



The Church of Scotland

# VIVID VISION

A vivid vision for the Church of Scotland

## Facilitator Guide





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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **What do you hope for the Church of Scotland?** We hope that this session will enable a time of reflection and encouragement as together you imagine what God might do through your local church and your impact on your local area.

This Facilitator Guide is your companion as you lead a group, perhaps your Kirk Session, in the material.

We will use a mixture of reflection and discussion times, framed around a short film, to explore and imagine together.

## About the Film

The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team of the Church of Scotland took time to consider the hope they have for the Church. Acknowledging fully the challenges we face now, this resource chooses to look ahead and imagine what could be. As we look to God and actively trust in the goodness of God, new growth, new ways of being, deeper faith and more effective mission could be possible. The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team offer this interpretation of what they imagined so that you might be inspired to dream your own dreams for your context.

## Purpose and Format of Session

In this session we will be exploring:

Through reflection and discussion:

- Responding to the shape of the church now
- Sharing stories which demonstrate where God is at work
- Imagining a new future for your church

Through a short film:

- What God could do in your church and local area

# SESSION INFORMATION

## Before starting the Sessions

- Make sure that you have set aside the appropriate time to prepare to get the most out of the session and consider how you might introduce the reflection and discussion times for those you're gathering together. We encourage you to have this guide available either electronically or in a printed format as you lead the session.
- Make sure you've sent the Pre-Session Preparation questions to your participants before your session and ensure that your participants have access to the Participant Guide, either digitally or printed. If you are printing the Participant Guide or the Facilitator Guide, you may want to omit the full-colour title page.
- Full transcripts of the film are available for accessibility purposes, though we ask you to prioritise watching the film together.
- Familiarise yourself with the Vivid Vision film, ensure that you have all the tech requirements to show this film to your participants e.g. projector/tv, speakers etc
- The timings provided for reflections are a guide; you may wish to adapt these timings as suit you. It may be helpful to use a timer, either on your mobile phone or externally to help you keep to timings.
- This session should take approximately 2 hours to complete.

## Reflection and Discussion

Reflection questions have been designed to deepen thinking, encourage hearts and strengthen resolve. As such you should aim to allow space and time to complete these, taking time to pray through what has been revealed. This may be an emotional and challenging piece of work for some, while there will be time for individual reflection and shared group discussion during the session, we would encourage you and your participants to set aside further time for personal reflection outside of an organised session.

Below are some prompts to help you consider how you might want to frame the reflection and discussion times.

- We've given suggested timings for discussion and reflection, you may wish to shorten or lengthen these depending on your group.
- How will you display the discussion questions for your participants? (The questions are available in both Participant Guide and on the session PowerPoints)
- Consider how you will set up the space to make it conducive to sharing e.g. layout, refreshments, group size, music
- How might you encourage people to take time to reflect before starting the discussions?

## Session Overview

Below is an overview of the session including suggested timings:

Overall Time	Activity Time (minutes)	Activity
		Arrival & Refreshments
0:00	2	<b>Part 1: The Church as it is Now:</b> Welcome & Introduction
0:02	15	Discussion
0:17	8	Read: Nehemiah 1
0:25	2	Pray
0:27	6	<b>Part 2: The Church as it Could Be:</b> Listen and Share: Stories of Hope
0:33	6	Watch Film: Vivid Vision
0:39	15	Discussion
0:54	5	Individual Reflection
0:59	15	Sharing and Discussion
1:14	10	Forming a Vivid Vision: Individual Imaging
1.24	25	Forming a Vivid Vision: Sharing and Discussion
1:49		Final Prayer
		Next Steps and Closing Comments

## Materials

Below are some suggestions of specific materials you may wish to have to hand for the session activities:

Activity	Materials
Forming a Vision: Individual Imagining	Post-it notes
	Pens
	Somewhere to display post-its e.g. table, whiteboard

## Final Prayer

If you intend to engage creatively in the Final Prayer section, below are some suggestions of materials to gather beforehand. You may wish to play reflective worship music during this time. **More details of all the suggested prayer activities are given in the guide.**

Activity	Materials
Candle Lighting	Tea lights and matches
	Table
	Printed Bible Verses (see Appendix)
Letting Go	Paper (see Appendix for template)
	Pens
	Cross print-out (see Appendix)
	<i>OR</i>
	Large sturdy pot for water
	Small rocks/large pebbles
Chalk/chalk pens	

## Further Resources

Depending on the number of participants you have, you may wish to vary the size of your groups for discussion. You can find some tips and hints for group work in the Resources section on Church of Scotland Learning. Find out more about Church of Scotland Learning and register [HERE](#).

## Pre-Session Preparation

Prior to this session, provide all participants with the Pre-Session Questions handout, found on the Vivid Vision area on Insite.

# PART 1: THE CHURCH AS IT IS NOW

## Welcome - 2 minutes

*Thank people for taking time to prepare for this session and express a desire that this time would be honest, real and hopeful.*

You may wish to express the following points to your participants:

- Our desire is to move from where we have been to where we would like to be.
- We will discuss a number of big questions which it might feel hard to directly influence, but we will take time to pray as well as to consider our personal response.

## Discussion – 15 minutes

*This first discussion time gives people to opportunity to express their sadness and lament openly. You may wish to frame this section with sensitivity and give your participants 1-2 minutes to read and reflect on the questions individually before opening up to discussion. The discussion questions are available on Slide 3 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

### Allow 15 minutes to discuss the questions below.

- What is your greatest sadness for your congregation?
- What is your greatest sadness for your local area?
- Would you be able to articulate any disappointment in God? What might this be?
- Looking back, do you carry any regret for things done or not done by yourself or others?

## Read - 8 minutes

*Having thought about some of our sadness for the church, we turn now to the book of Nehemiah - a powerful story of faith, resilience, and restoration set in the aftermath of Israel's exile.*

We are going to explore the first chapter of Nehemiah, where he learns of Jerusalem's ruined walls and the despair of his people. Deeply moved, he turns to God in prayer and lamentation, laying the foundation for the rebuilding of both a city and a community.

This historical moment, when God's people faced the challenge of renewal after years of displacement and decline, resonates with us today as we consider the situation of the Church of Scotland. Like Nehemiah, we too are called to mourn what has been lost, to seek God's guidance, and to take bold steps towards rebuilding and

reinvigorating the church for God's glory. Let's explore this chapter together and draw inspiration for the work God has placed before us.

Take time to read this chapter aloud for the group, you may wish to read it yourself or ask someone else to read it as others listen and reflect. It is printed in the Participant Guide should anyone want to follow along as it's read.

## **Read Nehemiah 1**

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah grieved for all that was lost and all that could have been. He was honest before God and allowed his heart to break in the place of prayer. He then offered himself to God for the next part of the story.

## Pray - 2 minutes

After the reading, give a moment for silence and encourage people to reflect individually on what stood out for them from this passage and how God may be speaking or prompting them through that.

You may wish to lead your group in prayer together, or you can use the written prayer below.

Jesus, you were called a man of sorrow,  
one acquainted with grief.

As we look to the hard, the sad and the sore places of our church,  
our hearts are heavy, like Nehemiah, we could sit down and weep.

Yet, we know you bear our sorrows and carry our griefs,  
may we know the kindness of your companionship with us in our grieving.

God, we remember that before a word is on our tongue,  
you know it completely.

Our deepest thoughts, even those we can hardly articulate,  
are known fully by you.

Help us to draw near to your throne of grace,  
with boldness, openness and honesty.

Holy Spirit, like the disciples in the upper room, we don't know what's next,  
but like them, we want a willing heart.

Equip and enable us; grow courage in us,  
that we might step out in faith as the answers to our own prayers.

Like Nehemiah, God we offer ourselves to you once again,  
Jesus, we want to keep following you.

Amen

# PART 2: THE CHURCH AS IT COULD BE

## Listen and Share - 6 minutes

Take time to share any stories about what people see God doing now, either in or through the local church. The questions below might help one or two people to briefly share encouragements for the group. Perhaps there are stories you know of that would be encouraging to hear, you may wish to give a couple of people prior warning, identifying a story you would love them to tell. *The discussion prompts are available on Slide 4 in the PowerPoint Presentation.*

- Where are people growing in faith?
- Where are people coming to faith for the first time?
- Where are new opportunities showing themselves?
- How are we learning?

## Watch Film: Vivid Vision - 6 minutes

The Vivid Vision film is available on the Church of Scotland Vivid Vision webpage. It is also imbedded into the accompanying PowerPoint presentation available on Insite. Take time to watch the short film together and encourage people to engage fully and be present in the moment as they watch. *The film is available on Slide 5 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

## Discussion – 15 minutes

*This discussion time gives people to opportunity to express their reflections on the Vivid Vision film. Again, you may wish to give your participants 1-2 minutes to read and reflect on the questions individually before opening up to discussion. The discussion questions are available on Slide 6 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

### Allow 15 minutes to discuss the questions below.

- What did you think of what you saw and heard? How did it make you feel?
- What seemed realistic and achievable?
- What inspired or excited you?
- What made you raise your eyebrows or shake your head?
- What would you keep and what would you change?

## Individual Reflection – 5 minutes

Encourage the group to take 5 minutes to reflect individually on the questions below. *The discussion questions are available on Slide 7 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

- What would you like to see God do in your local area?
  - Consider people, schools, homes, community gathering opportunities, shops, businesses.
- How would you like to see your local church grow?
  - Consider all ages, backgrounds and ethnicities.
- What is your part to play?
  - Consider the gifts, skills and passions you could bring to the table.

## Discussion – 15-20 minutes

*This discussion time gives people to opportunity to share their thoughts from the previous reflection and to listen to the hopes and ideas from others. Encourage participants to notice where their hearts become excited and where they resonate with things mentioned. The time for detail and planning will come, this discussion time is an opportunity to express hopes, dreams and ideas together. The discussion questions are available on Slide 8 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

**Allow 15-20 minutes to discuss the questions below:**

- Can you describe what you would like your church and community to look like in three years' time?
- What would the implications of pursuing this kind of vision be for your own congregation or Presbytery?
- If together you were to pursue this, what do you see as the barriers to this vision being achieved? What needs to change?

## Forming a Vivid Vision: Individual Imagining – 10 minutes

Take time individually to begin to write your own Vivid Vision for your church. Do not worry if it is not eloquent. On some post-it notes, jot down the main things you hope the future holds. To help you get started, you can find some prompt questions in the Participant Guide. *The activity prompts are available on Slide 9 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

*Encourage your participants to write in bullet points on their post-it's at this stage, rather than in prose. Consider playing some music as people write and keep people informed of how much time they have left throughout.*

- Allow 6-7 minutes for people to formulate their thoughts and begin to write things down.
- In the last 3 minutes, encourage participants to pick **three** points that they would like to share with the group and write those points on separate post-it notes.

## Forming a Vivid Vision: Sharing and Discussion - 25 minutes

**As one group, begin to build a shared picture of a vision of the future.**

*This section gives everyone the opportunity to share their ideas for a Vivid Vision and to begin to identify any key themes and commonalities within the group. Not everything has to be achieved in this discussion time, if conversation is flowing well and staying on track, take encouragement from that and don't rush to complete everything. The discussion prompt is available on Slide 10 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

Using a table in the middle or a whiteboard, give 1-2 minutes for everyone to present their three post-it notes and offer any brief explanation they wish. Ask everyone to put their post-it's on the whiteboard/table and as people share, be looking for any common themes or ideas so that these can be grouped together. Depending on the number of participants, you may need to be strict with timing in this section.

- You may wish to schedule a follow-up session to look at the ideas in more depth and consider next steps.
- If your group is particularly large and it would be difficult to formulate a draft of the vision at this time, you may wish to form a small sub-group to collate the ideas and submit a draft of a Vivid Vision for your church before the follow-up session.

You may have time to consider some of these questions during your session, however if not, they will form a helpful basis for a follow-up session. *The discussion questions are available on Slide 11 in the accompanying PowerPoint Presentation.*

- How / when will you begin to pray for this?
- How would you like to participate in the realisation of this vision?
- Who else would you like to share this with?
- What might you need to ask, find out or consider?
- What might be our personal, individual next steps?
- How might the vision be portrayed in a way that is relevant to your community e.g. involving all ages, having a special service or week of prayer, responding creatively through art, craft, music etc?

## Pray

This may have been an emotional and challenging piece of work for some, so this moment of space may prove to be helpful in closing. We have not allocated a specific amount of time to this final section, take time to consider how much time may be helpful to your participants as you close. *There is a holding slide for a prayer time available on Slide 12 in the PowerPoint Presentation.*

During this session you will have discussed and shared many things – some hopeful and positive, some harder and more challenging. Closing in a time of prayer allows you and your participants to give all that you have said, not said, heard, seen and discovered to God. You will know your group best, so frame this time of prayer in a way suitable and most helpful for them. Below are some suggestions for things you may wish to include that can be used individually or together, you can include as many of them as you feel is helpful.

## Individual Prayer

### Candle Lighting

Have a small table of tea lights with one candle lit. Invite participants to come and light their own candle and take a moment to reflect and pray. You may wish to have some printed Bible verses available on the table to prompt people as they pray. In the Appendix we have included some suggested Bible verses which you can print off and use.

### Letting Go Prayer

There may be a mixture of emotions and feelings for those taking part. Perhaps some worries or concerns will weigh heavy, or perhaps some participants will feel a weight of responsibility for what's ahead, even if they feel excited and encouraged by it. Offering an opportunity to 'let go' of those weights, worries and concerns in prayer may be a helpful exercise for your participants.

#### Option 1:

Have some pieces of paper printed off (see Appendix) and some pens available at a table. Encourage your participants to write down the thing they want to 'let go' of as they pray. Encourage participants to take a moment and then fold their pieces of paper and leave them at the cross. Assure your participants that no one will be reading anything they write down here and encourage them to take their time and have a go, even if it's different.

#### Option 2:

Have a large sturdy pot of water and a small collection of small rocks/pebbles. Encourage your participants to pray as they hold the rock in their hand and then use the act of dropping the rock in the water as a physical sign of choosing to 'let go'. If your rocks are big enough, you can have chalk pens available for participants to write a word of what they're letting go of on the rock.

## Collective Prayer

### Scripture Reading

As you pray together, you may wish to read some Scripture out loud to encourage one another. Feel free to choose something appropriate for your group. You can find some suggestions below:

“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.” **Proverbs 16:9**

“Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom’s instruction.” **Proverbs 29:18**

“People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” **Isaiah 30:19-21**

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” **Matthew 4:18-22**

“He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” **Revelation 21:5**

## **Closing Prayer**

We would encourage you to use the prayer below when the time feels right to close your session.

Lord, thank you that you make all things new.  
Thank you for the church of years past.  
There have been many good things along with the hard.

I pray for your Holy Spirit to lead us forward.  
We ask that you will guide our decisions and turn our  
hearts to deeply desire you above all else.  
We ask that you will open doors to new opportunities  
and help us to know what to leave in the past.

We ask for your wisdom, strength and power  
to be constantly present within us.  
Please make us strong and courageous for future.  
Give us ability beyond what we feel able.  
Let your gifts flow through us, so that you would be honoured  
in the church, and others would come to know you.

Amen.

## Next steps

We would encourage you to schedule a follow-on session to continue forming your own Vivid Vision for your church.

The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team would love to hear your perspective on this material and your thoughts about the vision. Please contact [faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk) to share your thoughts.

As you consider taking more practical steps towards the vision, what support might you want and need? What would you like your Presbytery to provide? What could the national church do for you?

You may find the resources available on Church of Scotland Learning helpful in identifying some next steps. Click [HERE](#) to find out more about Church of Scotland Learning. The modules we would direct you towards are:



### **Future Focus – The Way Ahead**



### **Navigating Your Way Through Change**



### **Talking About Your Faith.**

# APPENDIX – PRAYER RESOURCES

## Candle Lighting: Bible Verses

Feel free to print off these Bible verses, cut them up and have them displayed at your candle lighting station for people to read.

<p>This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1 John 5:14</b></p>	<p>I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Psalm 66:17-20</b></p>
<p>If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Matthew 21:22</b></p>	<p>Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hebrews 4:16</b></p>
<p>In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Psalm 18:6</b></p>	<p>You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Isaiah 26:3</b></p>
<p>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>John 14:27</b></p>	<p>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Philippians 4:6-7</b></p>

## Letting Go: Prompts

Feel free to print this page, cut it up and have copies of these prompts available for people to write on at a 'letting go' station:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Letting Go</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1 Peter 5:7</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Letting Go</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1 Peter 5:7</b></p>
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**Letting Go: Cross print-out**

If you have a physical cross, you may wish to use this instead. If you are setting up this station on a table, feel free to print off this image to have available.

