



## Reconciliation and the Parable of the Prodigal Son

This Leader's Guide will help you to deliver teaching and leadership about God's reconciliation. Sessions at the Clergy College will also help you to lead this session.

### AIMS

- to understand that we must be agents of reconciliation if we are to follow God's will
- to help participants think what God's reconciliation means for each of us personally, for our church and our community and for whole of creation
- to begin to see how and where we can participate in a ministry of reconciliation.

### RESOURCES

- Hand-out: the Parable of the Prodigal Son.
- The resources for use in the fourth section, e.g. Powerpoint or DVD.
- You may need a flip chart to record responses as the discussion proceeds.

The Powerpoint presentation is available to download from the Accompanied Ministry Development team. Please ensure you have a working version before the session and that the technology and the space you plan to use are appropriate for your audience.

### SESSION PLAN

*Note: the timings are approximate—they are intended to allow plenty of time for discussion*

*20- 25 minutes*

1. Hand out copies of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.
  - a. Divide the group into three
  - b. Get each group to take a different character
  - c. Spend a few minutes investigating the motivations for each of the character's behaviours and responses. Why did they do this? Why do they react in the way they do?
  - d. Ask each group to talk about their character and his motivations. Record reactions on flip chart (or similar) ideally using one word responses.
  - e. Summarise: say that issues that require reconciliation arise from complex, conflicting and varied responses. Not usually a simple picture of right or wrong which can easily be resolved by an easily understood act of justice.

*20-25 minutes*

2. In the same groups (or if the number is comparatively small, do this as a plenary) examine the actions of the father in the story
  - a. What is his approach to both his sons?
  - b. What risks does he take in doing this?
  - c. How necessary is this? In other words, if he had not done this would reconciliation have been possible?



- d. Conclude this section by saying:
- Reconciliation is not about going back to the way things were
  - It is about establishing a new relationship
  - It is about being risky and being uncertain about the outcome
  - It is not about imposing a solution on others but about giving them the space to accept, or refuse, what is being attempted
  - It is a continuous and continuing process
  - It is about trying to allow the peace of a forgiving Christ to flourish in places of distorted and broken relationships

*10-15 minutes*

3. How is your church/benefice an agent of reconciliation?
- a. Describe your church in terms of the three characters in the parable. Do you most resemble the prodigal (assertion of rights), the elder brother (the response of justice), or the father (the agent of reconciliation)? There will probably be elements of all three...
  - b. Are there areas in your church/community that require reconciliation? Without being too intense, what areas of your common life are blocked by broken or distorted relationships?
  - c. Is there a role for the church in trying to bring about reconciliation?
    - How would you go about this?
    - What are the risks you would run in attempting this?
    - How do you think you will change in order to achieve reconciliation?

*5-10 minutes*

4. Tell a story of forgiveness and/or reconciliation – look at the resources listed in the Parish Programme (list of videos and websites) for some inspiring ideas OR use the Powerpoint with pictures and prayers to reflect upon the spiritual dimensions of reconciliation (available for download from the AMD office).

*5-10 minutes*

5. A final summary: St Paul (quoting II Corinthians) says we are involved in a ministry of reconciliation, the need to bring God's peace (and justice) to a broken world. The smallest conflicts need as much reconciliation as the bigger issues. Therefore there could be a requirement for the church to actively involve itself in this ministry. Is this feasible for us? If so, how do we go about it? How do we identify the areas we need to get involved in? Should we lead by example (how these Christians love each other!)?

*5-10 minutes*

**End with prayer for reconciliation in our church and our world.**

Led by priest or other participant