

## Shirley Parish Lent Groups 2022 - Live Lent – Embracing Justice

### Session 1 (Readings from Ash Wednesday to Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March)

#### 1. Welcome everybody to the course

Begin with this prayer:

**Loving God, we bring ourselves, our church and our world before you; we ask that you show us, alone and together, how to turn and walk in your ways. Amen**

#### 2. Introduction

The Lent Groups this year are following the daily *Live Lent – Embracing Justice* readings and themes. The groups will work best if we each commit to using the daily readings and prayers as often as we can. What we talk about in the groups will build on what we have read and thought about in the daily readings.

Each week there will be the opportunity to reflect on the readings from the past week and share any insights or ask any questions. We will also take one or two of the Bible passages and dig a little deeper into them. We will end by talking about a couple of discussion questions.

#### 3. Summary of the week (Ash Weds – Weds 9<sup>th</sup> March readings)

The week began by thinking about the creation, and how human beings are made in the image of God. We looked at the “it’s not fair” cry that we often hear and began to imagine a world where things are fair. We recognised that the world is far from perfect, and that each of us is part of the problem.

We then turned to the Exodus story from the Old Testament. We looked at how the nation of Israel, now slaves in Egypt, were being treated as “them”, and no longer as equals; we thought about them crying out to God for justice and our week finished with a look at Moses, and how he was transformed by God into a leader for the people.

#### 4. Conversation starter

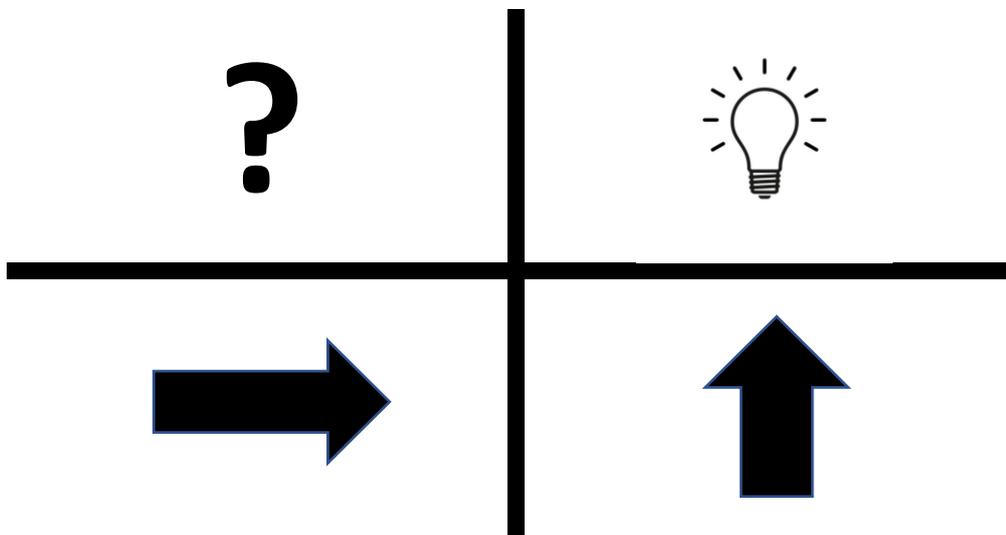
What are our experiences of unfairness or things not being right?

How can we see ourselves as part of the problem, rather than simply blaming others?

#### 5. Bible reading - Matthew 7:1-5

*'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.'*

To help us think about this passage we will use the "Swedish Bible Study Method", allowing each member of the group to think and talk about the questions below.



(clockwise from the top left)

- Is there anything I don't understand?
- Is there something new that I have never noticed before (a lightbulb moment)?
- What does this passage say about my relationship with God?
- What does it say about how I should relate to others (and myself)?

## 6. Reflection

The first few readings in the Live Lent course set the groundwork for the whole course. God created a perfect world; he created human beings in his image to live in harmony with himself, with each other, with the world around us and with ourselves. However, it is clear to all that things are not like that now. The cry of “it’s not fair” is heard all around us and goes up to God.

The easy thing is to see ourselves as the victims, those who suffer from injustice or unfairness. But the passage in Matthew 7 shows us clearly that we have issues that need to be dealt with as well, and even before, we seek to address the world’s problems. Jesus says *first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.*

The Exodus story in the Old Testament is one that is of great significance to the people of Israel. It is the story of their release from slavery and their establishment in the promised land as a nation living under the law of God. But it is a story that goes much deeper than that. It also tells of how God had to transform the people so that they could be ready to follow him, worship him and be the people he had always intended them to be. It’s a story that echoes the words of Jesus – transformation or change begins with us.

## 7. Discussion questions

The Israelites cried out to God .. and God remembered his covenant\* (*Exodus 2 - The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.*)

(\* covenant is another word for agreement or promise)

What do you think it means to cry out to God?

And what do you understand by God remembering his covenant?

What do you think we should be crying out to God about today?

## 8. Final thoughts

Ask each group member to say one thing they have learned from the session, and one thing they might do as a result..

## 9. Final prayer

Jesus, Lord of time

**Hold us in your eternity**

Jesus, image of God

**Travel with us the life of faith**

Jesus, friend of sinners

**Heal the brokenness of our world**

Jesus, Lord of tomorrow

**Draw us into your future.**