and God's creation.

- Day 1: The story of Mary and Martha invites us to acknowledge times when we may have been too busy or too focused on a task to listen.
- Day 2: We read some of the steps the Dioceses of Alabama and the Virgin Islands took to support mutual discovery and learn about each other.
- Day 3: Listening deeply calls us to work toward reconciliation. We cannot be reconciled to God without being reconciled to one another.
- Day 4: Listening deeply leads to the joy of discovering our solidarity with our fellow human beings.
- Day 5: Despite our best intentions, it is easy to forget to listen. When we listen like Mary, we discover the God-given gifts of all.

Invite those who read the readings to share any comments, impressions, or questions they have about them.

Discuss or Do (10-20 minutes)

Considering the gifts, learning styles, and experiences of the people who are likely to participate, choose some of the following questions or activities to use with your group.

- **Discussion: The guiding principle about mutual discovery begins, "Walk humbly." Why is humility important for mutual discovery? Does mutual discovery begin with humility, or does humility flow from mutual discovery?** *Activity: You may have heard of "known knowns" (things we know for sure), "known unknowns" (things we are aware that we do not know), and "unknown unknowns" (things we are not aware that we do not know). Form three subgroups and choose one of your mission relationships. Ask one subgroup to create a list of "known knowns" about this relationship. Ask the second subgroup to create a list of "known unknowns" about this relationship. Ask the third subgroup to try create a list of "unknown unknowns" about this relationship. What has it not occurred to anyone to ask or try to discover? If meeting online, use breakout rooms. Let the subgroups work for three to five minutes, and then have them share with the larger group. Ask: How sure are you about the "known knowns"? How might you address some of these unknowns? What do you think your mission partners would say if they did this activity?*
- **Discussion: Which stories or passages in the Scriptures reveal God's reconciling love?** *Activity: List aloud or have written some key events in the Scriptures, such as Creation, Flood, Call of Abram, Exodus, Wilderness, Giving of the Law, Judges, Prophets, Actions of Jesus, Teachings of Jesus, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Early*

Church, Epistles, Revelation. Assign one of these events to each individual or subgroup. Give them two minutes to reflect on how this key event reveals God's reconciling love. If meeting online, use breakout rooms. Then have them share with the larger group.

- **Discussion: When have you experienced the joy of God's mission? What led to that experience?**

Activity: Share three to five photos from a mission experience that reflect the joy of God's mission. Explain the context of the picture and how that experience reflects such joy. Or, reach out to someone ahead of time and invite that person to share three to five photos and describe how they reflect the joy of God's mission.

- **Discussion: What gifts do we see in our mission partners? What gifts do we see in ourselves?**

Activity: Bring a gift bag or gift box to the meeting. Give participants small pieces of paper, and ask them to write down gifts they see in your mission partners and gifts they see within this group. Place the papers in the bag or box. Draw them out one by one and read aloud. Discuss whether each is a gift that is present in your partners, in yourselves, or in both. If meeting online, invite people to send a private message to you in the chat naming gifts they see in your mission partners and in one another. Read aloud and discuss.

Reflect (10-20 minutes)

Martha's resentment of Mary must have been present before Jesus joined them that day. One wonders if Martha ever shared her frustration aloud with her sister or simply held it inside. The comment of Jesus, "You are worried and distracted about many things," was not necessarily a criticism. It could be read as a way to get Martha's frustration into the open and invite the two sisters to listen deeply to each other. We do not know what happened next. Perhaps the two sisters reconciled, listened together at the feet of Jesus, and worked alongside each other after their visit with him.

The story of Mary and Martha often gets replicated in our mission relationships. Invite the group to reflect on these questions about your shared mission relationships locally and globally. Assign someone to take notes from this conversation. Keep the notes to continue the conversation in future weeks.

- Do we or our mission partners ever over-function like Martha? Do any of us take on tasks without asking for help or input?
- Do we sense any resentment under the surface in our mission relationships? Try to imagine what Jesus might say to name that resentment and lead us toward reconciliation.
- How might we listen more deeply to one another? Is anything we are saying not being heard? Are we aware of times when we have not listened deeply?
- When we listen most deeply to one another in our mission relationships, what do we hear? How might we check to discern whether what we think we are hearing is correct?

Close

Read aloud this week's theme, together if possible:

Listening Deeply

As we cross boundaries, with the help of God, we strive to listen deeply to one another and to the Word of God in Holy Scripture. We discover and honor sacred differences in cultures and people. We repent of harm caused by failing to listen and failing to honor one another. We hear the Spirit calling us to renounce evil powers that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

Whose voices need to be heard?

WEEK THREE

LIVING LIKE JESUS

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God's reign of love in this world. Episcopal Church mission priorities of evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care have global dimensions. Following Jesus in the Way of Love calls us to work with global partners to address racism, environmental degradation, human migration, challenges to human rights, poverty, and the need for sustainable development – all while proclaiming God's love, mercy, and hope.

What would Jesus say or do today?



WEEK THREE

Day 1

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

“You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- Matthew 5:1-11, 43-48, NRSV

Question

Jesus spoke these words to people who were living in a time of division and oppression. How can we live like Jesus in a world torn apart by division?

Action

Our action steps this week direct us to learn more about our shared work in The Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Asset Map is a website that gathers information in one place about Episcopal congregations, schools, and institutions. Check it out at www.episcopalassetmap.org/.

Prayer

Almighty God, Source of all that is, Giver of every good gift: You create all people in your image and call us to love one another as you love us. We confess that we have failed to honor you in the great diversity of the human family. We have desired to live in freedom, while building walls between ourselves and others. We have longed to be known and accepted for who we are, while making judgements of others based on the color of skin, or the shape of features, or the varieties of human experience. We have tried to love our neighbors individually while yet benefitting from systems that hold those same neighbors in oppression. Forgive us, Holy God. Give us eyes to see you as you are revealed in all people. Strengthen us for the work of reconciliation rooted in love. Restore us in your image, to be beloved community, united in our diversity, even as you are one with Christ and the Spirit, Holy and undivided Trinity, now and for ever. Amen.

Confession of Sin from Prayers of the People with Confession for Racial Reconciliation and Justice
Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, 2018

WEEK THREE

Day 2

Nurture Relationships

Nurture relationships to develop avenues for cross-cultural mission and local/global pilgrimage, for all ages and abilities.

Relationships, in many ways, are the essence of the church: our relationship with God, our relationships with each other, our relationship with creation. Nurturing these relationships through prayer, worship, works, communion, care, and love can be seen as an essential ministry of the church. Nurturing relationships defines who we are as members of a Christian community and is a worthy guiding principle for mission. It is what God calls upon us to do.

This truth became clear to me when I accompanied our Presiding Bishop to Haiti for a mission trip in 2008, while I was serving on the church's Standing Commission for International Peace and Justice. Despite the fact that the Diocese of Haiti is one of The Episcopal Church's largest and most vibrant dioceses, the church's relationships with our sisters and brothers in Haiti had come under strain due to differences in language, culture, and history. Our trip helped revitalize the relationships by highlighting the critical role the Diocese of Haiti's schools, hospitals, and houses of worship play in supporting the economic, social, and spiritual life of the island nation. In cultivating these relationships, we developed new avenues for cross-cultural understanding and mission. For me, it was powerful testimony of the church's God-given mission to bridge divides and unify all God's children through love and understanding.

Mr. Matt Gobush is a parishioner in the Diocese of Virginia. Drawing upon his government service in foreign policy, including at the Pentagon and in the White House, he has long been active in the international ministries of the church. Matt is also a contributing editor to Providence, a journal of Christianity and U.S. foreign policy. He and his wife are the parents of six internationally adopted children.

Question

This story highlights the value of pilgrimage and personal presence in nurturing relationships. When we cannot be physically present with one another, what are some other ways to nurture relationships across cultures and geography?

Action

Look up the Office of Global Partnerships at www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/. This office develops and nurtures The Episcopal Church's relationships with the Anglican Communion, ecumenical and interreligious partners, and organizations such as the United Nations and National Council of Churches.

Prayer for Mission

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 100

WEEK THREE

Day 3

Advocate for Structural Change

Advocate for structural changes to support global mission issues...

We all have that one friend. The one who never quite has it together or always seems to be in some kind of trouble, yet who is so lovable we never give up on them. We always take this person's calls, have a kind word or a small gift to give, and celebrate joys and sorrows with this person, even when this friend frustrates us to no end.

And we all know others dealing with similar addictions, demons, or struggles whom we mostly cannot stand –the ones we tell to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. When Jesus says, “Pray for your enemies, bless those who persecute you,” he is reminding his followers – and us – that our compassion and our love are not meant to be limited to just the good ones. It is easy to love the people whose stories we like or who present themselves in a palatable enough way for our sensibilities. It is much harder to love and serve those who are unlovable, who do not “deserve” it.

In the words of Clint Eastwood (and Jesus), “Deserve has nothing to do with it.” We are called to love everyone. We can do that by advocating to change systems so that friends and enemies alike do not have to beat the odds to survive. Rather, we can work to change the odds so that we all find ourselves together in the Kingdom of God.

The Rev. Grey Maggiano is rector of Memorial Episcopal Church, Baltimore, Maryland. He is active in mission locally and internationally, working to resettle more than 100 Afghan refugees through his parish. He also has shepherded Memorial through a reparations process, dedicating \$500,000 toward racial reparations in west Baltimore.

Question

Think of someone you know who struggles to beat the odds in order to survive. What structural or systemic changes would make a difference for this person?

Action

The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations (www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/) helps our church advocate for structural change within the United States. Its *Faith and Citizenship Guide*, available in English and Spanish, offers suggestions for doing the work of advocacy within the United States, but the principles also apply to many governments outside the United States. Review this guide and consider how to strengthen your own advocacy. For those who live in the United States, consider joining the Episcopal Public Policy Network to keep current on relevant legislation and respond to action alerts.

Collect for Social Justice

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 260

WEEK THREE

Day 4

Promote the Dignity of All

Advocate for structural changes to support global mission issues, including promoting the dignity of all and honoring refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers everywhere.

What does it mean to “promote the dignity of ALL”? Who is represented in ALL? Did Jesus discriminate in his love of ALL?

Think of how we, particularly those little children whom Jesus loves, open a package of M&Ms to eat. We do not care what color the individual pieces are because we know they will ALL taste the same.

Bishop Desmond Tutu said, “Far too often people think of themselves as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another.”

Canon Judith Conley, from the Diocese of Arizona, is co-author of “DreamWorks,” the process The Episcopal Church used to develop the anti-racism training Seeing the Face of God in Each Other. She is a senior general convention deputy.

Question

What can you do to convince others to understand that our love and inclusion have no borders, knowing that, as Bishop Barbara Harris has said, “the God behind you is greater than the problem in front of you”?

Action

Visit the website of Episcopal Migration Ministries (www.episcopalmigrationministries.org) to learn how you can engage in the ministry of welcome. Contact Episcopal Church Center staff to learn more about these issues, or local entities with whom you can make connections. Organize a small group to discuss ways to be involved in aiding refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers.

Prayer for the Human Family

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; untie us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that in your good time, all people may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 815

WEEK THREE

Day 5

Honor Sacred Differences

Honor our sacred differences while we unite as Beloved Community around God's table.

A wise teacher once told me that it is incredibly difficult to hate someone up close and, to learn to love one another, we must risk a closer proximity. When we draw near to each other, we draw near to God.

Risking a closer proximity across our differences may mean subjecting ourselves to transformation. And, if we are to follow the way of Jesus, then we are to follow the Way of Love, which leads us closer to one another to listen to each other's lives.

It is easy to love what is comfortable. Yet, the kind of love that Jesus invites us into is *agape* love. Agape love is the kind of love that is given to us by God unconditionally and without partiality. It is the love that celebrates diversity. It is the love we receive that is unearned and given simply because of who we are – God's beloved children. And so, the love given to us is the love we are to give to one another, without exception.

Agape love is *active* and *courageous*. It is love that *moves toward* those who are different. It is a kind of love that listens with curiosity and humility. It is a love that asks questions and seeks to understand. It is a love that unifies us, celebrating our sacred differences, and invites us not simply to talk *about* each other, but to learn to listen *to* each other.

And in listening to each other – in sharing stories and our lives – may our hearts and minds be transformed. May we be open enough to have our assumptions changed, courageous enough to celebrate our differences, faithful enough to choose dignity and kindness, and humble enough to receive and share the love of God freely.

The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin is the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina. He was elected in 2016 and is the first bishop of Western North Carolina of Hispanic descent.

Question

Are all differences sacred? Which differences among people are particularly sacred? Which differences among people do not really matter?

Action

Learn more about our church's vision of Becoming Beloved Community at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community/. The site includes many resources for congregational and individual use.

Thanksgiving for Diversity

O God, who created all peoples in your image: We thank you for the diversity of cultures in this world. Show us your presence in those who differ from us, and enrich our lives with their fellowship, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 840

WEEK THREE

Group Reflection (45-60 minutes)

Gather (5-10 minutes)

Welcome participants, especially those who may be new to the group. Read aloud the Beatitudes (Week Three: Day 1). Invite group members to share which Beatitude seems most surprising to them.

Pray (1-3 minutes)

Invite the group into a moment of silence. After a sufficient time, offer one of the prayers from the reflections of Week Three.

Review (5 minutes)

Our readings this week invited us to live like Jesus by nurturing relationships, advocating for structural change, promoting the dignity of all, and honoring sacred differences. Action steps focused on learning more about ministries within The Episcopal Church.

- Day 1: We heard the Beatitudes from Matthew and explored the Episcopal Asset Map.
- Day 2: We remembered that relationships are the essence of the church and learned about the Office of Global Partnerships, which nurtures our global relationships.
- Day 3: We were challenged to advocate for structural change so that people no longer have to “beat the odds” in order to survive. We learned about the Office of Government Relations and its *Faith and Citizenship Guide*.
- Day 4: We were reminded that all means ALL, that love and inclusion have no borders. We explored the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries.
- Day 5: We were inspired to honor sacred differences and unite as Beloved Community. We turned to our church’s Beloved Community work.

Invite those who read the readings or explored the resources to share any comments, impressions, or questions they have about them.

Discuss or Do (10-20 minutes)

Use a combination of these discussion questions and activities with your group. Keep in mind the gifts and learning styles of people who are likely to participate and choose a variety.

- **Discussion: Why is it important to nurture relationships when engaged in mission work? With what people or groups would you like to nurture deeper relationships?** *Activity: Look for your congregation or group on the Asset Map and find out if the information is complete. Make notes of any changes that are needed. Search for other congregations or groups with whom you might build relationships.*
- **Discussion: What structural changes are clearly needed in your community? What structural changes are harder to see but still necessary?** *Activity: Choose an action alert from the Office of Government Relations website. Share it with the group as an example of advocating for structural change. Discuss possible steps for advocacy around structural change in your community.*
- **Discussion: How do the Scriptures lift up the dignity of all people, especially the dignity of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers everywhere?** *Activity: Read aloud Leviticus 19:33-34:*



“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (NRSV). Ask: If God were speaking this law today, what would God say? Which people or groups would God mention? What would God ask of God’s people? Have participants write what they think God would say today and then share aloud with the group.

- **Discussion: Are all differences sacred? Which differences among people are particularly sacred? Which differences among people do not really matter?** *Activity: Form subgroups of two or three. If meeting online, use breakout rooms. Invite everyone to talk to their subgroup about how they are different from one another. How are their differences sacred? How do they want their differences to be honored? Then have the subgroups share what they discussed with the larger group.*

Reflect (10-20 minutes)

Invite the group to reflect again on the passage from Matthew (Week Three: Day 1). Read the passage aloud and discuss these questions.

- With whom did Jesus nurture relationships?
- For whom did Jesus advocate?
- Whose dignity did Jesus promote?
- What differences did Jesus honor and make sacred?

Now, reflect on your mission partnerships. Assign someone to take notes from this conversation. Keep the notes to continue the conversation next week.

- With whom are we called to nurture relationships?
- For whom must we advocate?
- Whose dignity must we promote?
- What differences must we honor and make sacred?
- With which agencies and institutions of The Episcopal Church would we like to partner as we seek to live like Jesus?

Close

Read aloud this week’s theme, together if possible:

Living Like Jesus

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God’s reign of love in this world. Episcopal Church mission priorities of evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care have global dimensions. Following Jesus in the Way of Love calls us to work with global partners to address racism, environmental degradation, human migration, challenges to human rights, poverty, and the need for sustainable development – all while proclaiming God’s love, mercy, and hope.

What would Jesus say or do today?

WEEK FOUR

TOGETHER

God's mission is to make us one together, to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We have far to go, but as we walk together, God is at work among us. We trust that God has poured out gifts on the whole Church. We seek mutual, interdependent relationships – offering and receiving gifts, respecting differences, sharing joys and sorrows, learning from each other, living into God's Beloved Community, and Becoming a World Where Love is the Way.

How will we walk more closely together?



WEEK FOUR

Day 1

“He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.”

- Mark 6:7-13, NRSV

Question

When Jesus sent the disciples out on mission, they did not go alone. They were sent two by two. As God sends you out in mission, who is walking with you? Do you need to invite others to walk with you?

Action

Choose one or two people who are walking with you in mission. Commit to praying for them this week. Tell them that you are praying for them.

Collect for Church Planting

You raise up laborers for your harvest, Holy God, sending them out as sowers of your good news, workers of healing, and caretakers of new life: Bless us in the work of planting and tending your Church; equip us for service, enliven us with your joy, and help us remember and trust that it is you who will bring in the harvest; through Jesus Christ, the Savior of souls. Amen.

- Book of Occasional Services, 2018, p. 242

WEEK FOUR

Day 2

Support Missionaries

Support missionaries, from discernment, during their service, and upon their return.

Dear Lord, we thank you that your son, Jesus, had the forbearance to send out disciples two by two. Our mutual support allowed Sandra and me to shine some light through our ministries. Two forward-thinking bishops – the Rt. Rev. Neil Alexander of the Diocese of Atlanta and the Rt. Rev. Mdimi Mhogolo of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika – united as brothers in Christ lent support for every step of our mission. Our parish, St. Thomas in Columbus, Georgia, supported us by praying, proclaiming our mission, and helping to finance our endeavors.

Dear Lord, we needed support as we discerned where to go and what to do. This was provided by Rev. Jane Butterfield. Support and encouragement during our stays in Kenya and Tanzania were provided by the Office of Global Partnerships, Virginia Theological Seminary, and many others. Bishop Rob Wright of the Diocese of Atlanta welcomed us on our return.

Our most cherished moments were the Sundays we went out into the villages. Usually, several nearby churches would attend. Sandra or a visiting priest would often preach. The singing, dancing, drums, and spirit were amazing, uplifting, and unforgettable.

Dear Lord, we pray earnestly that the future holds renewed possibilities for more Episcopal Volunteers in Mission and more Young Adult Service Corps members, to be sent for long-term stays throughout The Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion, and elsewhere. These missionaries require support from every level of the church. We pray that the same support shown to us can be lavished upon them.

Dr. Martin McCann and his wife, the Rev. Dr. Sandra McCann, served one year in Kenya and 11 years in Tanzania (2004-2015) as missionaries sent by The Episcopal Church.

Question

Imagine yourself serving as a missionary sent by The Episcopal Church to build up God's Way of Love around the world. What kind of support would you need? What would help you in your work? Or, if you are serving or have served as a missionary, what kinds of support strengthen you most?

Action

Visit the website of The Episcopal Church Office of Global Partnerships (www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/). Review the information about our two Episcopal Church mission sending programs: Young Adult Service Corps and Episcopal Volunteers in Mission. Consider whether God might be calling you to missionary service, or share these programs with someone you know who might be interested in serving as a missionary.

Collect of a Missionary

Almighty God, whose will it is to be glorified in your saints, and who raised up your servants to be a light in the world; Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 248

WEEK FOUR

Day 3

Address Global Issues

As we walk this Way of Love, address together the many issues of poverty, violence, oppression, threats to global health, and environmental degradation.

Since the beginning of creation, God has wanted the human being not to be alone, but to live in community, interacting with other people and with the entire creation that is the work of God's hands. This is why God placed the human being at the center, as a steward. God himself in his essence is the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), as it has been revealed to us. God does not remain alone but interacts with the creation that is the work of his hands. God chooses the people to reveal himself to, to guide, and to accompany him on the road to the promised land: Israel. In this way, we can see how God himself does not want to see human beings living alone or acting in creation without taking others into account.

We know that the human realities we are currently going through affect each and every human being. As parts of that creation, we are responsible to act in favor of it, which should inspire us to take action together. In this way, we can contribute to the creation, which is currently in disorder, to return to the order established by God at the beginning, which is his permanent desire.

Our conscience must be educated and know that no one, absolutely no one – no matter how powerful, how wealthy, or how smart – can do this work alone. We must create awareness of our interdependence, of our interdisciplinarity, so that together we can lower the global tension we are currently experiencing.

Since the church is the work of God himself, it cannot move away from its purpose. It cannot act against the will of its creator, who invites us to establish ties of friendship and of love, in order to love ourselves as we are, accept ourselves in difference, and work directing all our efforts toward the achievement of the same goal.

I remember when I was a child in the fields of my town, Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, the families lived very close. They shared the products of the field more easily among the neighborhood. They met to solve community problems. It was a simple life but lived in the most deeply sincere love and respect both for the things of God and for the church. This helped me to understand that all life is a divine gift and must be respected, that our duty as Christians is to respect and love each other, even when difference exists.

Personally, I believe that now, more than ever, the church is called to be a sign of life, as Jesus himself says in the Gospel of John (10:10): *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

The Gospel itself invites us to learn to work together, to be able to announce the good news of the Kingdom. God is challenging us so that Christians may be more united in God's purpose. The whole world is demanding from Christians: Where is the good news of Jesus?

- What must EVERYONE and EACH OF US do, so that the sufferings of the people of God are transformed into joy?
- What can we do to transform weapons into bread for the poor, and wars into theaters of peace?

- Why are Christians so divided and separated from each other?

Brothers and sisters: Inspiring, working, and praying together are the only ways to help the world come out of this difficult crisis that it is currently experiencing.

May almighty God who has called us to be instruments of love and peace send us to the world to announce GOOD NEWS.

The Rt. Rev. Rafael L. Morales is the seventh bishop of the Diocese of Puerto Rico. He is very committed to leading with a missionary spirit in the church and related institutions.

Question

The writer offers a passionate plea for Christians to be catalysts to live into the good news of Jesus Christ, to heal the wounds of division, and to address the needs of the poor. How is God leading you to respond to this call?

Action

One of many ways The Episcopal Church seeks to work interdependently and be a sign of life to the world is through its work at the United Nations. Look up “Episcopal Church and United Nations” or read about this work at www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/global-partnerships/episcopal-church-united-nations/. Look up also “Episcopal Church and Creation Care” to learn about our church’s work to protect creation, or visit www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/.

Prayer for the Future of the Human Race

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 828

WEEK FOUR

Day 4

Go from Where You Are

Remember that to “Go” can also mean “Go” by building relationships, learning, listening, encouraging across space through virtual presence and communication from where you are.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NRSV

Gracious God, in your infinite goodness you have given each of us many talents, gifts, and strengths in order to accomplish your will for us in service to you, the church, and each other. Through your son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us how to use these gifts to further your works in our earthly home. Using your perfect love and guidance, you allow each of us to complement one another through our respective talents, gifts, and strengths.

Eternal God, we have such accomplishments when we join together in our common mission and ministries. For the past 20 years, we have seen such accomplishments through the work of Episcopal Relief & Development, helping those in times of great need following natural and man-made disasters, lifting those up who have fallen to the deepest depths, giving people hope for a future worth living, and offering an integrated approach to better lives through healthier living and respect for our island home. We have used the collective strengths of our faith communities throughout the Anglican Communion to accomplish these things in accordance with your will.

Most loving God, allow us to go from where we are and continue our work together by Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way. Amen.

Mr. Jack Tull, from the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, supports the Way of Love through Christian ministry.

Question

This writer reflects on mission as a prayer. How does mission put prayer into action? Is it enough simply to pray for the healing of the world, or does God desire that we go from where we are and participate in God’s healing work?

Action

Learn about the work of Episcopal Relief & Development at www.episcopalrelief.org. How does Episcopal Relief & Development enable Episcopalians around the world to go out in love from where we already are?

A Prayer for Church Planting

Jesus, Savior, made known to us in broken bread and in wine poured out for reconciliation: Give us good courage for this work of mission that as we, too, are broken, poured, and shared for the world’s feeding, we find ourselves made whole in you. Amen.

- Book of Occasional Services, 2018, p. 243

WEEK FOUR

Day 5

Be an Advocate

Encourage all dioceses to have a Diocesan Global Mission Advocate.

Advocate, support, commend, uphold, promote, champion, stand up for. For something to happen, we need to do more than raise our hands in agreement. Just as Jesus sent out the disciples two by two and gave us the great commission, so we must go out and advocate: Share our beliefs, champion the cause, promote world mission in all its aspects. Experience shows that for a particular voice and concern to be not only heard but acted on, someone needs to speak out, keep it on the table, and promote specific actions, or it can be neglected in the shuffle of everything else. What we actually do depends on active advocates.

So I wonder about my own advocacy. I wrestle with the actual response to our weekly prayers for people who are sick and poor, for peace and reconciliation, for Becoming Beloved Community, and more. What are we actually doing besides praying? In reality, we can each take on only so much. Where am I being called to put my time and energy toward?

Sometimes I nod my head. Sometimes I add to the discussion. Sometimes I step up and take a lead. Every cause, every mission needs all these reactions. All should advocate. At least one should actively ensure that advocacy turns to action. Hopefully every diocese will have at least one person who will champion world mission and its principles and activities and ensure that all at least know about and support world mission and as many as possible actively engage in it.

Ms. Helena Mbele-Mbong came from Minneapolis via Cameroon (10 years) and Burundi (three years), to Geneva, Switzerland, where she became an active member of Emmanuel Church, Geneva, and the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. Over the years, she has served at all levels in the Anglican Communion.

Question

The Guiding Principles for World Mission invite dioceses and convocations to designate at least one “Global Mission Advocate,” someone who will promote global mission relationships and help turn advocacy into action. Does your congregation or group need a Global Mission Advocate as well – someone to help turn your advocacy to action? Who might that be? Could it be you?

Action

Review the Guiding Principles for World Mission that are found at the beginning of this resource. Make notes about how these principles apply to your global mission relationships.

Prayer for Those Who Influence Public Opinion

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices: Direct, in our time we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

WEEK FOUR

Group Reflection (45-60 minutes)

Gather (5-10 minutes)

Remind the group of the reading from Mark in which Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. Invite group members to share their names (if needed) and the name of one person with whom they would like to be sent by Jesus. It may be someone from whom they would like to learn, someone with whom they have served in the past, someone whose gifts complement their own, or someone who might be a faithful mission partner.

Pray (1-3 minutes)

Invite the group into a moment of silence. After a sufficient time, offer one of the prayers from the reflections of Week Four.

Review (5 minutes)

Our readings this week reminded us that mission is not a solitary activity. Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way requires us to work together – as mission partners, as nations, and as The Episcopal Church.

- Day 1: Jesus sent the disciples out on mission two by two. No one went alone.
- Day 2: A retired missionary shared his experience of being supported by his congregation, diocese, and bishop. We looked at the missionary sending programs of The Episcopal Church.
- Day 3: We read a passionate call to address global issues and looked at the work of The Episcopal Church at the United Nations.
- Day 4: We were reminded to put our prayers for the world into action, and we reflected on how Episcopal Relief & Development helps us go from where we are.
- Day 5: We heard the call to be an advocate, including an advocate for world mission.

Invite those who read the readings to share any comments, impressions, or questions they have about them.

Discuss or Do (5-15 minutes)

Considering the gifts, learning styles, and experiences of the people who are likely to participate, choose some of the following questions or activities to use with your group. Try to allow more time this week for the next section, *Reflect*, in order to review what you learned over these past four weeks and consider next steps.

- **Discussion: Do you know anyone who served or is serving as a missionary through The Episcopal Church? What can you share about this person's ministry?** *Activity: Visit the websites for Young Adult Service Corps or Episcopal Volunteers in Mission and look up information about current missionaries. If meeting online, or if everyone has access to a device, assign each person to read about one missionary and share the person's story briefly with the group.*
- **Discussion: Current mission priorities of The Episcopal Church (in 2022) include evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care. What are the global dimensions of these priorities? Is it possible to do this work without global partnerships?** *Activity: Look at a picture of Earth from space. Ask: Do you see national boundaries? Or do you see a world in need of healing? Invite each participant to share aloud a global threat that comes to mind when looking at the Earth as a whole.*



- **Discussion: How important are travel and physical presence with one another to our global mission relationships? Can we work together without being physically present? How?** *Activity: Set a timer for three minutes. In subgroups, have members brainstorm ways to stay connected with partners and serve God's mission that do not involve travel. Next, set a timer for one minute and ask subgroups to choose their two favorite ideas from the list they created. Then have each subgroup share these two ideas with the large group.*
- **Discussion: Who among us is an advocate for global mission? How might we support such advocacy?** *Activity: Review the Guiding Principles for World Mission found at the beginning of this resource. Then assign one of the 13 principles to individual participants and ask them to share how this principle applies to your group's global mission relationships.*

Reflect (15-25 minutes)

Review notes from conversations over previous weeks.

Week One:

- What are the boundaries across which God's love is sending us?
- What is our dream for these relationships? When love is the way, what does life look like for all of us? How can this relationship be used to build up love in the world?
- How are we meeting Christ in one another?
- How do we hope we will go the Way of Love together?

Week Two:

- Do we or our mission partners ever over-function like Martha? Do any of us take on tasks without asking for help or input?
- Do we sense any resentment under the surface in our mission relationships? Try to imagine what Jesus might say to name that resentment and lead us toward reconciliation.
- How might we listen more deeply to one another? Is anything we are saying not being heard? Are we aware of times when we have not listened deeply?
- When we listen most deeply to one another in our mission relationships, what do we hear? How might we check to discern whether what we think we are hearing is correct?

Week Three:

- With whom are we called to nurture relationships?
- For whom must we advocate?
- Whose dignity must we promote?
- What differences must we honor and make sacred?
- With which agencies and institutions of The Episcopal Church would we like to partner as we seek to live like Jesus?

The final question in the message to the church highlights the goal of this study and of the Guiding Principles for World Mission: *How will we walk more closely together?* As a group, identify action steps you are ready to take toward the goal of walking more closely together, *Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way.*

Close

Read aloud this week's theme, together if possible:

Week Four: Together

God's mission is to make us one together, to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We have far to go, but as we walk together, God is at work among us. We trust that God has poured out gifts on the whole church. We seek mutual, interdependent relationships – offering and receiving gifts, respecting differences, sharing joys and sorrows, learning from each other, living into God's Beloved Community, and Becoming a World Where Love Is the Way.

How will we walk more closely together?

