

Facilitators Guide: Creating Circles & Culture of Mercy

Guiding Group

The role of the Facilitator will necessarily include organising the group's access at the session to the resources on screen or in print.

A suggested structure for each Session is:

1. Preparation of the Focus Space
2. Prayer
3. Introduction
4. Content Explored
5. Reflection and Discussion
6. Closing

As this is the fourth and final theme of the fourth and final Segment, most groups will have already explored the context for *Mercy Global Presence* as "global" (Segment One), its spirit as "mercy" (Segment Two), and its experience as "presence" (Segment Three) so will be familiar with the process and [the microsite](#). For those coming new to the process, or wishing to revisit earlier themes, these Segments will remain available on the microsite.

Whichever presentation you, the Facilitator, or group first choose to engage with, commence your work using the introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm.

Sr Elizabeth asks us to recall the many circles of mercy in which we have participated over the years:

- What are the circles of mercy which you help shape today by your very presence?
- Who joins you in these circles?
- Whom do you invite – who invites you?
- Do you welcome a stranger into your circle?
- Are you invited to circles of mercy which you would never have imagined in the past?
- In which circles, do you find healing yourself?
- In which circles, are you a source of healing and compassion
- Where are the circles of mercy which you share with Earth?
- What is the newest circle in which you have been present and which has brought you much joy?

Once again, we offer three of many possible approaches to using resources from this theme, implementing the suggested structure (nos. 1-6). The approach used will depend on the needs,

interests, abilities and situations of the group members. At this present time, groups that are able to meet are using video conferencing. Our suggested approaches take account of this and of face-to-face-meetings becoming possible again in the future.

Facilitators may, of course, use their own approach with the resources, or choose elements from these three suggested approaches to create a different approach. At the conclusion of the Session the Facilitator or another group member is encouraged to send on 'what is too good for the group to keep to themselves' to mgpfeedback@mercyinternational.ie

Example One: Theological Imaginings

Culture of Mercy is the second in a 3-part series in the series of Theological Imaginings presentations produced for Mercy Global Presence by Professors at the University of Durham, UK. Dr Victoria Biggs, presenter, is La Retraite Fellow in Lived Theology, Trauma, and Reconciliation.

Ecological Mercy was presented by Dr Carmody Grey, Assistant Professor of Catholic Theology, for Segment Two, Theme Two, 'Degradation of Earth'.

Circles of Mercy is the title of the third video. Dr Anna Rowlands, presenter, is St Hilda Associate Professor in Catholic Social Thought and Practice at the University of Durham, England.

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, both the video and then the text of the article by Victoria Biggs could be shared using the 'Share screen' function. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the text.

The focus space for this prayer could include a beautiful cloth, a lit candle, flowers or greenery, images of groups (circles) to which members of this gathering belong or symbols that call these to mind e.g. a Mercy cross, a globe.

Introduce the session with the song 'Pour Out Compassion and Mercy' from the Reflective Prayer.

Screen the video. Invite participants to share their responses to what they have heard. Consider the following:

- 'What mercy actually means in our lives. It's a womb. It's something that encloses us, keeps us safe, and more than that, it's the place where we're formed.'
- 'We're surrounded by this great mercy. To move from this awareness to creating a culture of mercy, we need to change how we see other people.'
- 'The creation of this compassionate community, this community that's distinguished by solidarity and mutual understanding rather than by any kind of partisan loyalty. That to me is intrinsic to mercy.'

If time allows, consider screening the third video 'Circles of Mercy'.

Conclude the session with the Prayers of Intercession and the song 'Through the Eyes of Mercy' from the Reflective Prayer.

Example Two: Distinct Voice

There are two presentations about ministry in South Sudan among the 142 presentations (16 themes x 7 contributors) in the Mercy Global Presence process. [Ailish O'Brien rsm](#) (The Congregation), the Distinct Voice in Segment One, Theme Three, 'People and Deep Social Change', introduced us to her ministry of education with the organisation 'Solidarity with South Sudan'. In this fourth and final theme of the fourth Segment, Scholasticah Nganda rsm (The Congregation) shares 'the sense of purpose in living in solidarity with those in South Sudan and privileged being a member of a group that continues to serve the poor and marginalised people, in a spirit of solidarity, joy and with a hope of a better future'.

Sr Scholasticah shares that the Solidarity with South Sudan project is currently supported by more than two hundred female and male congregations. At present the project has five inter-congregational communities with twenty-one religious men and women from seventeen congregations 'expressing a new paradigm of collaboration between congregations for a more effective response to the immense and urgent needs of South Sudan'.

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the video could be screened and the text of the prayer could be shared using the 'Share screen' function.

When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the prayer text.

The focus space for this prayer could include a beautiful cloth, a lit candle, flowers or greenery and images that depict looking beyond oneself to the needs of others.

Commence the session with the song 'Pour out compassion and Mercy' from the Reflective Prayer.

Introduce the Solidarity with South Sudan project by consulting the website:

<https://www.solidarityssudan.org/en/home>

Following the screening of the video, invite sharing from the group in response to the following quotations from the presentation or invite participants to share the phrase or sentence that has impacted them:

- 'I am becoming aware that graces abound and overflow in places most unexpected...This is a mission filled where the opportunities for mercy presence are limitless.'
- 'Just to be serving the youngest and poorest nation in our world is a blessing, an invitation for creating circles and culture of mercy.'
- 'One cannot think of creating circles and culture of mercy without reflecting on Pope Francis's image of the church as oriented towards missionary activities.'
- 'The object of mercy is human life itself and everything it embraces.'

- 'For me mercy is becoming today more than ever the fundamental criteria of our authenticity of the church, a church that is on the way and that goes out of itself.'

Conclude the session with the song 'Through the Eyes of Mercy' and the Blessing by John O'Donohue from the Reflective prayer

To hear more from Sr Scholasticah, [watch her interview](#) with Adele Howard rsm for the VOICES (MIRP) project in 2016

Example Three: Reflective Prayer

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the text of the prayer could be shared using the 'Share screen' function.

When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the prayer text.

The focus space for this prayer could include a beautiful cloth, a lit candle, flowers or greenery and images that depict looking beyond oneself to the needs of others.

Sandra Lupi rsm has structured the Reflective Prayer which includes a new Mercy song, based on Micah 6:8 and Matthew 25:35-40, commissioned by the Brisbane Mercy Congregation in celebration of 160 years of service to the people of Queensland, Australia,

Ensure the roles in the Prayer Service are clear to participants before commencing the Reflective Prayer.

Pause after the Leader shares the Context. After a short time for reflection, invite sharing of two or three responses before moving into the video of the Noel Davis poem.

There are five short readings. Invite participants to sit with one or two of the readings of their own choosing. After a short time for reflection, invite sharing of responses. The sharing could be invited in the form of a word or phrase from the readings e.g. 'a mode of relationship' (Reading one); 'the grace of the living God' (Reading three), or the sharing of insights. Alternatively, the Leader chooses the one or two readings for participants to reflect on.

Play the video of 'Through the Eyes of Mercy' as a response to the readings before inviting four of the participants to read one of the Prayers of Intercession. Before moving into the Closing Prayer, invite the sharing of further intentions.

Conclude with the final song: 'Pour Out Compassion and Mercy' and the Blessing.

This Reflective Prayer could be used after participants have had time to read, reflect and absorb some of the other presentations, bringing this theme to a close.