

## The Anglican Parishes of Whittington and Weeford with Hints

*What the Lord requires of you is to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with  
your God*



**Visio Divina, the Visual Liturgy and Prayer**



**A vital ingredient of worship is  
expectancy believing that something  
good is going to happen.**

## **The visual in Worship and Prayer**

Churches have always understood the visual (arts) as an entry point into worship and as a support and structure to worship and prayer. It is not unusual for church building to have stained glass windows, banners, pictures and statues, for example.

In our own churches we have been blessed by the generosity of donors committed to extending the visual liturgy of our churches with the Weeford Icon, with wooden processional cross, with service booklets filled with pictures to prompt and support, with lectern falls and chasubles, new altar vessels and candle holders adding to the richness of existing altar frontals, burses and veils and carvings. So too the ambience extended by donors' gifts of pew cushions. All these things add to a sense of the sacred and support worship and prayer.

As well as worship in church, we can use images to support and guide our prayers alone at home or with others. Picture can prompt questions, resonate and jar, open up new connections and thoughts inspire us to enter imaginatively into religious thought and prayer and mood.

**Our WWH home support booklets purposely include many images to reflect upon. You are invited to use as a stimulus to prayer and reflection.**



## **What Is Visio Divina?**

**Visio Divina is translated as “divine seeing”. It is related to the prayer form Lectio Divina (divine reading), but instead of Scripture, this form of prayer uses visual elements to help set your mind on prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through the image.**

**This form of prayer has been used throughout the centuries, more popular in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities where icons are often used in prayer. However, Visio Divina is growing in use across Protestant communities, as well.**

**Often the richest prayer life comes through multi-sensory connection with God.**

**We are each wired in different ways. Some of us respond best to the written word, some to**

the spoken word, some to music, some to art, some to movement. We can connect to God in prayer through each of these ways. Though we may have a preferred sense through which to pray, the richest prayer life will come through experiencing God through all your senses.

Visio Divina is one such accessible way to engage God in prayer. It allows us to approach conversation with God that we might not have had otherwise had. If this method of prayer is new to you, I encourage you to give it a try.



## **How To Pray Visio Divina**

### **1) Find an Image for Prayer**

**You can use any type of image for Visio Divina. You might use images found in your church – a religious painting, a stained glass window, or an icon. You can look in art books or museum websites for works of art. Historical religious paintings are great choices and you can use the related Scripture passage to open your time in prayer. Also try praying with religious images from other cultures, or even more contemporary or abstract art.**



## **2) Prepare Your Heart for Prayer**

**Before you begin, choose your image and have it visible – either be near it in person or have the image pulled up on your phone or computer.**

**You may want to begin your time in prayer with a scripture reading. If you're using a religious image, use the scripture related to that image. Or, use a Scripture from the day's lectionary reading or just a favourite you want to pray.**

**Close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind, and ask God to enter into this time of prayer with you. Ask God to speak to you through this image.**



### **3) Allow the Image to Speak to Your Heart**

**Open your eyes and look at the image you've selected. Let your eyes pause and focus on the part of the image they're first drawn to.**

**Gaze upon just that part of the image for a minute or two. Then close your eyes, still seeing that part of the image in your mind.**



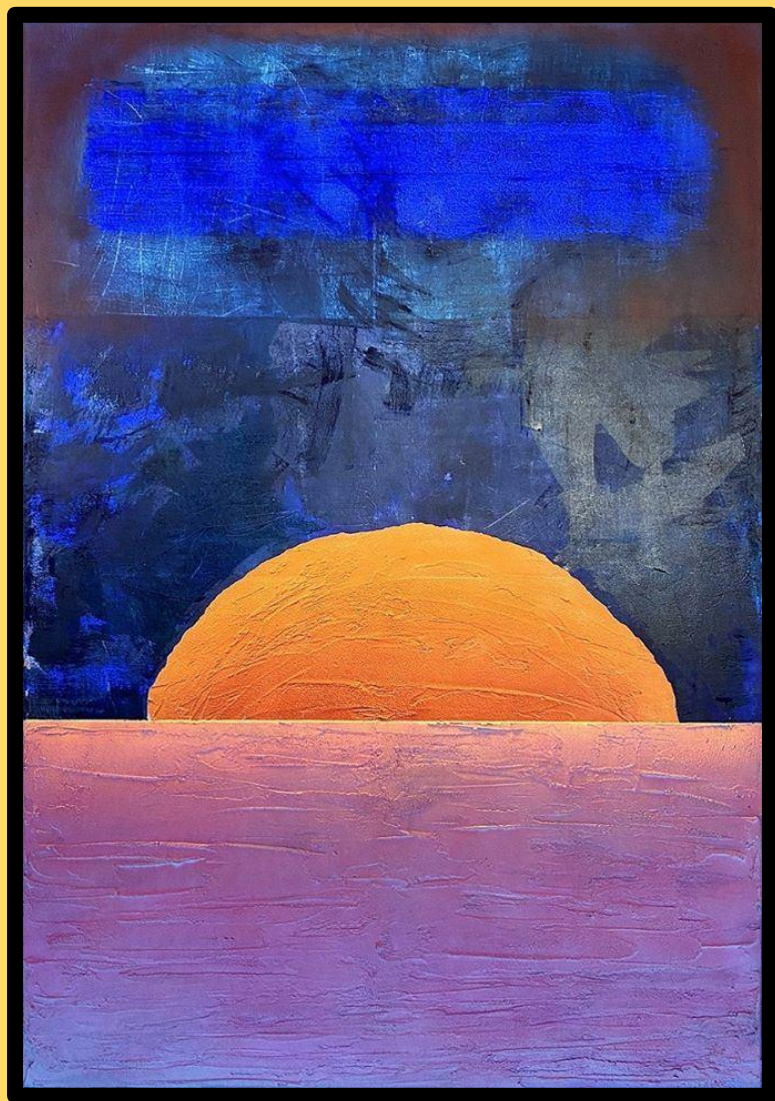
#### **4) Reflect on the Entire Image**

**Open your eyes and now look upon the whole image. Gaze upon all of the image, allowing it to draw forth a word, an emotion, or an image in your heart.**

**What do you hear God whispering into your heart? What thoughts or questions is this image raising? What emotions do you feel?**

**Continue to gaze and reflect as long as you need to, then briefly close and rest your eyes.**





### **5) Pray Through the Image**

**Open your eyes. While looking upon the image, respond to God. Pray through the words, images, emotions, questions, and thoughts that are now on your heart.**

**Continue to look upon the image as you pray. Then, close and rest your eyes briefly.**

### **6) Rest and Reflect in God**

**As you close out your time in prayer, open your eyes and gaze again upon the image. Rest in God's presence as you reflect upon this prayer experience.**



**Consider how you'll take this into your life. You may choose to journal about your experience**



# Visio Divina

## *How To Pray:*

- Prepare: close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind
- Lectio (read): Open your eyes and scan the image. Note what draws your interest, but continue to scan the whole image. Close and rest your eyes a minute.
- Meditatio (meditate): Open your eyes and let your eyes be led. Focus on just this part of the image and name it. Close your eyes, seeing that piece of the image in your mind.
- Oratio (pray): Open your eyes and look again at the piece of the image that caught your eye. Allow it to bring forth a word, image, or emotion. Close and rest your eyes.
- Contemplatio (contemplation): Open your eyes and gaze at the image. What is God speaking to you today through this image?



**Stand true to God and he will bring out  
his truth in a way that will make your life  
an expression of worship.**



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