



## THINKING ABOUT SERVING THE LORD AND LIVING GOD'S WAY

### The Maker's instructions

Being a Christian is not simply a matter of what you believe. It is not simply a matter, either, of being committed to things that will help you to grow. Being a Christian should affect the whole of the way we live. God's guidelines for human behaviour are laid down in the Scriptures. They are not narrow rules but the Maker's instructions on how life is to be lived – indeed, the scriptures liberate us! For every Christian there is a call to become more like Christ over the days and years as Christ dwells in our hearts through faith.

### Loving God and loving others

This is the way Jesus summarized all the law by which Christians should live and serve:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 22.37)*

Christians are called to live in this rhythm of worship, service and mission: loving God and loving our neighbour. Jesus went on to explain this in the context of a parable (a simple story used to illustrate a moral and spiritual lesson).

### The Good Samaritan

What does it mean to love our neighbour? See the story Jesus told in Luke 10.25-37. In the light of this story ask yourself this question: who is my neighbour?

1. in the place where I live?
2. in the place where I work?
3. in the context of the whole world?
4. In my church community?

Even for Christians who are mature, it may not be always that simple to think through what is right or wrong in a situation and to put it into practice – especially when God is concerned not just for individuals but for communities and the whole world.



### Fight valiantly!

It is not always easy to live as God calls us to live. The Bible tells us we will meet difficulty and opposition in the Christian life both from within ourselves and in the world around us. According to these words from the baptism service we fight on three fronts:

*Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world, and the devil and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.*

### Strength for the Christian life

Perseverance is a vital Christian discipline. The continued renewal of grace to live as Christ calls us comes in large measure through the sacraments and the ministry of the Church. Receiving Holy Communion regularly, developing good disciplines of prayer and Bible reading, having the support of a group of other Christians, regularly confessing sins and seeking the ministry of healing are all ways we stay spiritually fit. Then we are ready to serve, minister and reach out to others.

### Into action together

Imagine there is no church at all in the neighbouring community of some place. The members of your group are sent out by your church to plant a church in that area. You

have 15 minutes to work out how you would begin; decide what your priorities as a church are and, especially, what gifts you have in your group for ministry in the new situation.

- ❖ What are the essential tasks that need to be done?
- ❖ Who will exercise which ministry?
- ❖ Everyone must play a part in the new church.
- ❖ You have no premises and a grant of just £500.



### Baptism & Confirmation – a commission for Ministry

*‘Those who are baptized are called to worship and serve God’*



(the Common Worship Baptism Service). Each of us needs to reflect on how we put that promise to serve into action. In many people’s minds, the Church is like a big double-decker bus with the vicar as the driver and the treasurer the conductor. In this model, everyone sits back and enjoys the ride to heaven. But, this is a very unhelpful image. A much better picture is that of a sports team with every member of the team playing their part in achieving new and great things – goals for the kingdom! If team members don’t turn up for training, the whole team suffers. If one team member switches off or doesn’t bother, then the whole team is affected. In Church life every member of our congregation has a role and gifts to bring and share for the building up of God’s kingdom:

- ❖ Every member of the team has a vital contribution to make.
- ❖ God has given you gifts, talents and resources that need to be discovered.
- ❖ God will call you into different ministries outside and within the Church.
- ❖ Some will be called to ordained Ministry and to service. Could that be you?

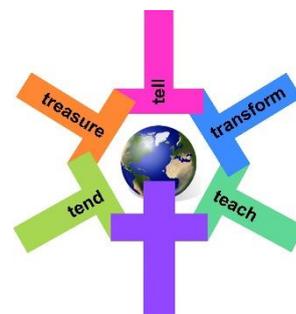
### The Anglican Five Marks of Mission

The concept of Christian ministry can easily shrink to become simply what we do in church. In fact, our Christian service is the whole of our lives offered to God in the service of the kingdom, offering the very best of who we are back to God:

*‘I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.’* (Romans 12.1).

The Anglican Communion seeks to define Christian service in these five marks of Christian mission:

- ❖ to proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
- ❖ to teach, nurture and baptize new believers;
- ❖ to respond to human need by loving service;
- ❖ to seek to transform unjust structures of society;
- ❖ to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.



### Discovering your gifts

In his letter to the Romans, Paul identifies different gifts needed for ministry and service (see Romans 12). These include teaching, service, prophecy, encouragement, mercy and leadership. Working out how Jesus calls us to serve takes time, patience and prayer. And there are some pitfalls to avoid:

- ❖ Your ministry is not confined to churchy things or Christian activities.
- ❖ Ministry is not the sole responsibility of the clergy – it is shared by the whole church.
- ❖ Upfront ministry is not more important than behind the scenes ministry.
- ❖ ‘Spiritual’ ministries are not more important than practical ones.
- ❖ Your ministry is unique to you. Don’t model yourself on anyone else.
- ❖ Every form of ministry is to be undertaken as a servant and in/with love.
- ❖ Take time to let your ministry develop and persevere in what you do faithfully.
- ❖ A balance between prayer, rest and work is important in every Christian’s life.

Remember, it is all too easy to take on too much. Do something well for God!