



Capital Vision 2020 Commissioning

We will equip and commission 100,000 Ambassadors representing Jesus Christ in daily life

Why is a Commissioning Service for Ambassadors significant?

The Church has a rich tradition of recognising people's ministry. People have been prepared, recognised and trained to fulfil their particular ministries so that as individuals they know that what God initiated has been recognised by the body of Christ. For the most part, however, these ministries have been confined to the life of the gathered church and so it has been tempting to think that the church has 'ministers' - who do get recognised - and then 'the others' - who don't.

We want to emphasise that the whole of the body of Christ has ministry in common. The body of Christ is called, gifted and sent to serve Christ in the world. This is important to guard against a sense of individualism, whereby what is happening in our own lives has no connection to the wider body of believers that we are a part of.

There are particular ministries; specific parts of the body of Christ have specific roles. Some of those roles will be fulfilled within the gathered life of the church, others will operate through the scattered church. All the different roles in the different places are crucial. We are all needed to operate as the body of Christ - in the way we relate to one another **in** Christ, and in the way we relate to the wider world **through** Christ.

In essence, however, our scattered lives are in contexts where we are asking the basic questions:

What does it mean for me in **my situation** to love God with my heart, soul, mind, and strength?

What does it mean for me in **my situation** to love my neighbour as myself?

If we are to help people embrace their identity in Christ on their own frontlines, or the places where God has called them to be ambassadors, then a service that commissions people as ambassadors will fulfil a number of significant needs that we all have:

- People will be acknowledged as being 'in ministry' – albeit one not located within a church context
- They will recognise their need for ongoing growth in learning how to minister there.
- They will be able to request the ongoing support from their brothers and sisters
- They will be sent to these contexts
- They will be held accountable to the promises that they make.

A Commissioning Service is an opportunity for people to make promises to one another and God as part of the church.

This act of commissioning happens within worship and is not one group of people (the church leaders) telling another group of people (the rest of the church) how to live, but is an opportunity to call one another into the presence of the redeeming Christ where we are invited to make our own response.

Preparing for a Commissioning Service

Ambassador's Commissioning services could be held for

- a number of people who want to be specifically commissioned, or
- a whole congregation at a time of year when there is a natural 'new start' – in the UK this is often January or September.

The heart of the commissioning service consists of the congregation saying:

- Here is the situation you are facing
- Here is what we expect of you
- Here is what we will do to support you.

Therefore there needs to be specific preparation – the "equipping stage" so that each of these stages are clear to everyone.

Before the service

It would be wrong to introduce a commissioning service without giving people appropriate guidance in what is expected. Similarly, it is unhelpful to assume that this will be accepted by everyone. One danger is that if we don't help people to prepare for the event it will diminish the significance for individuals.

Although there are specific preparations that should happen, hopefully, the preparation is not solely for the commissioning service. The aim is for the church to be developing a culture where people's understanding of being an ambassador for Jesus Christ in everyday life is normal. This will happen as preaching, worship, small groups and conversations all

reflect that reality. So preparation is not just about this event, but is part of the ongoing ministry of the church.

Material here is specifically designed for ambassador's commissioning in the context of the whole congregation or a group within the congregation. Specific resources are also being developed for workplaces and for life stages.

Preparing people

As individuals

Take time with them asking about their situations, how they understand that they can serve the Lord there, and what they would want to prayer for. You could use the questions below that are suggested for use in groups. The important thing to emphasise here is that we are calling for people to take primary responsibility for their own growth and ministry as ambassadors. We want to challenge, encourage, sustain and keep people accountable to their frontlines. However, we cannot make them live 'lives worthy of the calling that they have received'.

As small groups

It could be that all the groups work towards preparing for a Commissioning Service, or it could be a single group that prepares and is then commissioned. As part of our partnership with LICC, they have a number of resources such as "Life on the Frontline" that are hugely helpful in considering this. Your church may find other resources or ideas that help you prepare.

Questions could be explored in small groups, providing discussions over several sessions before the service, so that everyone has chance to think clearly about their own situations.

As whole congregations

You can use a mixture of the above. It might include a preaching series, regular careful explanations, getting people to sign up to be included in the service etc.

The Commissioning Service

The Service

Every church has its own liturgical expectations and practices, so it is unlikely that one set of suggestions would suit everyone (or indeed anyone). So what follows are some suggested components that could be included in a commissioning service, along with a number of different questions that could be used or adapted according to the local context.

One thing that is helpful to think about is who does the praying, preaching and commissioning. It may be the church leaders, or you may prefer to think about asking lay people to lead some of these aspects of the service as an indicator of the mutuality of commitment to this.

Scripture Readings:

Matthew 28:16-20

John 15: 1-8

Acts 1:1-8

Acts 13

3 John

Exodus 3

Isaiah 6

Testimonies

Stories from people reflecting:

- how they have been aware of God's presence on their frontlines, or
- how they have become aware of the significance of faith to their situations,
- their thanks for the fruitfulness that they have experienced there with the hope that this will build confidence in other people.

Suggested Songs/Hymns

There are specific songs that can be used, but often the significance of a hymn/song is how they are introduced or shown to be significant for everyone's frontlines.

Suggested Commissioning Wordings

It's important to feel that you can adapt wording to reflect the local culture – both of the church and the wider community. These are offered as suggestions that might inspire you to be more specific to your own setting:

A congregational commission

As an ambassador of Jesus Christ in London I will with God's help, and with the encouragement of my church community:

- Seek to grow as a disciple of Christ, praying, encountering the Bible, and being part of a regular worshipping community.
- Listen to and engage with the people and places of my week, understanding the questions people are asking and applying the gospel to their situation
- Seek to be salt and light in all areas of my life : public and private, work and home – everywhere
- Pray for 7 people that I may share with them the story of my faith.

The service concludes with

Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

A more specific commission that recognises people in specific contexts:

1. Do you believe you have been led by the Spirit of God to accept the responsibilities that God has placed upon you as you go now to serve the Lord in
2. In humble reliance upon divine grace, will you give of yourselves unreservedly to the work of Christ in your appointed field at
3. On behalf of this congregation, I commend you to this work and pledge to you our prayers, encouragement and support. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you; that in this and in all things you may do God's will to the service of Jesus Christ.
4. To church:
Dearly beloved, I commend to you your brothers and sisters in Christ whom we, this day, have commissioned to God's service as part of their continual sharing of Christ's Great Commission on earth.
5. Said by church:
We rejoice to recognise you as being followers of Jesus sent from our church.
We thank God that you have dedicated your service to His mission.
May the blessing of God go with you.

A more searching and specific challenge to people:

1. Will you pray that God's influence will be experienced by you in your work/on your frontline?
2. Will you search for his will and let it be done in your day-to-day decisions and deeds?
3. Will you reflect what it means to be a follower of Jesus in all your relationships?
4. Will you live in such a way that others will want to know what Christ means to you?
5. Will you make a conscious effort to minister and witness across all types of barriers in a sympathetic, loving and patient manner?
6. When conditions allow, will you invite others to acknowledge Christ as Lord?
7. Will you strive to maintain a life of regular Bible reading, prayer and worship, on your own as well as together with others, believing this to be the most effective way to minister in the name of Jesus?

After the Service

The hope is that acts of commissioning become a regular part of the life of the church. The preparation for them provide opportunities for pastoral equipping, and as time goes on, it would seem to be wise to train numbers of people who can have the structured conversations with others as they prepare themselves.

It's important that the frontline focus remains a reality for people in the church; that worship regularly includes the experiences and opportunities given to us as we serve God on the frontline. Commissioning services can be a great support for all this, but if they are the only time in the year that work or frontlines are addressed they will be seen to be mere tokenism.

However, if they do offer a focus for people, then the way that they are followed up can also be significant.

- Ambassador's cards are available from capitalvision2020@london.anglican.org – these fit in a wallet and give space to write a personal commitment
- Ambassadors can sign up www.london.anglican.org to receive regular communications, and access to resources such as a prayer journeys or stories from other ambassadors and events supporting them in everyday life. They become part of the 100,000 ambassadors representing Jesus in daily life.
- Follow up within the local church using follow on resources. One example is the resource Fruitfulness on the Frontline.
- Resources and events will also be available through areas and across the Diocese www.london.anglican.org will give you details.

People can be recommissioned when their situations change. Or they can be encouraged to recall their own promises when others are commissioned.

The point of the service is not to add one more activity into the already crowded church year, but for it to be a sign of the significance that is given to the frontline that everyone has the opportunity to embrace.