



surprised by the spirit

We are not alone. We will be made new by the power of the Spirit. What a surprise!

An invitation from Archbishop and Primate Linda Nicholls

We recently passed the one-year anniversary of the declaration of a global pandemic. This has been a time of extraordinary upheaval in our lives and the life of our churches. It has also been a time of discovery. We discovered the pain of many losses—personal and communal. We discovered that we are more resilient and more creative than we may have previously thought. We discovered God in our midst—and we have been Surprised by the Spirit.

I invite you to gather again, as you did in early 2019, in 'Conversation Circles' to explore your discoveries and surprises, and to listen for the voice of the Spirit in your midst. We are beginning to see hope for an end to the pandemic as vaccinations roll out across the country. We will be able to gather in person for worship and community life. What have we learned? What is God calling us to now? What have we let go and do not need to reclaim? What surprises do we need to grieve? What surprises do we need to celebrate? What will we continue to do? What new sparks are flying in your imagination for the life of our congregations?

Over the next five months, I invite you to have conversations in your parish, clericus, deanery, area or committee meetings or Diocese. This guide will help to lead your conversations

through prayer, scripture reflection and your stories. Once you've shared in your conversation circle, I invite you to capture your circle's "Spark" of surprise, which will include a learning, a question and a hope. You might choose to depict your Spark through: writing; in a video; in a poem; or, through another visual, audible or written format—let the Spirit guide you.

Once you've discerned your Spark, I ask you to share it on the Surprised by the Spirit website, so it can be shared with fellow Anglicans across Canada. Our entire Church needs to hear from one another, as our journey continues. Sparks will be shared through the national website and gathered into a celebration for Thanksgiving 2021! This is an opportunity to listen to the Spirit—to listen to each other—and to celebrate what God is showing us now for our future together.

God of wind and flame, send your life-giving Spirit upon your people: give fire to our words, strength to our witness and boldness to our proclamation of your wondrous work in Christ; who, with you and the Spirit, lives and reigns now and forever. Amen.

Website: spirit.anglican.ca
Email: spirit@national.anglican.ca





FORMING a Conversation Circle

Note: For circles including children, you may wish to use the Children's Guide format, available for download at www.spirit.anglican.ca.

Any group of 4 or 5 Anglicans may form a conversation circle. Larger gatherings, such as a committee, council or synod, are best broken into groupings of 4 or 5 people. Smaller groupings will allow you to complete your conversation circle's discussion in a little over an hour. Circles can meet outside, online, in churches or wherever suits the group—in accordance with Public Health guidelines for your community. Each circle may wish to nominate one person to lead them through the steps of the conversation.

What matters most is making a safe and comfortable space for everyone, so that each person feels okay about speaking from their heart.

Conversation circles commit to listen to one another with acceptance and without judgment, and to make their shared prayer available to all Anglicans across the country—so that the Surprises of the Spirit and insights of the past year may be heard by us all.

Once your conversation circle is gathered, you're ready to begin your conversation, through the steps which follow.

For any assistance, you are invited to email spirit@national.anglican.ca



STEP 1 – Opening

Settle into a time of silent prayer. Once all seem ready, pray this prayer together:

God of wind and flame, send your life-giving Spirit upon your people: give fire to our words, strength to our witness and boldness to our proclamation of your wondrous work in Christ; who, with you and the Spirit, lives and reigns now and for ever. Amen. Opening Prayers (1997) alt.

STEP 2 – Connecting with Scripture

Ask someone to read the background and scripture passage provided below, from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

BACKGROUND

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles begins after Jesus' resurrection. It opens with the promise of the Holy Spirit, the commissioning of Jesus' followers to continue his ministry and his ascension to the Father. We join the story in time to hear Jesus' last instructions to the apostles. He has just told them to wait in Jerusalem for their baptism by the Holy Spirit and gathered them to witness his being taken up into heaven.





ACTS 1:6-8

So when [the apostles] had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After a time of silent reflection, invite everyone to answer the questions:

1. How do you imagine the apostles are feeling in this conversation with Jesus?
2. What emotions does this conversation with Jesus stir up for you?

STEP 3 – Looking Back; Looking Forward

Reflect back on our journey as a church over the past year.

Ask another person to read the passage a second time.

After a second time of silence, consider these questions:

1. In what ways has our community of faith felt lost or struggled to see the Spirit?
2. What has surprised you over the past year?

Allow time for everyone to reflect on these questions, perhaps using art, movement, or writing to help them express themselves. When all are ready, gather back in the circle to discuss each question.

When everyone has had a chance to share their thoughts, take a moment in silent prayer and then answer these final questions together.

3. What has our community of faith learned from the experience of this past year?
4. What questions are we being called to wrestle with?
5. What hopes for the future and signs of new life is the Spirit showing us?

STEP 4 – Joining the Wider Conversation

Together, distill your conversation—your Spark!—so that you can share it with the rest of the church. You might not capture everything, but that's okay!

1. What is **one learning** you would like to share?
2. What is **one question** you would like others to wrestle with as well?
3. What is **one hope** you would like to offer?

Ask one person to capture or record your group's Spark and have them submit it at spirit.anglican.ca



STEP 5 – *What next?*

For Thanksgiving 2021, we'll come together to witness the surprises which our conversations have revealed. In the meantime, you are encouraged to share your Sparks within your congregations and ministries. Here are a few questions to consider:

1. How will I/we share our Sparks with the congregation/ministry.
2. What do these Sparks mean for me, personally? What are the implications for my own ministry and life of faith?
3. What do these Sparks mean for my congregation/ministry? How might we respond to what the Spirit is showing us?

CLOSING LITANY

Invite participants to respond with the bold refrain.

God of our journeys, you meet us in the lonely and locked places of our lives.
Like Jesus' disciples, we are weary from the assaults of repeated loss.
As you helped them in their confusion and pain, help us now to reorient our hope:

They thought they were restoring the power of Israel
—but you invited them to build the kingdom of God

Surprise us with your hope

They thought they were isolated and apart
—but you gathered them to yourself and to each other

Surprise us with your love

They thought they were lost and uncertain
— but you cleared the path and a direction forward

Surprise us with your faithfulness

They thought it was the end
— but you breathed new life into a grieving people

Surprise us with ourselves, renewed! Amen.

This guide has been created by members of the Spiritual Formation for Discipleship Network, a group in partnership with the Faith, Worship, and Ministry department of The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.



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