

Session THREE: Exploration

*The purpose of this session
to understand ourselves better*

*Timings of this session
around 90 minutes*

*You will need
to keep a record of what you discover together*

*Welcome everyone to the session: [10 minutes]
ask everyone to share something they have valued from the last session.*

Introduction: [15 minutes]

Jesus often spoke in Parables to communicate what the Kingdom of God is like, that is, to reveal how God wants the world to be.

The Church needs to be a living example of this, a glimpse of what God's world could look like.

Here are two of the ways Jesus explained this.

If your group is large enough you could split into two groups and take a passage each.

Story A: Mark Chapter 4 verse 30 - 32

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'



Story B: Luke Chapter 13 verse 20 - 21

And again he said, 'To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

Pause for prayer:

[5 minutes]

God of new life and tender, green shoots,
we offer to you the seeds of new life
we hope to plant in your name –
different ways of doing things
that share your good news in unlikely places,
hidden growth that starts unseen
and erupts with energy as your Spirit takes hold of it,
moments when we listen for your voice
and entrust ourselves to act on what we see and hear.
May we welcome the new friends and partners you send us
and keep taking risks to build your world
of justice, joy and peace. Amen

Amen.

Sharing our experiences:

[20 minutes]

At the end of our last session you were invited to make contact with a local group or church in your community and find out what issues they are facing.

Spend around 20 minutes now sharing together what you have discovered.

- *Think about ...*
- *Are there any shared themes or patterns emerging in what you are sharing about your community?*
- *What are the challenges and opportunities, and how do you **feel** now you've shared this?*

Going deeper ... *Exploration*

[30 minutes]

Take some time together to share honestly about your church(es). Two different approaches are outlined below. We begin with a problem solving approach, then we look for opportunities for change and growth which can help to fuel creative solutions.

Challenges:

- What takes up most time and energy?
 - Is that what you feel called to be doing?
- Have some things just become a chore?
 - Could they be done more easily?
- We often say 'there aren't enough people to do all the jobs.'
 - Do some jobs still need doing? Could Synod help with some tasks?
- What do you feel you most need help with?
 - List as many things as you want, big and small.

Opportunities:

- What has ended recently which hasn't been missed?
 - Is there any need to bring it back?
- What hasn't taken place for some time which has left a hole?
 - How can that need be filled now?
- What new ways of working have you found?
 - Which ones are worth developing?

Homework:

Before next session ...

- Arrange to have a coffee with someone in your church who isn't part of these sessions, ideally someone you don't know yet.

Closing prayer:

*May our ears hear you in our exploring,
as we discover Jesus afresh in each other. **Amen.***