

An aerial photograph of a river valley, likely the Crofton River, with a blue circular graphic overlay. The graphic consists of several concentric, slightly irregular blue rings. The text 'ONE RIVER' is in a dark blue serif font, and 'MANY STREAMS' is in a teal sans-serif font, both centered within the graphic.

ONE RIVER
MANY STREAMS

Crofton Parish
during COVID19

Study Guide



Crofton Parish during COVID19

As we come into the second half of 2020, the impact of Covid19 continues to be felt. While some aspects of lockdown have eased, we face the reality of ongoing restrictions on our daily lives for many months to come.

Churches continue to be significantly disrupted by the pandemic. Much of what we enjoyed about our gatherings—large groups, worshipping in song together, personal contact and our sacramental life — may not be able to resume in the foreseeable future.

On Sundays during July, we will be exploring how we can function as Crofton Parish for the next 6-12 months or more. This will require a new approach to being God's people.

We are calling this new approach:

ONE RIVER, MANY STREAMS

This Study Guide is to help individuals, households and groups understand what's happening and how they can support the Parish and be involved in the months ahead.



ONE RIVER, MANY STREAMS

Introduction

During this extended period of restrictions, Crofton Parish will not be able to function as usual for many months. In this season, we are going to re-organise into 'Streams' of 30 people or less.

Seasons of scattering like this are unusual for the Western Church but not for the global Church, nor for Christians in previous generations. God works remarkably when the followers of Jesus are forcibly dispersed.

The 'One River, Many Streams' vision for this season is threefold:

- Help everyone keep growing as followers of Jesus;
- Gather as community in smaller 'Streams';
- As individuals and in 'streams', reach people and places we have never reached before.

We are still united in purpose and vision ('One River'), but for now we will function as 'Many Streams'.



ONE RIVER
MANY STREAMS

1: Gathered & Scattered

Acts 8.1-8

There are two 'modes' in which the Church is called to operate:

- Gathering in worship and community
- Going/scattering in service and mission.

In the West we have little experience of the second of these, so much so that 'going to church' has become our default understanding of what it means to be a Christian community.

Yet, there have been many times when churches have been unable to gather. Acts 8 describes the first time this happened; Covid19 is simply the latest. But in times of scattering, God works as powerfully—if not more—than in times of gathering.

Questions for reflection/discussion:

1. Why do you 'go to church'? (You can be honest—there are no right or wrong answers.)
2. What do you think are the differences between churches in 'gathered' mode and in 'scattered' mode?
3. The Gospel spread more widely when the Church scattered. Why do you think this is?



2: A Bucket or a Spring?

John 4.4-14

In our relationship with the Lord, we often imagine ourselves as 'leaky buckets': going to church on Sundays, or Home Group or another event, for a 'top-up' of God's presence and power, which leaks out of us as we go about our daily lives until we return for another top-up.

But Jesus promised those who follow him a different experience: that we would be springs of living water, not leaky buckets (see also John 7.37-39).

The key difference between the two is when we resolve to 'dig our own well' of personal prayer, study and devotion. There is no substitute for a personal walk with God.

Questions for reflection/discussion:

1. Do you see yourself as a 'leaky bucket' or not? Why?
2. Make two lists: one of the things that deepen the life of the Spirit within you, the other of the things that drain it. How can you do more of the former and less of the latter?
3. How do you 'dig your own well'? How can your group support each other to do so?



ONE RIVER
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3: Streams that Make Glad

Psalm 46.4; Hebrews 10.23-25

If, as we expect, it is unlikely that we can meet in large gatherings for an extended period, then we need a new way to be Crofton Parish in this season of scattering.

We are calling this approach 'Streams', and we hope they will make you glad. Streams are groups of about 30 people who can meet safely to pray, learn and support one another.

We will still be 'One River' - united in purpose and love. But, for a season, we will gather as 'many streams' that make up the one river and make glad the people of God.

Questions for reflection/discussion:

1. Why do you think it's important for Christians to meet together?
2. Stream meetings will be very different from ordinary church. What might we learn about being a Christian community in this time?
3. Are you (or your Home Group) in a stream?
If so, pray for your new Stream and think about how you can help make it somewhere that 'makes people glad.'
If not, would you like to join one? You can email the Parish Office to find out more.



4: The River of God

Ezekiel 47.1-12

Ezekiel 47 is a compelling picture of how the life and love of God flow like a river towards people and places, transforming the world as it goes. It is a picture of the people of God flowing out into the world, bring blessing and transformation.

There is a tipping point in the vision where the river goes over a waterfall (the Arabah) and into the lowest place on earth—the Dead Sea—where, even there, it brings transformation. The salt water becomes sweet.

Too often, Christians are ‘bottled up’ in churches when God wants to pour us into the world like a mighty river, bringing blessing and life wherever we go.

Questions for reflection/discussion:

1. What strikes you about the vision from Ezekiel 47?
2. In your daily life, what people and places is God sending you too? Pray for yourself and others that God will use you to bring blessing and transformation.
3. We want our Streams to ‘reach new people and places’. Who might you be able to invite to the Stream you are part of? Pray for them today.

An aerial photograph of a river delta, showing a network of channels and distributaries. A large, stylized blue circular graphic with multiple overlapping rings is centered over the image. The text "ONE RIVER" is written in a dark blue, serif font, and "MANY STREAMS" is written in a lighter blue, serif font, both centered within the graphic.

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