

Stepping out into our community

Vision: To allow God space to inspire us to trust him and take risks as we move forward in engaging with our community more deeply and to develop in us the attitudes and skills to be effective facilitators of transformation

Introductory reflection

Ask everyone to think of a short story of a positive personal change that you have made in your life (whether work, family, internal). You don't need to share the stories themselves but reflect together on the things that helped and hindered change for you in that situation, especially those that are non-tangible (e.g. faith, relationships). *What does this reflection show us about helping others through a process of change – whether physical, spiritual or emotional?*

Matthew 14: 22-33 – Walking on water:

Questions to discuss:

1. What happens in this story: What are the disciples afraid of? What gives Peter the courage to get out of the boat? Why does Peter start to sink? What happens when he does?
2. What can we learn from this as we step out as a church to follow God's call to engage more deeply in our community? What attitudes and approach do we need?
3. What group is God calling us to listen more deeply to, where our church or we personally already engage with our community? (see 'Going deeper' below)
4. What aspects of this next step do you fear most or find it hard to trust God?
5. What experience have we each had before where God has enabled us to take a risk? What helped us go forward then that could encourage us now?

Act of Love

Prayerfully ask God what one step he wants us to take this week to engage more deeply with a group or person from the community, whether formally or informally, so we are well positioned to begin the Discover Community activities with them.

Pray together **Colossians 1:11**: *"We pray that you will have the strength to stick it out over the long haul - not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us."* (The Message)

Going deeper:

Give everyone post-its/ small papers and pens. Ask them to think of all the groups that we engage with in our community, whether as a church or as individuals or a group. Write each one on a post-it and spread them out on a wall or in the middle of the group. Cluster the ones that are the same or linked. Pray over them, asking God to show where he wants you to prioritise your time and listening as part of the 'Discover Community together' activities.

Summary for facilitator:

Stepping out to work with our church and community is always a risk but God promises to be beside us. He asks us to trust him, keeping our eyes fixed on him – and that it does not matter when we fail as he will catch us. But if we don't get out of the boat, we will not need his saving hand. Our own experiences of change show us that it is not easy. It depends on many factors, including us having courage, trusting God, persevering and having people around us to support and encourage us as we take each step. So as we go forward to engage with our community more deeply, we need to encourage each other and them. People need space to reflect for themselves about what changes they want to make, to have a voice, feel listened to and have support around them to move forward.

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