



Diocese of Bristol

† TRANSFORMING CHURCH.
TOGETHER.

Transforming Church. Together:

A short course.

**OPENNESS
GENEROSITY
CREATIVITY
BRAVERY**

Booklet 4: Bravery

“Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is old and what is new” - Matthew 13:52



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Space for notes

Introduction

This is the fourth of four booklets exploring the four values that have been discerned as part of the Transforming Church. Together process in the Diocese of Bristol.

This booklet explores the value of bravery and how we can be courageous with our voices and actions.

This session includes:

The Transforming Church. Together prayer to start the session.

An introduction to the value.

Opening questions for us individually and to discuss as a group.

Images to explore and reflect on the value.

Bible passages to be explored together on the value.

A prayer to finish the session.

Within this booklet is an opportunity to feedback to the Ministry Team and PCC your thoughts on the value of theme of bravery within the context of your church.

This booklet is based on material provided by the Revd Dr Simon Taylor and the Revd Cheryl Hawkins.

The Transforming Church. Together prayer

You may wish to light a candle and use this prayer at the start of this session.

God of the Way, you call us to leave familiar places and to set out on new paths.

Enlarge our vision of your work in the communities we serve, speak to us through the people we encounter and open our hearts to the love.

Give us courage and boldness to engage together in this time of prayer and discernment, and by your Holy, life-giving, and creative Spirit, renew your church in prayer and service, and in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Transforming Church. Together

Housegroup Feedback Form - Bravery

STOP

What gets in the way of achieving this value at our church?

START

What should we start doing to show this value at our church?

CONTINUE

What should we continue doing to show this value at our church?

What words would you use to describe the value of bravery in the context of our church?

Closing prayer

Silently sit and hold before God who or what God has placed on your heart during the session.

We pray together:

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.

O Holy Spirit, giver of light and life.

impart to us thoughts better than our own thoughts,

and prayers better than our own prayers,

and powers better than our own powers,

that we may spend and be spent

in the ways of love and goodness,

after the perfect image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

(Eric Milner-White and G W Briggs, Daily Prayer, 1941)

Bravery

We are courageous with our voices and actions.

Courage is a frequent biblical refrain, especially in times of transition and adversity. In handing over to Solomon, David urges him to “Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you”

(I Chronicles 28:20).

Daniel, under threat in exile, is told in a vision “Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!”

(Daniel 10:19).

The Psalmist urges us to “Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage, wait for the Lord!”

(Psalm 27:14).

The conditions for bravery in just these few passages are above all knowing the presence and power of God, putting aside fear, knowing that you are safe in his hands, and having the patience to wait on God.

We will be exploring these themes further, but before we do, spend a few minutes thinking about those conditions for bravery and when you may have seen them working in your own life.

If we are to transform ourselves, our church and those about us then we are going to have to act bravely: remember Philippians 4: 13 –

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me”

Our bravery is rooted in the salvation won for us on the cross by Jesus.

There is bravery in witnessing for Jesus, in calling for justice and righteousness that flow from salvation, and in the reconciliation that is needed:

- 1. between human beings,**
- 2. within the church,**
- 3. with creation and**
- 4. with God**

Discussion question

- 1. How do we as a Church community meet that challenge of bravely witnessing for Jesus, in calling for justice and righteousness, and in seeking reconciliation?**
- 2. How daunting does that task feel?**
- 3. How do we support each other in being brave witnesses?**

Take time:

Before moving on to the next section, take a moment in prayer to lift before God your discussions. For the things you have found helpful, for the things you have found challenging.

The last supper

At the end of the long discourse at the Last Supper before he was betrayed and crucified, Jesus concluded by telling the eleven disciples:

“In the world you will face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world” (John 16:33)

Here is the deepest root of Christian bravery – in Jesus` death and resurrection. Jesus has overcome sin and death is defeated. We ourselves do not have to defeat sin and death but only bear witness that they have been defeated.

Discussion question

How do we bravely bear witness that sin and death have been defeated?

At the height of Apartheid in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was preaching in the pulpit, only for soldiers and riot police to enter and surround the walls of the Cathedral. With a smile on his face, Tutu addressed the newcomers with the following words:

“Since you have already lost, I invite you today to come and join the winning side”

(The story is told in Jim Wallis, *God`s Politics: ‘Why the American Right gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn` t get it’*, Oxford:Lion, 2005, pp. 347-48)

Opening questions

How have you seen bravery in recent weeks in your life, in your local community or in the news?

Can you give examples of when you have seen bravery in your Church? In what ways if any, did this transform the life of the church, individuals, or the Community?

Share briefly what you are comfortable with in answering the above questions with the rest of the group.

Reflecting on images

Below and on the next page are some images on bravery, reflect quietly on them. Which one resonates with you the most and why? Does a different image come into your mind?

**If you feel comfortable in doing so,
share with the rest of the group.**



When Joseph realised that Mary was pregnant he resolved to quietly divorce her, until an Angel visited him and said ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.’ (Matthew 1:20)

This shows Joseph being brave in a counter-cultural way – listening to God to act in a way which would challenge the accepted social norms of the day.

Discussion questions

- 1. Are there times when in faith we should be brave and act in a counter-cultural way?**
- 2. How can we support each other in doing this – how do we make sure we look after our own wellbeing and that of others when acting bravely?**

The conditions of bravery

- Knowing the presence of God
- Putting aside fear
- Knowing that one is safe
- The patience of waiting on God

Discussion questions

- 1. Can you think of any more conditions?**
- 2. Discuss each condition. As a Church community how can we ensure that those conditions are used when we are discerning to act bravely?**

Bible reading:

Do not be afraid

Read out loud Luke 1: 26-38 leaving a short time for silence afterwards.

The phrase “Do not be afraid” is found 47 times in the Old Testament and 21 times in the New Testament – it is a phrase used at times of visions, at times of battle, times of upheaval, by visiting Angels. It is used to encourage, to reassure.

In our reading from Luke, we see Mary visited by the Angel and she is immediately told not to be afraid. Even so, Mary questions the message of the Angel and how what the Angel is saying will happen “How can this be, since I am a Virgin?”

The Angel gives further reassurance and finishes with the words “For nothing is impossible with God”. Mary bravely accepts God’s call declaring “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word”

Discussion questions

- 1. How brave do you feel in sharing your faith with others in church, in your local community, at work, or with friends and family?**
- 2. Have there been times when you have had to be brave for God and say “Here I am”**



