



Discerning the gifts of the kingdom community at work

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Purpose

To enable Christians at work to become aware of, and bear witness to, the gifts of the kingdom community within their working environment.

This worksheet is founded on the conviction that the kingdom of God is 'in our midst' (Luke 17:21). That means at our place of work, as well as elsewhere. What follows is also rooted in the belief that the kingdom is a kingdom *community*, through which God offers us four unique gifts: *life*, *liberation*, *love* and *learning* (the 4L's – see below). As Christians we are called to discern these gifts, exemplify them in our work and, in ways appropriate to that context, seek to make them, and the divine giver, known to others.

Preparation

Our preparation for the tasks of discernment and witnessing to the gifts of the kingdom community in the workplace has two aspects – personal and corporate.

- *Personal* – This aspect of preparation relates to our spiritual development, an essential part of which will be our daily life of prayer, reading and reflection. Such preparation can help us more perceptively discern the gifts of the kingdom community in the here and now of our daily work.
- *Corporate* – This aspect of preparation relates to how we grow in our awareness of the gifts of the kingdom community at work through our membership of the Church – by means of worship and the support and encouragement we offer one another. It involves sharing with others in a journey of spiritual discovery.

Process

Over a set period of time – day, week or month – commit yourself to being alert to gifts of the kingdom community (the 4L's) within your work and workplace – through the environment, the daily experiences of work, relationships with fellow workers and in contacts with the general public. During a work break (if appropriate), or at the end of the day, jot down in diary form where you believe the life-giving, liberating and loving activity of God has been evident in your surroundings, conversations, incidents, events, encounters and meetings. Also note down those things that make you feel that you have been engaged in a journey of spiritual discovery (learning). Reflect on where at work you have been able to discern these gifts and give expression to them in ways that have helped others to glimpse their presence and the nature of the giver.

Try and share your experiences with other Christians (who, if possible, have been keeping a diary of a similar kind). Reflect on what you have learnt and, in particular, how you might better exemplify and witness to these gifts in your work situation. Use these reflections to enrich your personal prayer life, worship and encounters with Christians and/or others in groups and gatherings seeking to relate faith to the world of work.

Content

Look at *Breaking the Mould of Christendom* (see Resources K1) to get in touch with the idea of the four gifts of the kingdom community (the 4L's). A few questions to help in our discernment of these gifts at work are suggested below.

- **Life** – Does the workplace offer experiences of visual or audible beauty – through buildings and how they are decorated, through workplace surroundings, through music? Do people find work enjoyable, exhilarating and exciting? Are gifts of imagination and creativity in evidence? Do people feel secure, content and 'at home'?
- **Liberation** – Can people give full expression to their knowledge, skills, talents and wisdom? Do the norms and ethos of the workplace allow for flair, initiative or risk taking? Do people experience a strong sense of significance? Are people freed from stress, anxiety or a sense of failure by the support, forgiveness and generosity of others?
- **Love** – Do management and fellow employees offer signs of genuinely caring for one another – especially in small yet significant ways? Does the workplace provide a 'human face', a 'human touch' and does it honour the 'human scale'? Are people affirmed, cared for and supported when a personal crisis occurs – at work, at home or elsewhere? Do people experience a strong sense of solidarity? Is respect and courtesy shown to the general public through services rendered or goods supplied?
- **Learning** – Does work enable people to grow as persons, as well as in work experience and skills? Are people involved in innovative endeavours? Are new experiences and fresh ideas welcomed? Is imagination encouraged? Can people share their visions? Is there a sense of work being an ongoing journey of discovery shared by and with all?

Points to note

Another way of focusing on the gifts of the kingdom community is to reflect on where these are *not* in evidence; that is, where these gifts are being denied, negated or ignored. Along with the more positive questions suggested above, it is also important to ask: 'where and why in our workplace are people failing to experience the gifts of life, liberation, love and learning?' What can we do to challenge, expose or remove that which prevents these gifts being recognised, experienced and used to build the workplace which manifests the gifts of the kingdom community?

Resources

Clark, David, *Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom Community, Diaconal Church and the Liberation of the Laity*, Peterborough, Epworth, 2005 (pp. 21-27, 37-40)

Clark, David, *The Diaconal Church: Beyond the Mould of Christendom*, Peterborough, Epworth, 2008 (pp. 177-182, 202-205, 207-211)

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