



W *i* T N E S S

LIVING THE MISSION OF JESUS



WINCHESTER DIOCESE
LENT COURSE
2016



LIVING THE MISSION OF JESUS

Welcome to 'iWitness'!

The Diocese of Winchester's Lent Course for 2016 is designed to help us grow in confidence as we witness to the Gospel in all its fullness.

Rooted in the Acts of the Apostles and Luke's Gospel, it will help us to explore how Living the Mission of Jesus in the power of his Holy Spirit means we are people and communities who:

Steward Faithfully

Act Justly

Serve Sacrificially

Teach Effectively

Proclaim Boldly.



DIOCESE of
WINCHESTER

All the materials for the course are available online at **winchesterlent.org**; you can also contact us through the website.

As well as this booklet, which is designed for individual use, there is also a book containing material for use with groups. Some of that material may be useful if you are preparing sermons to support this course.

Other material is available online, and on a limited number of USB sticks – including suggestions for youth groups, some short films, and practical examples of Living the Mission of Jesus in this Diocese.

Introduction

This booklet is for individuals – whether or not they are part of a group following the Lent Course.

If you are in a group, the material here is designed to be used between meetings. So for example the ‘Week 1’ material here builds on the material covered by the group in Week 1, which is presented in the groups’ book. If you are in a group but miss a session, the material here will help to bridge the gap.

If you are not in a group, this booklet will provide you with lots of food for thought, reflection, prayer and action. If you can meet occasionally with one or two others to discuss your learning, it will help you relate your reflections to real life.

See if you can find an hour or so each week to engage with the material, but if you’re short of time, decide which aspect of the week’s task will be most useful for you and focus on that. There’s space for your notes each week.

In the first group meeting, people were invited to reflect on how God reveals himself through his creation – in particular through the natural world. You are invited to reflect in the same way.

DISCOVER

If you've been outdoors today, in what ways have you experienced the world around you, through your five senses? (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching/feeling)

You might pause to give thanks for these everyday sensations, and especially for any which brought you comfort or joy...

Can you think of moments this winter when you've caught a glimpse or heard a whisper of **God** in creation? How would you describe the sense you had of **who God is?**

If you go out tomorrow, why not take your camera/phone and take some photos of natural things which catch your eye – and then use them as ways into prayer.

How else does God reveal himself to you? As well as 'nature', people often mention the Bible, an inner voice or thought or sensation, dreams, things other people say or do, events or circumstances. Sometimes they mention an audible voice or a vision, or other 'supernatural' experiences. **What about you?** Try making a list of some specific experiences when God has revealed himself to you.

How many of these experiences have you told someone else about? Who might be interested? Central to this course is the idea that people love stories! – and you might enjoy reading some of the God-stories on the websites listed at the end of this section.

REVIEW

The task for this week is to put together the story of your experience of God – your spiritual journey. For many people, there's a definite sense of before and after becoming a Christian; for others the process is more gradual and the transition less clear.

It may be helpful to start by jotting down everything which seems relevant – including significant people, places and experiences; important questions, challenges, explorations and discoveries; key moments, insights and decisions...

When you're ready to 'tell your story', at least on paper, you could simply write it all out in full, as if you were writing a letter (or an email) to someone who didn't know much about Christianity. If it's more than a few hundred words, you might need to edit it a bit! And it's worth checking that it's in everyday language, free of Christian jargon.

Alternatively, you could:

- *Draw a time-line across a sheet of paper, charting the ups and downs of your spiritual journey, with some notes or symbols to explain the significance of the various peaks and troughs.*
- *Divide your life into decades or life-stages, and note the key life events in each, then reflect on your experience of God during each period and add some more notes.*
- *Summarise your faith story as if it was a book: decide on a title/sub-title, then list the chapter titles as they might appear on the 'Contents' page.*
- *Draw a series of pictures, cartoons or symbols (road signs, perhaps?), each illustrating a key event in your spiritual growth and development.*

COMMUNICATE

However you decide to unpack your story on paper, it's important that you can also communicate it (or bits of it) in conversation when the opportunity arises. It's also useful to be able to summarise **what difference being a Christian makes** for you.

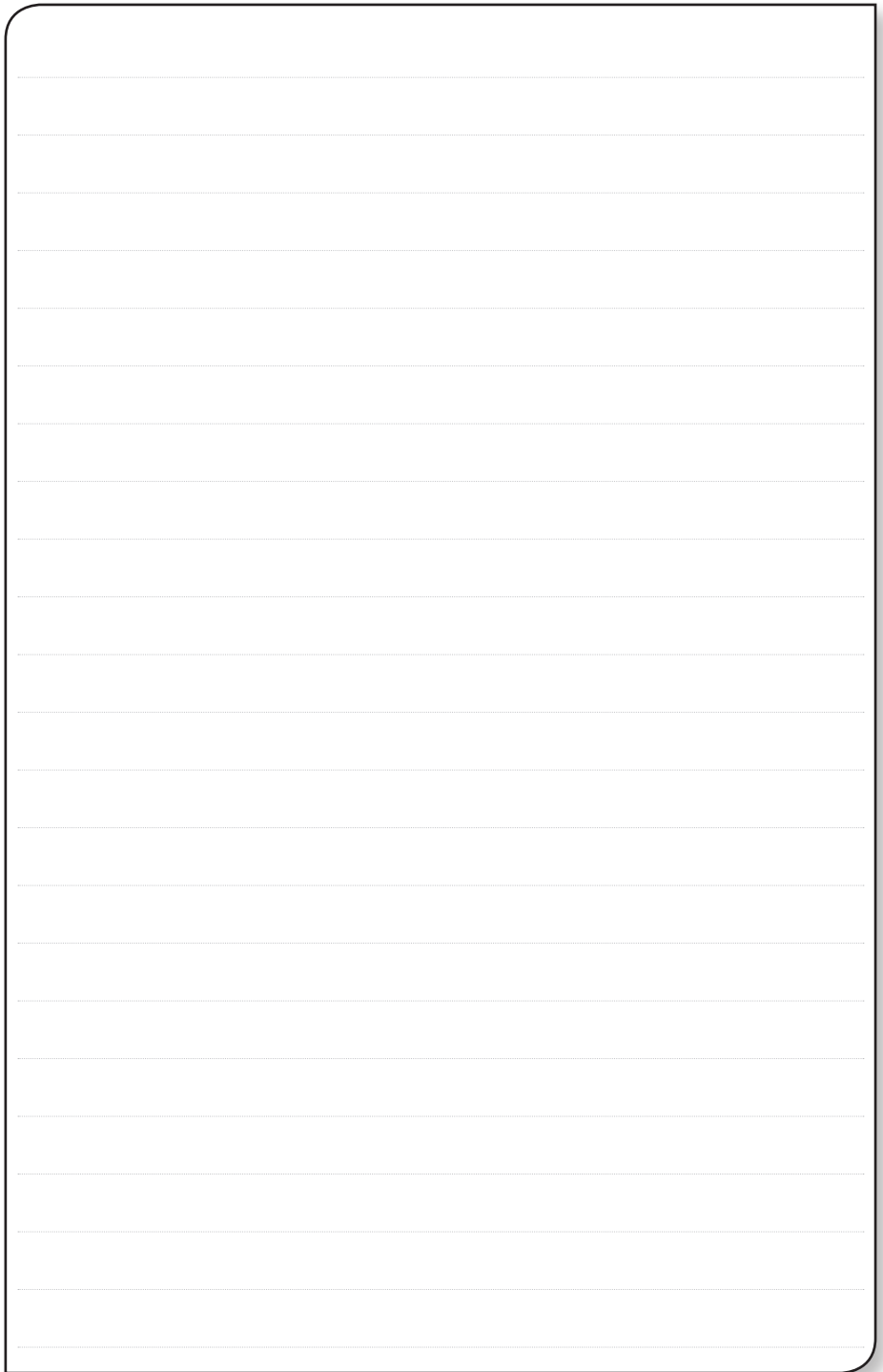
Meanwhile take some time to reflect prayerfully on your story: it's likely that as you talk it over with God, you'll discover new things about yourself and about him.

You might also think and pray about who might be interested in aspects of your story, and how you'd communicate the relevant bits...

If you're willing, ask God to give you opportunities to talk about your story over the next few days – and dare to take the opportunities when they arise!

If you'd like to read some other God-stories, have a look at one of these websites:

- christianitytoday.com – search for 'testimonies' (also a magazine)
- newchristian.org.uk – see 'personal stories'
- knowmystory.co.uk – young people's stories



WEEK 2: GOD'S STORY - PART ONE

In the second group meeting, people were invited to explore who God is, and to think about how we might communicate what (we) Christians believe.

REFLECT

Our task for this week is to think through what exactly the Christian message is – what is this 'Good News' we're called to share, and how can we communicate this gospel simply and clearly to those who are interested. It needn't be any more difficult or complicated than explaining the plot of your favourite film or book.

You might like to (re)visit the 'alternative Profession of Faith' (from Common Worship) below, and see if you can express each aspect of the Trinity more simply and clearly – in your own everyday words.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

I believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

EXPLAIN

Then see if you can summarise the Good News as a 'tweet' (a text message on the social networking site Twitter), which can't be more than 140 characters – about 30 words! – and should include Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You might find it helpful to visit a couple of websites which explain the Christian message, for example:

- **christianity.org.uk** – lots of different angles on the Gospel
- **rejesus.co.uk** – all about Jesus!
- **trypraying.org** – see 'The Point'
- **church-on-the-net.com** – in-depth articles

And/or you may have access to books or leaflets which explain the gospel in straightforward language – it's worth enquiring at a Christian bookshop if you have the opportunity, otherwise you could try a website:

- **thegoodbook.co.uk** – resources for faith-sharing, including leaflets/booklets
- **sgmlifewords.com** – resources for faith-sharing, including leaflets/booklets
- **hopetogether.org.uk** – ideas & resources for faith-sharing

You'll notice that some of these websites/publications also include diagrams explaining God's loving purpose for the world, the significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Are there particular phrases or diagrams which would help you explain what Christians believe, and why this is Good News?

EXPLORE

When you've had a go at summarising the Good News in about 30 words, take some time to reflect prayerfully on what you've written or drawn. You might like to talk to God about what you really believe; you might dare to explore some of your doubts and difficulties...

You'll notice that the above 'Profession of Faith' invites people to express not only their **belief** in God, but also their **trust** in him. There's a big difference between assenting to a set of propositions about God, and living your life depending on them being true: this 'propositional knowledge' (knowing about God) can be contrasted with 'experiential knowledge', which is based on a personal relationship with God.

Again, you might unpack some of this in prayer, inviting God to draw you deeper into relationship with him... As you do, it's worth exploring any resistance or fear you experience as you sense his invitation to trust him more fully...

*You may want to make some more notes about how you'd explain what **you** believe, and/or what it means to **you** to be a Christian, in simple, jargon-free language.*

PRACTICE

Why not try it out on someone? It's probably easiest to find a Christian who's willing to listen – and they might give you some helpful feedback – but you could also keep an eye out for an interested individual who isn't (yet) a Christian.

While you're at it, see if you can find a committed atheist who's willing to tell you why they **don't** believe in God. If you know a number of such people, you could do some research and perhaps present your findings (anonymously of course) to your church or Christian group... it would probably help you to refine your 'Good News story' in a useful way.

Two other things which might help you communicate God's Story more confidently:

Set yourself the task of reading through the whole of Luke's gospel over the next couple of weeks, perhaps in a modern translation (eg. the New Living Translation).

Try memorising one or more of these Bible verses – printed here from the New International Version (UK), but of course you can use any translation. Once you've learnt a verse, you can then paraphrase it slightly to suit the conversational context.

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'

(Isaiah 43:1)

'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'

(John 3:16)

'the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

(Mark 10:45)

Jesus said... 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

(John 14:6)

'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;

and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

(Isaiah 53:6)

'God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

(Romans 5:8)

'it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.'

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.’

(1 Peter 2:24)

‘All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’

(Acts 10:43)

‘if you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’

(Romans 10:9)

‘to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God’

(John 1:12)

‘if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!’

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus said, ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.’

(John 10:10)

‘Come near to God and he will come near to you.’

(James 4:8)

‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.’

(Revelation 3:20)

A blank sheet of lined paper with horizontal ruling lines and a dashed midline, resembling notebook paper. The page is otherwise empty.

WEEK 3: HIS STORY, HER STORY

In the third group meeting, people were invited to think about the (many) roles they play in different areas of their lives, the people they relate to in those roles, and how they might grow some of those relationships.

NETWORK

Our task for this week is to identify people we know who might be on a journey to faith, and to consider how we might be able to accompany them.

First, have a go at mapping the networks of people you're connected to – either by creating separate lists for each area of your life, each including all the people you relate to in that area/role; or by drawing overlapping circles of people (one circle for each role/area); or by drawing a spider diagram with you in the middle and people arranged around you, according to how close the relationships are.

You could look at your phone, diary, address book or Christmas card list to check you haven't forgotten anyone who's significant to you.

Then reflect prayerfully on your lists/diagram: how does God see all these people? Which of them do you think already know him? And which do you think are being drawn towards him at this point in their lives?

If you are willing, ask God to show you who you might be able to journey with as they respond to the Holy Spirit's work in their lives... there might be two or three people, maybe more.

How might you invest in your relationship with one or more of those you've noticed? Might you be able to spend a bit more time with them? Perhaps you could invite them round for a coffee, or out for a drink? Or for a dog-walk?!

PRAY

Probably the two most important things you can do are to **pray** for these people, and to **listen** to them – both of which take time.

You might like the idea of Five-a-Day prayer – here's the basic idea:

PRAY FOR 5!

Choose 5 people.

(one older, one younger, and 3 others)

**Pray for these 5,
for 5 minutes**

(a minute each)

**for 5 days a week
for 5 weeks...
*then rejoice!***

Try praying with or without words; try praying with your head or with your heart; try writing or drawing your prayer; try miming or singing your prayer... it needn't be boring!

LISTEN

Really listening to someone is a great gift. People know when we're not really listening – perhaps because we're distracted, or because we're focusing on our response. But we're never too old to learn the art of listening; here are some pointers:

- *Position yourself appropriately – get the right distance, angle & height*
- *Have an open posture, perhaps leaning forward slightly*
- *Make appropriate eye contact*
- *Use your facial expression & body language to respond to what's being said*
- *Allow them time to think, as well as to speak – don't fill their silences*
- *Make helpful 'encouraging noises' (eg. Mmmm...)*

You may notice that if you start to deliberately do these things, people will talk to you a lot more – so you'll need to allow them more time! And God speaks to us through others' stories.

Some people will happily tell their stories without any further encouragement, but for those who struggle to express themselves, or who don't feel that anyone would be interested, reflecting, paraphrasing or asking open questions can be really helpful:

- *Reflecting back/mirroring: pick out a key word or phrase and gently repeat it back, to show you're attentive & interested.*
- *Paraphrasing: use your own words to rephrase the key theme(s), in a tentative, non-judgemental way, to show – or check – your understanding.*
- *Asking open questions: use a question such as 'What...?' or 'How...?' to encourage the speaker to say more (and perhaps go deeper), on their own terms.*
- *Summarising: gather up the main threads, from the speaker's point of view, to show you listened and understood.*

If you'd like some practice, have a go at turning some closed questions into open ones, as in the examples:

Closed question: Was it a good meeting?

Open question: What happened at the meeting?

Closed question: Won't you be glad when the baby comes?

Open question: How are you feeling about the new arrival?

Closed question: Did you enjoy school?

Open question:

Closed question: Are you still angry with your boss?

Open question:

Closed question: Aren't you worried about the operation?

Open question:

Closed question: Would you like me to help you?

Open question:

See what happens when you deliberately ask open questions instead of closed ones, even with people you know well!

As people open up to you more and more, and as you hear more of their story you may notice echoes of God's story. Keep reading Luke's gospel (as suggested last week) so you become more and more familiar with the life and work of Jesus Christ – whose story may connect in surprising ways with the stories of those you listen to.

If you memorised a Bible verse last week, check you can still remember it – and learn another one! (See last week's list.)

A blank sheet of lined paper with horizontal ruling lines and a dashed midline, resembling notebook paper. The page is oriented vertically and has rounded corners at the top and bottom. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.

WEEK 4: MY STORY - PART TWO

In the fourth group meeting, people were encouraged to explore the difficulties they may have in talking about their faith, and the difficulties others may have with the Christian faith – some of which we may share!

QUESTION

Our task for this week is to address our own difficulties, and to consider how we might engage with others who are struggling with questions and doubts.

Start by reviewing what we've explored already: look back through this booklet and any notes you've made here or elsewhere. Do you feel more confident about telling your story now than you did at the beginning? If so, what's changed?

Take a moment to think about, and perhaps jot down, what still feels difficult. What makes it hard for you to communicate confidently with others about your faith?

Now spend a bit of time communicating with God about all this... you might even try writing him a letter. Or you could write a journal entry about your thoughts and feelings...

SHARE

Probably the most effective way to overcome our lack of confidence about telling our stories is to 'Just Do It' – or, as one self-help book title suggests, 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway'! Like most things, it gets easier with practice.

It's also worth bearing in mind that the people we're thinking of and praying for are human beings just like us – we have so much in common. At times we all

experience joy and sorrow, love and anger; we're all a mixture of hopes and fears; we all do right and wrong. Most people have some kind of experience of God, and most people have doubts and questions.

So go with your curiosity and ask people about their experience/sense of God? Or about their 'spirituality', or their experiments with prayer? You could see it as background research for this course. Don't forget the skills of listening and responding... people are often delighted to tell their stories to someone who is genuinely interested.

You might also pray for opportunities to share a snippet of your story and/or God's story in the course of everyday conversations – and you could think about how you'd respond to these comments:

"I shan't be here on Monday – I've got to go to a funeral."

"I wonder if I tried meditation I'd feel less stressed?"

"I went to a convent when I was little, and they made God sound really scary."

"Why are you a Christian?"

"I went to church on Sunday for the first time in years, and I got really emotional."

"The bit I don't get is why Jesus let them kill him...?"

"I have tried reading the Bible, but I didn't really get anywhere."

"I just can't forgive myself..."

"Do you think there's any point in praying for someone who's dying?"

"I had this weird dream – there was this beautiful person – I think it was Jesus."

"Do you believe in angels?"

"All those happy Christians – sometimes I really hate them."

RESEARCH

If it's other people's difficulties and questions which bother you, how about engaging with these issues, either by talking them over with someone whose wisdom you respect or by doing some reading:

John Pritchard's book *How to Explain Your Faith* is excellent, and so is the *Six Big Questions* Grove booklet (Ev 97) by John Hibberd – also available online on the throughfaithmissions.org website – choose '6 Big Questions' from the menu bar. CS Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* is a classic; his *Mere Christianity* is also a great read. Or for a recent book on similar lines, try Tim Keller's *The Reason for God*. Another helpful website with an apologetics slant is bethinking.org. In this context, it's useful to think about why you are (still) a Christian, despite the difficulties and doubts which you encounter in your own life. (Have you ever listened to 'Unbelievable' on Premier Christian Radio on Saturdays at 2.30pm?)

If you've finished reading Luke's gospel, see if you can also read the book of Acts before Easter. It's a great reminder of how effectively ordinary people

(fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) can communicate both their stories and God's story when they are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So let's ask the Holy Spirit to fill and enable us to do the same:

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with
the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the
breath of love,
and renew the face of the
earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Father,
pour out your Spirit upon your
people,
and grant us a new vision of
your glory,
a new experience of your
power,
a new faithfulness to your
Word,
and a new consecration to
your service,
that your love may grow
among us,
and your kingdom come;
through Christ our Lord.

A blank sheet of lined paper with horizontal ruling lines and a dashed midline for handwriting practice. The page is otherwise empty.

WEEK 5: GOD'S STORY - PART TWO

In the final group meeting, people were invited to reflect on the question, 'What does a mission-shaped me look like?' God wants to use each one of us, as unique individuals, to 'witness' to him, pointing people to Jesus rather than to ourselves

Our task for this week is to work out our own individual Mission Action Plan, or iMAP – and to begin to put it into practice. Holy Week and Easter often provide opportunities to talk naturally about Jesus and what he has done for us.

Start by reviewing what you've learnt this Lent, then create your individual Plan:

REVIEW

As you look back over this course, what seems most significant to you?

How do you think God has been at work in you?

How are you already communicating about him with others?

PLAN

Looking forward with God, what do you think he is inviting you to do differently?

How could you communicate the Good News more effectively?

Not long before Pentecost, Jesus told his disciples,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere –

in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8)

Ask God for the power of his Holy Spirit right now. And let him fill you again tomorrow...

Empowered by his Spirit, where does Jesus want you to be his witness in 2016?

Write your name in the first gap, then prayerfully fill in the rest:

You, ,

will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

And you will be my witness... in

.....

..... ,

throughout

.....

..... ,

in

.....

..... ,

and to the ends of the earth.

Having identified some places or situations where you can be a witness to Jesus, what might this involve?

For example,

- building relationships with one or two people whom you sense God might be drawing to himself – praying for them, making time to really listen to them, and sharing snippets of your story and/or God’s Story as the opportunity arises
- asking other Christians how they came to know Christ, and learning from the way they tell their stories
- reading ‘Six Big Questions’, or something similar, if you’d like to feel more confident in responding to people’s difficulties.

When your Plan feels ‘finished’, take some time to offer it to God, and to talk it through with him.

WITNESS

If it’s helpful, you might set yourself some specific goals to work towards by Easter:

- look for an opportunity to tell someone what Holy Week/Easter means to you
- invite someone to come to church with you on Easter Day
- finish reading the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, if you haven’t already done so.

How about finding someone to share your Plan with, and to pray with? If you have both made Plans, you could make yourselves accountable to one another, meeting regularly to discuss what you’re learning as you grow in confidence as witnesses to Jesus.

You might also decide to keep a spiritual journal to help you reflect on and learn from God’s Story, your story, and others’ stories. As well as using it in prayer, you could also talk some of it over with a spiritual director. And you will probably want to Review your Plan in the light of your experience.

Sooner or later, you will come across a brand-new Christian – perhaps someone you have been able to introduce to Jesus. As well as welcoming them into a Christian community, where they too can learn to Live the Mission of Jesus, you can help them grow in their new relationship with God through prayer and Bible reading.

Here are some websites/apps others have found helpful:

- **nowachristian.org** – online beginner’s course
- **wordlive.org.uk** – online Bible readings
- **biblesociety.org.uk** – online Bible reflections – ‘lyfe’
- **sacredspace.ie** – online daily prayer and reflection
- **pray-as-you-go.org** – online daily prayer/reflection, with music

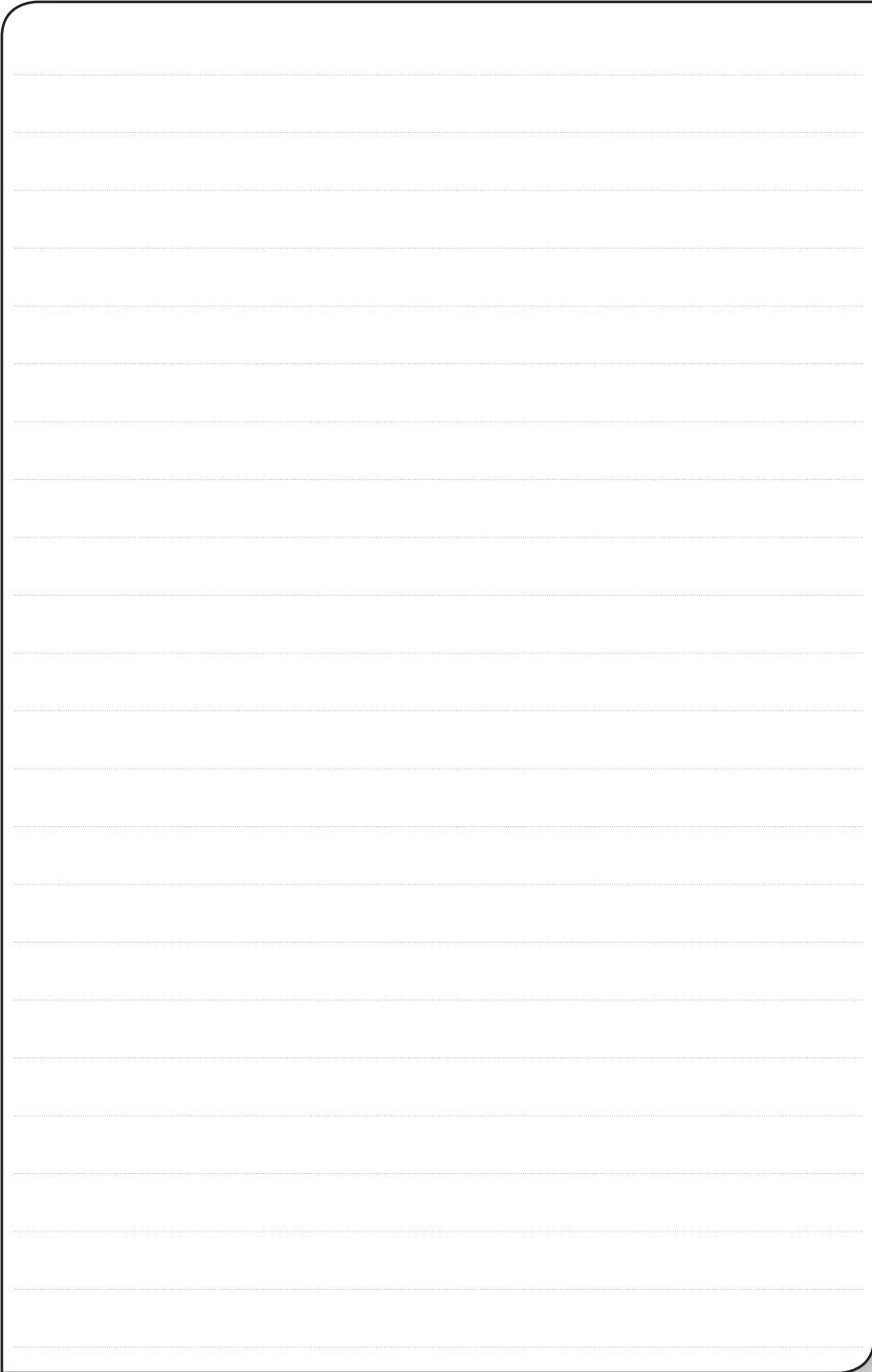
And if you’d like to learn more about telling God’s Story and your story, these books may be helpful:

Evangelism for the Rest of Us – Mike Bechtle

Out of the Saltshaker and into the World – Rebecca Manley Pippert

Sharing Jesus – Rob Frost

How to Explain Your Faith – John Pritchard



A blank sheet of lined paper with horizontal ruling lines and a dashed midline, resembling notebook paper. The page is oriented vertically and has rounded corners at the top and bottom. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.



WINCHESTER DIOCESE
LENT COURSE
2016



DIOCESE of
WINCHESTER

School of Mission
lent@winchester.anglican.org

www.winchesterlent.org