



LIVING
IN LOVE
& FAITH

CONVERSATIONS

DIOCESE
OF EXETER



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
IN DEVON





LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

NOTES FOR LEADERS

This resource is designed to provide a safe space for talking about the CofE Living in Love and Faith process and the proposed prayers of Love and Faith.

Feel free to adapt it to suit your group, but the following guidance may be useful:

- Ideally the discussion is best done in small groups of up to 12 people.
- The person leading the discussion needs to act as an impartial facilitator in order to enable people to speak honestly.
- The suggested process deliberately starts in a very structured way in order to create a safe space.
- Set a time limit and advertise this in advance. 90 minutes with a 10-minute break in the middle should suffice.
- In preparation for the session, ask people to **read** the proposed prayers and the summary of the current state of play (**see Resource 1**). They could also watch the short video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvaicO05bNs&t=197s

If you use this resource, we would love to hear your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Please email: llf@exeter.anglican.org

Introduction

- Begin by welcoming everyone, and, if they don't know each other, going round the group asking everyone to say their name and where they live. If people already know each other, a nice ice-breaker is to ask people where they grew up.
- Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to hear different viewpoints and to understand where the members of the group are in relation to the proposals. We want everyone to have an opportunity to speak, but no-one will be forced to do so.
- ***Pray – “Heavenly Father, you have called us in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ to continue his work of reconciliation and reveal you to the world: forgive us the sins which tear us apart; give us the courage to overcome our fears and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.” - Common Worship: Collect for The Unity of the Church.***
- Slowly read the Commitments from the LLF Course out loud ([Resource 2](#)). You may want to ask each person to read one going round the group.
- Introduce the Pastoral Principles. Lay print outs on the floor of, what is known in the Pastoral Principles course as, the 6 pervading evils. Read each one out. ([Resource 3](#))
- Ask group members to speak out the 'evil' which most resonates for them in relation to LLF issues. E.g Fear
- Invite people to say why they chose a particular word starting with the most common.
- Ask “How might being more aware of these pervading evils help us to have good relations in the Church?”

The Prayers

- Now turn to the Prayers of Love and Faith. Explain that the prayers cannot be used until Pastoral Guidance is issued.
- Ask people: What one comment would you like to make? For example, a prayer you particularly liked / disliked. What you feel is missing?
- You might like to ask 'What one word expresses your feelings as you read the Prayers of Love and Faith?' It may be worth offering example feeling words: thankful, concerned, angry, weary, relieved, confused, frustrated, excited, dismayed, joyful...
- Now invite one or two people with 'positive' feeling words to say something about why they have chosen the words they have.
- Then invite one or two people with 'negative' words to say something about the words they have chosen.

10 minute break

Where are we now?

- Have a bean bag or something similar – pass this around the group asking each person (who wishes to) to speak for up to a minute about the questions 'What is the pressing issue for us as a church now? What do we need to attend to?'
- If there is time, pass the bean bag around again and this time let people respond (briefly) to what they have heard.
- Now allow time now for more general discussion, but also allow time for closing prayers and to finish on time.
- Ask the group to agree one sentence about your next steps (even if it is that you cannot agree!)

Conclusion

It is good to end the discussion with prayer. There are some suggested prayers and readings included in **Resource 4**.

Resource 1 Background

How do questions about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage fit within the bigger picture of the good news of Jesus Christ? What does it mean to live in love and faith together as a Church?

Since 2017, the Church of England has been journeying together exploring some of these questions by means of a suite of Living in Love and Faith resources that were published in November 2020. The bishops of the Church of England invited church communities from across the country to use the resources to learn together, to listen to one another and to God. Everyone who took part was encouraged to share their insights, stories and reflections in order to contribute to the bishops' discernment about matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

The house of bishops met during the autumn of 2022 and they have now offered some draft prayers commended for use in churches. You can find these [here](#) Use of the prayers will be a matter of conscience for each member of the clergy. At the same time the bishops issued an apology to members of the LGBTIQ+ community for the lack of welcome many had experienced. They also reaffirmed the traditional understanding of marriage as being between a man and a woman. The bishops response to the LLF process can be found [here](#).

The proposals from the bishops were considered, debated and voted for, with one amendment, at the General Synod in Feb 2023. The amendment was to ensure that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England.'

Updates are available at:

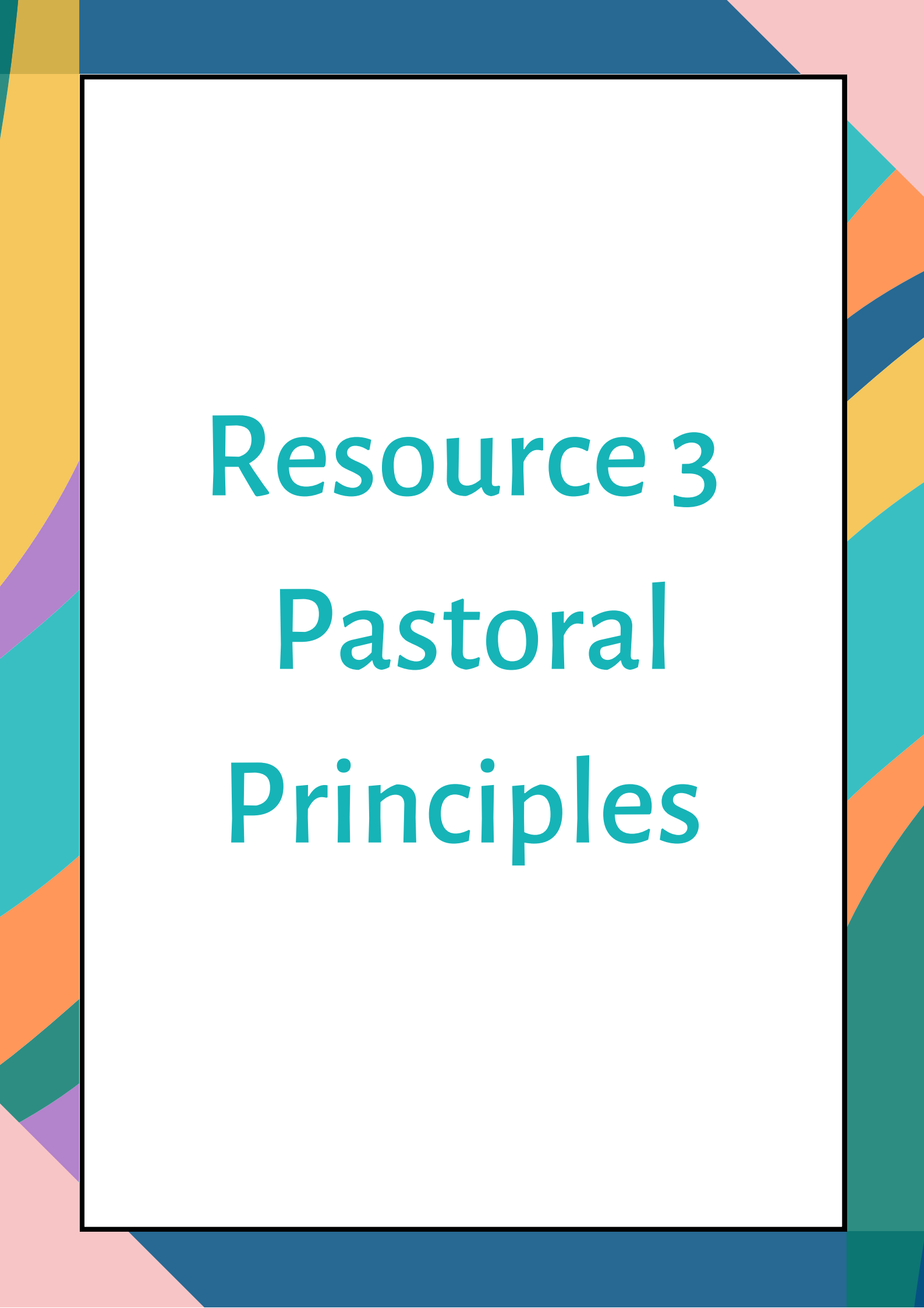
www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith/living-love-and-faith-stories-and-news

Resource 2

The Commitments

In our meeting together we commit to:

- holding each other before God in prayer;
- praying for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our conversations;
- learning together from Scripture and from each other;
- enabling everyone to speak;
- making space for those whose voices have not yet been heard to contribute – but without putting people on the spot if they don't wish to speak;
- avoiding interrupting each other, instead acknowledging what others say before moving on to have our say;
- keeping confidential anything personal that is shared;
- taking care about how we speak about others who are not in the room;
- looking out for and being sensitive to people's feelings;
- giving each other time to reflect before sharing with others;
- taking time out as a group from time to time, offering one another an opportunity to say if there is anything in the discussion they have found difficult but haven't been able to express;
- learning together how we can live more fully in the way of Christ



Resource 3

Pastoral

Principles

Acknowledge

PREJUDICE

Cast out

FEAR

Speak into

SILENCE

Admit

HYPOCRISY

Address

IGNORANCE

Pay attention to

POWER

Resource 4

Prayers & Readings

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Bible reading: **Philippians 2 - Imitating Christ's Humility**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

Resource 4

Prayers & Readings

Prayers

Holy God, you have heard our discussion, and you know our thoughts.
Open our eyes, that we might see you in the stranger.
Open our hearts, that we might share your love with others. **Amen**

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Resource 4

Prayers & Readings

A Blessing

God, bless us with discomfort at easy answers
and superficial relationships,
so that we might live deeply from our hearts.

God bless us with courage to challenge prejudice in our lives
and community,
so that all people might be seen as made in your image.

God, bless us with tears for those who feel the pain of fear,
rejection or exclusion,
so that we might reach out our hands in love.

God, bless us with enough faith and hope to believe
that we can make a difference in our world.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen