

“WE HAVE A DREAM TO SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS WITH EVERY HOME IN ELY”



With a well organised massive leaflet drop we could meet this ambition in the space of the next few weeks – but, when we speak of sharing the love of Jesus, surely, we are imagining something much more earthy, tangible, real and true, than just words. As we think about vision this week, just what might our sense of mission look like in time to come? Where will we be seeing the love of Jesus being shared, who will be involved. What will it feel like to be involved? The following imaginative exercise intends to help us to imagine these things together and we'd love for you to share with us the things your small group imagines, so that we can share together in building a picture up of images and thoughts that describe more of what this mission of sharing God's love with every home in Ely looks like in our shared thinking and heart across our church.

Begin with a time of prayer and take some time to Dwell in the Word in Isaiah 61

Make sure everyone has sight of the passage and have someone read it aloud. Invite people to notice where their attention is drawn in the passage. Have someone else read it aloud for a second time. Then when people are ready invite them to share with a partner in the room the bit of the passage that drew their attention. Invite them to listen deeply to each other and tell them that when you all come back together you will invite them to share with the group what their partner shared with them. Give them time to share together, just a few short minutes, and then, when you've drawn everyone back together again, invite them to share their partners noticing with the rest of the group. When everyone has had an opportunity to share, take some time to ponder what you have heard together. Finish this activity with someone reading the passage again.

(Try not to take more than 20 minutes on the passage as you'll want the bulk of your time to be spent on imagining vision)

Then take some time to work through the following imaginative exercise.

1. Make sure each of you are seated in a comfortable place. Pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to work through you; pray for a sense of the Spirit's presence in your group as you imagine. You might find it helpful if one person in the group takes on responsibility for reading steps 2 –4 as everyone takes time to individually reflect. Read these steps slowly, particularly section 4, to give time for people to start imagining what they are seeing.
2. Invite everyone to close their eyes and place themselves at a future point five years from now and using your imagination begin to look around the city and the places where you live and notice what you imagine the next five years of sharing the love of Jesus with every home in Ely has realized.
3. This is where the balloon comes in. Imagine you are in a balloon hovering and drifting slowly over city and places where you live. Imagine yourself seeing various points, around the city, in and around your group and your wider community. Imagine yourself travelling over the city at different times of the week - on a Sunday morning or a Tuesday afternoon, for example.

4. Where in the city or in our communities do you see things happening as a result of our congregation sharing Jesus' love with every home? Who are you imagining being involved? What events or activities are taking place in your mind's eye? What impact and knock-on effect do you imagine it having? What do you sense about the things you imagine happening? What is happening within church and beyond church? What do you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste that is going on? Being a part of this community, what do you sense that pleases you very much? What are the things you are imagining making you think or feel? You can be as abstract or concrete as you want – just notice what you are seeing in your mind's eye.
5. Invite people to jot down the images and thoughts that have come to mind during this time of individual reflection
6. When done, share together the images and thoughts you have had with the rest of the group. Take turns sharing the images with the other members of your group. Have someone quickly jot them down on a flip chart or a large sheet of paper or similar so that everyone can see and refer to them as the discussion proceeds. Sharing your ideas and imaginings may provoke new ideas and images of what it might look like in the future. Share these together too.
7. Take some time to Notice the common images, as well as distinctive elements in each of the visions. Together, discover and identify any common images in all your visions. Pay attention to the elements that made them different. What do you notice about what it looks like for folk to be involved with the different things you have imagined? What words might you use to describe the images you are sharing together? Again, have someone in the group jot these things down.
8. What are the passages of scripture or songs that come to mind when you look at the things you have noticed or imagined together? Brainstorm and jot down together the biblical images, passages stories and texts that come to mind, and perhaps songs or pieces of liturgy that connect with the things you have been talking about as a group. Jot them down alongside the other things that have been shared.
9. How might God be sending us? As we look at the different images and thoughts we have shared together, what is our sense of what God is calling us to do, or our sense of how is God sending us? What might we want to pray for, or ask God for?
10. **What is God up to?**
Invite everyone to have a go at writing a sentence that begins "God is..." that describes their sense of what they sense God is up to in our midst or in our community. Collect these up and add them to the groups notes.

End with a time of prayer, for one another, for your group, for your communities, for the church.

As a team we would love to know what comes out of this exercise for you as you imagine what might happen over time as we all lean in together to sharing the love of Jesus with every home. If you are willing, we'd love to send your collected thoughts and imaginings in to us that we might add them into to our own thoughts and reflections, and alongside those of others as we all seek to discern together the ways which God is calling us both to be and do, as a community of faith seeking to follow Christ in all this, together. Send your groups thoughts and reflections in to the team at Office@Stmarysely.org and we'll collate them together with other groups as well.