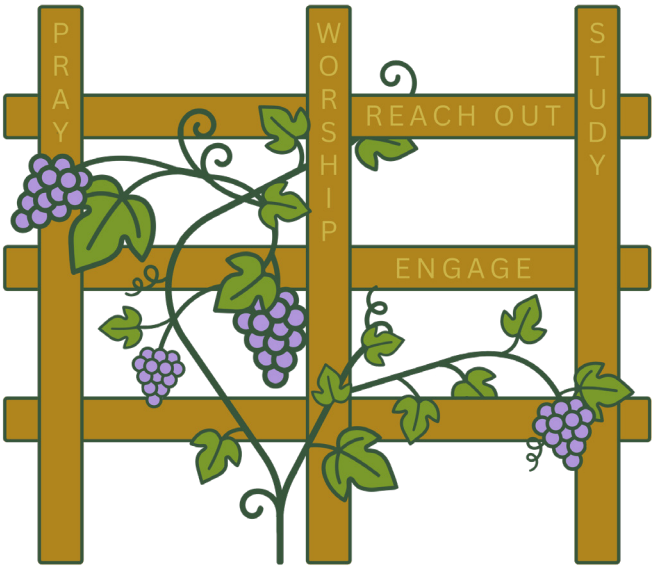
Diocese of Hereford
FLOURISHING TOGETHER
Season of Renewal



SESSION FOUR

Branching out: reach out & engage

AIM: Today we reflect on our involvement both with protecting our environment and our care for hurting people in our communities

'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.'
John 15:12,13,18-20.

REFLECTION

Engaging with Creation Engaging with Community

QUESTIONS

1. What things in society cause you concern?
2. What can you do to reach more courageously into your community?
3. How far are you prepared to leave the 'comfort zone' of your life and reach out to engage with those hurting in your community? Are there fresh ways in which you can somehow support the lonely, the refugee, the stigmatized?
4. What part can you play to protect the environment? What do you know about the pollution of our rivers Wye, Clun and Lugg? Why is flooding increasing?
5. What in the world is calling out for a compassionate response right now?



PRAYER EXERCISE

Use the 'cross-prayers' commended by Francis of Assisi, known among the Celtic saints as the 'cross-vigil'. Open your arms wide – extend them as far as you can like a tree or vine reaching out its branches.

First, embody a solidarity with the Cross. Think of Jesus opening wide his arms on the cross to embrace all who suffer, all who are in any form of distress. Think of Christ's all-encompassing love and acceptance.

Second, think of the Risen Christ and the way he longs to enfold whole of creation, the little ones and marginalized ones of the earth.

Third, offer this prayer as an act of intercession. It is a prayer that hurts – in the sense that your arms will grow weary and ache (Exod 17:11,12). Let this connect you to those who are in pain, those who are hurting: the sick, the dispossessed…

Finally, use this prayer-action as an act of self-offering. Look at your hands that have been uplifted in prayer: who will they touch, and bless today? Offer yourself afresh to God for your part in his mission of reconciliation in the world.