

DIOCESE OF ELY

6: Strangers Recognised

This learning programme is offered as a resource for parishes preparing to take part in the Diocesan **Mission Action Plan** initiative.

Each of the 5 sessions offers suggestions of ways in which the material can be used to prepare for and develop **Mission Action Plans**.

Based on the pattern found in the Emmaus story where the one who was first encountered as a stranger brings a new recognition of the presence of God, each of the sessions offers opportunities to reflect on God's mission challenge to find and serve God in those whom we experience as 'different, 'marginalized' or 'strangers'.

The material is particularly helpful for parishes wanting to involve a wide range of church members, in addition to the incumbent and leadership team, in the process of consultation and the initial shaping of the vision out of which particular plans will grow.

The material can be used flexibly: for example, parishes may want to work with one or two sessions in depth rather than working through them all.

Visual and audio material is provided with the course booklets.

For further information and to obtain a copy of the material please contact Les Oglesby or Chris Worsley.

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Over 40 parishes in the Diocese have opted to use this material as a Lent Course in 2008, but the themes and ideas for developing Mission Action Plans can be used at any time.

A brief summary of the material follows.

Session One: The Church as a Community of Strangers

What kind of community is the church called to be? This session will explore how mission communities can discover new life through the recognition of otherness and difference (1 Corinthians 12). How can the new life we discover help us to share more effectively in God's mission?

Session Two: God as Stranger

People can find the church a strange community and the God who is proclaimed remote or absent. What can we learn about the God who reaches out and touches the lives of young people for whom the church is often a strange place? What can we learn about the God who reaches out and touches those who live in the strange land of dementia? The spirituality of those with dementia can inform our ministry and mission and inspire us as we try to reach out to those who are unfamiliar with the church and those who struggle with the remoteness or absence of God.

Session Three: The Stranger who is Myself

Using the story of wrestling Jacob (Genesis 32), we look at what it means to discover what God wants for us, by meeting the challenge of the strangeness of those who are different from us. In such a process Jacob was able to become more blessed in God's service. The session looks at the contribution the process might make in deciding about priorities for the life and work of the church.

Session Four: Encounters with the Stranger

Mary Magdalen was named and blessed by the Risen Lord, at first taken to be a stranger (John 20). As the church seeks to be outward-looking in mission, we are invited always to be open to God's presence in 'strangers' who are not within the fellowship.

Session Five: Welcoming Strangers

God offers hospitality to us as individuals and communities. As those who accept the gracious invitation to be part of God's life, we are called to reflect this hospitality in our relationships with each other. Using the story of Abraham welcoming strangers who were 'the Lord' (Genesis 18) and the idea of God as Trinity, (a loving relationship of persons), this session will explore how our relationship with God who is love, can enable us to encourage each other within the fellowship in our different ministries.