



FAITH IN ACTION AWARD

Reflection Point



Theme: Service

1. Our Active Love Builds the Kingdom of God

Objectives:

Explore what is meant by God's Kingdom

Understand how Jesus' teaching: "the Kingdom of God is close at hand" affects the world we live in

Reflect upon our individual role in being witness to, and building, God's Kingdom.

Before you begin:

Create a reverent, quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space is set up ready for the closing liturgy.

Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings of the church and examples from the lives of Amazing Christians)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A time of prayer and worship

You will need:

- Print-outs of the chosen scripture passage/church's story for participants
- Instructions from the chosen activities
- For the liturgy:
 - 1x large candle
 - A small candle for each participant
- Reflective music
- Scripture

Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer

Gather the group together.

Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:

During his life, Jesus constantly speaks about the Kingdom of God. We believe that God's Kingdom is a place of justice and peace and that we are called to help build up that Kingdom here on earth. People often asked Jesus what the Kingdom of God was like. One of the best answers Jesus gave to those people was to "Go and tell John (the Baptist) what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them." This is the work Christ gives to us, his disciples. This work will never be finished. But we are co-workers with Jesus. We are his body on earth.

Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love, we are never alone and should never feel afraid.

We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God, three persons. We thank you that because of that faith, the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love.

Give us the strength we need, through your Holy Spirit, to live lives of love and faith. May the world come to know your Son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your kingdom here on earth.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Good News

Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme. Below are some suggestions followed by discussion points:

Matthew 18:3

Then he said: "In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 6:10-14

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One. Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.

Luke 18-19

Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.”

Isaiah 6-9

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling[a] together
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the cobra’s den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Pointers for discussion

How do you imagine God’s Kingdom to be?

Do you think God’s Kingdom is something distant or near?

What is meant by “thy Kingdom come?”

Is our behaviour affected by our faith and belief system?

Can God’s kingdom be destroyed?

Is there anything which makes it more difficult to build God’s kingdom on earth?

Is God’s Kingdom promoted by modern culture or does our society promote a different “ideal kingdom?”

The Church's Story

To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share some of the church's teachings from important texts and the work of great theologians.

Henri Nouwen (Catholic Priest and Theologian):

"The real work of compassion, of love, of service, is to give yourself to others so that they may live. In serving others, we bring the kingdom of God closer to our world."

Lambeth Conference 1988 Resolution 1.13

"The Church is called to serve those who are marginalized and oppressed. We affirm that our Christian service should be characterized by compassion, justice, and love. We are challenged to work for the well-being of all people, particularly the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed, in our communities."

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

"Almighty God, who has 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 use it in the maintenance of justice among all people and in the service of God, our Maker, and our Redeemer."

Pope Francis

Just as you cannot understand Christ apart from the kingdom he came to bring, so too your personal mission is inseparable from the building of that kingdom: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.

Gaudete et Exultate 25

Rev'd Dr Martin Luther King Jr. (Baptist Minister and Civil Rights Leader):

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."

Frederick Buechner (Author and Theologian):

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. Serving others is where we find our purpose in God's kingdom."

Barbara Brown Taylor:

"The Kingdom of God is not a place we go after we die; it is a reality we are called to create here and now through our actions of love, compassion, and justice."

Lives of Amazing Christians**Bishop Michael Curry**

Bishop Michael Curry is the former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, known for his powerful preaching and advocacy for social justice. He rose to prominence during the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle in 2018, where he delivered a passionate sermon on the power of love.

Bishop Curry's ministry emphasizes the transformative power of love in action. He often speaks about love as the way to heal divisions and build community, urging people to live out their faith through service to others. He has advocated for various social issues, including racial justice, economic equity, and environmental stewardship, recognizing that genuine love must manifest in concrete actions that uplift the marginalized and promote justice.

Throughout his ministry, Curry has inspired countless individuals to engage in acts of service, embodying the belief that love is not just a feeling but a call to action. His work serves as a reminder that loving our neighbour is integral to the Christian faith and crucial for building a more compassionate world.

Bishop Curry's approach highlights the connection between faith and service, encouraging Christians to actively participate in God's work of reconciliation and healing in the world.

Bishop George Bell

Bishop George Bell (1883–1958) was the Bishop of Chichester and a prominent Anglican theologian known for his commitment to social justice and peace. Born in England, he was educated at Oxford and became known for his intellectual contributions to Christian thought and his advocacy for moral integrity.

During World War II, Bell emerged as a vocal critic of the bombing of German cities, including the controversial bombing of Dresden. He argued that such actions violated the principles of Christian ethics and called for compassion even in times of war. Bell emphasized the importance of loving one's enemy, a teaching deeply rooted in the Gospel, and he sought to engage in dialogue rather than destruction.

In addition to his efforts for peace, Bishop Bell was instrumental in promoting post-war reconciliation and rebuilding efforts in Europe. He was a strong advocate for the rights of refugees and the displaced, encouraging Christians to extend their love and hospitality to those in need. He worked with various humanitarian organizations and played a significant role in the establishment of the Council of Christians and Jews, fostering understanding and cooperation between different faith communities.

Bishop Bell's legacy is marked by his unwavering commitment to love, justice, and peace, reminding us of the profound impact that active love can have in building a more compassionate world. His work continues to inspire those who strive to embody Christ's love in their lives, emphasizing that service to others is a vital expression of faith.

Personal Story

During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIA journey so far and share with the group how the acts of service they have participated in have been examples of witnessing and building God's Kingdom on earth.

You can, at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.

Activity Suggestions

Exploration

Draw or paint your idea of the Kingdom of God.

Research on what it means to be a witness. Does your new knowledge help you understand better the importance of being a witness to God's Kingdom here on earth?

Understanding

- Write a speech calling for all people to contribute to the building of the 'Kingdom of God'.
- Write a newspaper article about the ways people can be witness to the 'Kingdom of God'.
- Design an information leaflet on the life of someone whose service has helped to bring about the kingdom of God on earth. How has their work or example inspired others?

Reflection

- Take photographs and/or create an Instagram page of you and others at work for the 'Kingdom of God'.
- "When work is done in common – when hope, hardship, ambition and joy are shared – it brings together and firmly unites the wills, minds and hearts of mankind." (*Populorum Progressio*, 27). What does this tell you about working together for God's Kingdom and I being part of a Christian community?
- How do christian organisations and charities, such as Christian Aid, Tearfund or the salvation army promote the building of God's kingdom on earth? Plan an event in support of these charities for your own community.

Liturgy

Begin with stillness, or play an appropriate piece of music.

Scripture

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5:16)

In the same way, your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

Reflection

Light the large candle as a focal point.

After a moment's silent meditation, young people are invited to share their thoughts about

the symbolism of light.

Pointers for discussion:

- Do you let others see your light shine?
- How are you a shining light for others?
- Who is a light in your life?
- What significance does light have when thinking about being witnesses and builders of God's Kingdom?

Sing or play a song about light.

(Light of the world (Tim Hughes), for example)

During this time, invite the young people to come forward and light their individual candle from the large candle.

Concluding Prayer

Let us pray,

Jesus, you are the light of the world,

Bringing joy, hope, and peace, and dispelling all despair and darkness.

Shine in my heart.

Help me to turn away from darkness.

Let me bring your light to those who are afraid, alone, and lost.

Light my path, so that I can remain close to you always,

As a witness to your light and your love.

Amen.