**Towards
New Horizons**

Discerning ways forward
for our Communities

A Day of Reflection

# C:\Users\kathryn.turner\Pictures\holy_island\holyIsland_signpost.JPG

**A possible outline of a day session – feel free to adapt to suit your group and circumstances.**

Make something of the journey. If you are going to Holy Island, for example, you might think about walking to the Island along the Pilgrim Poles. There are various resources to help your reflections but a few basic ideas might be:

* See each pole as a generation in the Church/ or period in the life of your community/ stage in the history of salvation… and yourself and your community as pilgrims through that history.
* Look at the footprints of those who have gone before – where visible. Think also of the countless people who have walked the route – whose physical presence has been washed away by the sea but whose spiritual presence remains.
* At the refuge, think about why it is there – the power of the tide… rather like the power of the events/ circumstances you are facing. That, though it is needed when the tide is in full flow, there is a time of ebbing too when it is possible to move forward again.
* In muddy bits – think about how hard it can be to make progress… but aware that sometimes you just have to go through it!

If going to another place of prayer, reflect on the many people who have also made their way here - with their own joys and challenges… Allow the journey to mark a transition from the everyday and famliar to a place where people can, perhaps, be more relaxed and open to the power of God at work in their lives.

* **On arrival**

Have refreshments and time to “arrive” physically.

* **Prayer focus**

There may be a prayer focus in the church/ room you are using but you may also like to replicate your focus from home – with the addition of the envelope with things people wanted to bring with them.

* **Opening Prayer**

Reader We light a light

**All And pray that the Light of Christ**

 **and passed through generations**

**and entrusted to us at our baptism**

**might be with us and enlighten and guide us this day.** *(candle is lit)*

Reader We give thanks for the Word of God –

**All God speaking to his People generation by generation –**

 **a message ever ancient – ever new:**

**beloved of saints and sinners,
(Aidan, Cuthbert
and all the saints who have lived and prayed on this Island)**

**speaking its eternal and ever-new message to us today.**
*(Bible placed on stand/ table)*

Reader We gather as disciples of Jesus Christ

**All Whose cross and resurrection**

**reminds us that the path to the future**

**may lead through suffering and deaths**

**but that those who follow him**

**shall never be lost or forsaken**

**but shall always find a new light –**

**a new dawn.** *(cross placed on table)*

* **Scripture**

As at your local meeting, check the Readings of the Day and Sundays.

If nothing strikes you, try: Ephesians 3: 14-21.

Follow the same process as before – listening/ reading/ finding the word within the Word/ sharing reflections.

* **Reminder of why we are here – and taking it forward**

In the light of the Word of God, memories of God at work in parish history and our own stories, remind people that others have faced challenges and that God worked through them to do more than they could ever have imagined. Invite people just to dip their hand into the envelope and pick out one of the writings/ drawing and to read or describe it.

Allow a few minutes for people to ponder what they have heard/ seen and what they now feel is the work of the day. Possible prompts for reflection might be:

* What have I heard or seen in the notes and drawings we brought with us – perhaps in a way I didn’t at home?
* Am I picking up any themes – or particular areas of concern?
* Do any words from our Readings – or other words of Scripture or inspirational writings come to my mind and heart?

Invite people to share their thoughts – encouraging everyone to offer at least a brief comment.

* **Drawing out themes**

As you – and others – listen to responses to the questions see what themes seem to be emerging. Perhaps have several flip chart sheets or similar to put the thoughts into categories.

Depending on the number of themes – and number of people – you might like to suggest that people divide into groups to reflect on something that particularly attracts them. Allow half an hour or more for people to go for a walk or sit in their groups to work through the issues as they see them.

The following questions might help to focus the groups’ thoughts:

* What are the issues?
* What are the blocks to change?
* Who might need particular help in embracing or accepting necessary changes?
* What are the fears/ anxieties/ anger/ apathy / etc around this at the moment?
* What have people in the groups heard or seen so far today that might help things to move forward?
* Where does God seem to be leading us in this issue/ area of concern?
* **Sharing reflections so far**

Invite each group to report back on where their discussions/ reflections have taken them. Record as appropriate – on flip chart or typed into something like Word and projected onto a screen/wall so that people can see it – and the group can confirm that this is what they want to be recorded.

* **Pre-break prayer**Invite people to reflect on the following or similar questions:
* What have I heard/ seen today?
* What has impressed me from what others have shared?
* Where have we seemed in harmony? And where have we been edgy or irritated?
* Where does God seem to be leading us at this point?
* **Lunch break**
* **Emmaus Walk**

Depending on how well the group knows each other – and the size of it – ask people to get into pairs. You can let them choose their partner or do it randomly. (Month of birthday/ choose a number or letter from a basket and find its partner)

For those who are able, suggest that people go for a walk. For those less mobile, suggest they stay in the hall or find a bench or seat where they can be comfortable for half an hour or so.

Before people set out, pray the following or similar prayer:

Lord Jesus, you promised that where two or three are gathered,

you are there with them.

You walked along the road to Emmaus

 listening and teaching the disciples who feared they had lost so much

and who feared the future.

Be with us now as we embark on our own walk.

Listen to the words we say – and the prayer of our hearts.

Speak to us and send your Spirit upon us

so that we can hear your voice

in our hearts and through each other.

We ask this in your name.

Amen

The pairs then leave with the instruction that each person is allowed up to 15 minutes to talk uninterrupted about their pre-break reflections. Suggest they allow a few minutes between their talks to receive what each person has to say.

After both have spoken, they can head back to the hall and continue their conversation (just in pairs) over a drink and biscuit... as aware as they can be of the third Person invisible alongside them.

* What new insights are they given?
* What would they like to bring back from the walk to the rest of the group?
* **Drawing things together**

When people re-gather – depending on numbers…

Pairs could join with another pair and share what happened on their Walk. As the conversation progresses, ask them to be alert to any similarities and differences. Fours could then spend time talking – and listening! – to another four. Try to discern what the common threads are ready to feed back to the whole group. Alternatively, ask people to jot them onto post-its to stick on the wall.

Pairs could report straight back to the whole group. Again, be alert to what seem to be common threads and thoughts that speak of the Holy Spirit at work within the group.

* **Short break –**

to look at the post-its or threads that have emerged and been recorded – possibly with refreshments.

* **What are we taking back?**

Read/ re-read the passage from your chosen scripture.

Invite people to look back over the day in the light of the Reading…

* How have I experienced the height, length, etc of God’s love?
* When have I felt the fullness of that love – directly or through others?
* Do I believe God’s Word that, through Christ, I and my community can do more than I can yet imagine?
* What one thing do I sense I am being called to do in response to today?

At this point, you might like to give people a card – maybe a postcard from where you have been today – and an envelope. Suggest that they write or draw a summary of these last reflections on the card, seal them in their envelope and then address it to themselves. (Arrange to have these posted to arrive – hopefully! – in time for your next meeting. If this is not possible, take them away and hand them out at the beginning of that meeting)

* **Closing Prayer**

God of all time,

you are eternal

and in your sight our lives are like grass –

here today and gone tomorrow.

Yet, you love us with enduring love

and sustain us day by day

and hold us precious in your eye.

We give thanks for the blessings of this day –

and pause to name one thing that has been your particular gift to each of us…

*(People offer a very brief summary of that one thing)*

We pray that all that has been difficult or disturbing might be left here –

(to be washed away by the tides –

blown away by the winds –)

but that all that is good and true and of you

will come with us,

and return with us to bless our parish/ community.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

Glory be to the Father -

**in whom we live and move**

**and have our being.**

Glory be to the Son -

**Whose name we bear**

**and who calls each of us**

**to be his disciples;**

**to build his Kingdom**

**and to go out into the world**

**and bear its fruit.**

Glory be to the Holy Spirit -

**pouring out grace and guidance,**

**forming us and renewing us.**

Inspire us all

In the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

**to live the Gospel,**

**to be open to change**

**and to move forward together in hope.**

And may God bless us and keep us

and, until we meet again,

may God hold us in the palm of his hand.

**Amen**