

Opening up to God



LEADING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

OPENING UP TO GOD

During the period of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown of church life we have learned a lot about ourselves as congregations. There are things we have always done that we had to stop doing that we have never appreciated the way we do now. There are things we could never have imagined we could do that have become potential new strings to our bow.

As leaders of the congregation, its organisations and activities, this refining experience is one in which we need to actively look for God's hand shaping the next season of our church life and witness together.

In this moment we need to prayerfully discern what it is that God wants us to **return** to as a congregation, **retain** from what we have learned in lockdown and **reassess** in terms of what we might decide to stop doing or do differently.

TREASURES REDISCOVERED AND REVEALED

Jesus said to them, 'Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'

Matthew 13:52

Like Jesus' picture, maturing as disciples in the kingdom of heaven post lockdown will see the future storeroom of our congregation's life and witness contain a mixture of old treasures we need to get back to and new possibilities we hadn't seen before.

There may also be new ways of doing old things. We can't do everything and so we find ourselves in a moment in which future priorities need to be balanced and tailored to God's design for our future.

This short session combines some questions, a visual picture and a few next steps to help leaders work through a conversation designed to illuminate God's way ahead.

WHAT TO BRING OUT OF OUR STOREROOM

You may wish to discuss these questions in groups and take feedback, have participants submit their thoughts in writing on a page provided, or use post it notes to build a picture of the answers of individuals under three headings on a wall.

However you choose to do it, aim to end up with the thoughts of your group captured in three categories as illustrated below.

1. What activities were shown during lockdown to be the foundations of our life together and our witness to others (note these in a 'to return to' column as shown below)?
2. What new ways of doing things during lockdown now offer new possibilities for the future (note these in a 'to be retained' column as shown below)?
3. What activities or ways of doing things seemed to become less important or effective than we might have thought they were before (note these in a 'to be reassessed' column as shown below)?

TREASURES OLD AND NEW		
To return to	To be retained	To be reassessed

SEEING THE TREASURE

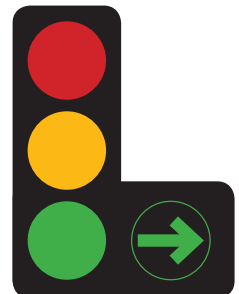
Having identified what must be **returned** to, might be **retained** and maybe shows signs of the need for **reassessment**, use the following traffic light system to begin to visually capture the next phase of life and witness together and share it with others.

Green – Things we need to return to as core activities

Green filter arrow – Things we need to return to as core activities, but which we have learned should be done in a new way through our experience in lockdown

Amber – Things we need to retain from the new things we started during lockdown

Red – Things we should reassess with a view to stopping them or investing less in them because we learned during lockdown they may not have been as important as we previously thought they were.



OWNING GOD'S TREASURED FUTURE

Spend time to pray, prioritise, plan and quickly capture your next steps.

Pray – Thanking God for what has been revealed through this activity. Ask him for wisdom in how to move forward as a congregation into the next season of your life together. Pray for the ability to carry through on what he has shown you as a leadership team.

Prioritise – You won't be able to make all the changes you might want to in one go. Choose one area from each colour of the traffic lights to invest in returning to, retaining and reassessing.

Plan – Identify one simple step you can take in each priority area and clarify what needs to be done and by who to make it happen.

TREASURES OLD AND NEW

To return to

To be retained

To be reassessed

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