

Beginning the “Year of Seeking” together (2024-25):  
*an invitation to discerning God in our lives and our contexts*

Nurturing the spiritual development of our worshipping communities is at the heart of our mission in the Diocese of Newcastle. As part of our Year of Seeking - the first stage of our developing diocesan engagement with Seeking, Sharing Sending (2024-27) - we are inviting individuals, parishes and deaneries to engage in discerning prayer together.

The goal of this prayer is to attend to and amplify where God is working in our lives and the lives of those around us, including our communities. The hope is that discerning God's work in this way prompts us to give thanks for God's work in our midst. In this deepening cycle of shared discernment together - as individuals, study groups, parishes, chaplaincies and deaneries - we will seek further clarity about where we might join in with what we have been led to notice and celebrate, especially turning outwards towards those people who are not typically involved in worshipping communities.

Beginning in prayer will, we hope, be an encouragement to us to notice that our involvement doesn't primarily depend on our skills and own life experiences, or status in the church or our communities. Participation in what God is doing across the Diocese of Newcastle is first and foremost a willingness to respond and begin to articulate our witness to what God is doing amongst us.

In any process of discernment there needs to be attention given to whether we are enabling and forming one another to be articulate about where we have noticed God working. This might mean we develop existing activities but it might also mean discerning things that move us faithfully in unexpected directions. In such circumstances, the diocese will look to provide support for developing and beginning activities you have discerned together.

As a diocese we are keen to recognise and amplify the work being done to reach in to our communities. We also know how difficult it can feel sometimes in a landscape that notices and amplifies what we lack rather than discerning what joys and faithfulness persist prophetically and imaginatively alongside this status quo.

We are keen to encourage and enable one another in our discernment to prayerfully seek out where God is working and join in. Our Year of Seeking together prioritises prayer and discernment, paying attention to signs of God's Kingdom amongst us, and growing in our awareness of the places God can communicate with us and wishes us to serve. This time of seeking will, we pray, enable a deeper, humbler, more imaginative engagement with the Years of Sharing and Sending that lie ahead.

Some way-markers in our Year of Seeking:

28th September - sharing Year of Seeking resource with new Diocesan Synod

5th October - Deanery Development Groups check-in with Revd Mary Hawes on Seeking God's work intergenerationally and with Children and Young People

19th October - "Seeking the gifts of others" Licensing Lay Ministry and the Year of Seeking

1st November - Launch of a revised Authorised Lay Ministry scheme, including learning communities on Seeking, Sharing, Sending (proposed for 2025).

27th November - "It came to pass..." The Bishop of Newcastle's Study Day for clergy examining some themes in the Year of Seeking through Luke's Gospel

1st December - Launch and distribution of further shared resources for discerning prayer in the Year of Seeking.