

Youth Resources



The Way of Love

**COME
AND
SEE**

About Come and See

Come and See takes place during Lent each year. It's our big, warm, open invitation to everyone, for everyone for an adventure in faith and trust. It's something for the local churches, schools and the whole community... including children and young people. It's completely free and all are welcome.

Every person has a part to play in sharing God's love for the world through their actions. That's why we have a separate weekly email for children and families, and separate materials for teachers and youth groups.

Access the full range of Come and See resources at oxford.anglican.org/organiser-materials

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Space Makers is part of a range of contemplative toolkit resources in use at many of our schools. Find out more at oxford.anglican.org/schools

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Introduction

Welcome to Come and See 2024 for youth! We have endeavoured to make these resources as simple and accessible as possible. There are six sessions that can be used in either a small group or Sunday youth group, but can be adapted for any sessions you have with youth.

Understanding Lent

We are about to enter the season of Lent, which is when Christians remember Jesus going into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, after he had been baptised. During this time, he was tempted by the devil, but he did not give in. For Christians, Lent forms the lead-up to Easter; they use this time to reflect on and prepare for Easter, when they remember the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Six sessions

We have provided a session for each week, with the youth edition aimed at secondary school ages. Each session has a theme that links to the Way of Love from various scriptures. Feel free to use just one activity, or two if you have time.

Weekly films

These are recorded by some of our chaplains and youth workers. They are mainly for school years 6–9 but can work with older groups. Each video covers one theme and comes with sections you can pause to discuss the questions provided. Use these alongside the sessions we have designed. Think of it as a pick ‘n’ mix. Be sure to watch the films in advance so you know the content.

Contemplative practices

Come and See offers ways for groups to experience and explore the life of faith, and assumes the learning is more in the process than the telling. It is especially embedded in the contemplative practices, which you are strongly encouraged to use. Each session includes a practice from our Contemplative Toolkit (some of your youth will know this as Space Makers). Stand-alone versions of the contemplative practices are on pages 18-23.

Understanding the Way of Love

The Way of Love is based on the Great Commandment. The Great Commandment is a term used in the New Testament to describe the first of two Great Commandments cited by Jesus in Matthew 22:37–40, Mark 12:30–31 and in Luke 10:27. These two Great Commandments are also found in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. The Bible states these two Great Commandments are as follows:

1. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

2. Love your neighbour as yourself.

Before you embark as a youth group on the next six weeks of Come and See, read through the Great Commandment together, either as a youth team or in groups. As you read through, you might like to consider how any aspects of the Great Commandment align with your parish or ministry vision.

Further resources

As a leader, you’re also able to access the Come and See guides for schools and church groups, along with early access to the films. This link is confidential to registered Come and See organisers, so please don’t share it with anyone else.

oxford.anglican.org/organiser-materials

Matthew 22:37–40

The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

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Week one: The Way of Love

Aim	To understand that we are recipients of God's boundless love, enabling us to love others in return. To become conduits of love.
Passage	1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us
Overview	Christians believe that the core message of the Bible is love – God's immeasurable love for humanity and our calling to share that love with others. This week we will be exploring this concept of divine love, inviting young people to experience God's love in a tangible way.
Love it activity	<p>You will need: PowerPoint and a way to display the slides (or print pictures to hold up). Cut out love hearts or squares with "Yes" on them to hand out.</p> <p>Have a PowerPoint with 10–15 pictures of objects/foods/TV shows/songs/places, etc. For each picture invite the young people to raise their love heart if it is something they love. No debates or comments, just instant reactions.</p> <p>Here are some examples to get you started:</p> <p>A specific chocolate bar, TikTok, Hawaiian pizza, their school, iPhone, Marmite, winter/hot summer, Spiderman, "The Masked Singer", cats, rollercoasters, Xbox/PlayStation, reading, spiders, football, prawns, McDonald's, shopping.</p>
What's in the box? activity	<p>You will need: heart-shaped stone or wooden heart, other objects and a box. Have a variety of objects, such as an iPhone, coins, flower, sweets.</p> <p>The idea of this activity is that the heart-shaped stone represents God's steadfast love for us. Ask the young people to guess what the link is between these items.</p> <p>All these things will fade and spoil eventually. But God's love for us has been since the beginning of creation and is forever.</p>
Questions	<p>What/who do you love in your life?</p> <p>Who demonstrates love in your life, and how do they show it?</p> <p>How can you extend this love to others?</p>
Prayer	Dear God, we open our minds to learn new things about you, we open our hearts to be filled with your love, and we open our hands to receive all we need to live our lives for you. Amen.
Reading and contemplative practice: Dwelling	<p>Print copies of 1 John 4:7–19 from page 19.</p> <p>Have this as a quiet time for individuals or split into small groups. Read the passage out loud a couple of times before saying:</p> <p>What do you notice, what stands out to you? What is God saying to you in this moment?</p> <p>Are there any questions?</p> <p>Our main focus is verse 19 – We love because God loved us first. The ultimate demonstration of love was Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.</p>
Videos	<p>Come and See: Beginning the Way of Love</p> <p>We love because God loves us Bible Story LifeKids</p>
Questions	Where do we see examples of Jesus loving us in the Bible and now?
Worship song suggestions	"Your love never fails, never gives up on me", "Reckless love", "Good, good Father".

Reflection

If you did the heart activity from the start of the session, hand out the hearts for youth to write a prayer.

- Thank God for what you have heard today, and one thing that stood out.
 - Say sorry for those times we have gone our own way and not been so loving or forgiven others.
 - Ask him for help to show love to others, and what that might look like.
-

Week 2 – What is love, and where does it come from?

Aim	Understanding the depth of God’s love for us as we continue to grow and learn about him.
Passage	John 3:16 God’s love
Overview	Life is a journey of exploration and discovery, particularly in our understanding of God. Christians believe that the more we know God, the more we are able to love him and receive his love. Even when we falter or struggle, our expanding knowledge of God’s love assures us that he is always ready to guide and help us.
Worship	This is a great way for young people to connect with God and know the promises, love and grace he has for each of us before you get into the session. Song suggestions: “Saviour of the world”, “Reckless love”, “Amazing Grace” – Phil Wickham.
Who is God? activity	You will need: paper and pens In teams be the first team to write/draw the most things you know about God. For example, Son of God, Lamb of God, Light of the world, provider, creator, saviour, shepherd, etc.
Knowledge tree activity	You will need: a large paper tree for the wall, sticky notes in the shape of leaves. Ask the young people: “What do you know about God?” They create a knowledge tree, writing or drawing things on the sticky notes and attaching them to the paper tree. Take a step back and read out all the amazing things we know about God. This visual representation can help illustrate how their love for God grows as they learn more about him.
Invitation and questions	In small groups/twos and threes discuss what has stood out from the knowledge tree for you. How has this deepened your love for God? How has this knowledge helped you in your own life?
Prayer	Dear God, thank you that the more we learn about you, the more we love you. Help us to keep seeking knowledge about you and deepen our love. Amen.
Reading and contemplative practice: Stilling	Read John 3:16–21 Use the bottle illustration from page 20 or use a candle. Read John 3:16–21 a couple of times, asking different people to read, or use different translations. Now be still. Let this passage sink in and settle as you watch the bottle or the candle. Let the light of these words shine on your heart. After some time has passed say: “We can know a lot about God, but what connects our head knowledge and heart is Jesus knows us and died for us. That sacrifice on the cross was so great, he did it once and for all time, for all the earth. The more we realise his deep love for us and understand that sacrifice the more we come to love him.”

Videos	<p>Come and See: What is love and where does it come from?</p> <p>The Chosen – The Chosen scene: John 3:16 – YouTube 4:00–6:35</p>
Questions	<p>These questions are from the Come and See video. They can also be used if using the Chosen video.</p> <p>What is love?</p> <p>Love is the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross for all the wrong things we’ve ever thought, said or done, so that we can be freed to love others.</p> <p>Where does love come from?</p> <p>God created the world out of love, God is love, love is rooted in God, love exists because of God, and it ends with God.</p>
Worship song suggestions	<p>“Your love never fails, never gives up on me”, “Reckless love”, “Good, good Father”.</p>
Reflective Illustration	<p>You will need: a range of marbles, “God so loved” – Hillsong.</p> <p>Give out a marble to each young person. Invite them to look at it – really look at it. What colour are the swirls, what colour and size is the marble, what does it feel like, are there any bumps or imperfections, does the swirl go clockwise, how does it feel on your hand?</p> <p>Each one of these marbles is new to you and unique to you. And just as you hold this marble, God holds the world and you. He knows every detail inside and out. His love for you is as real as that marble in your hand.</p> <p>Take the marble with you to remind you that God sees you and loves the world – loves you, so much he was willing to die for the world – for you. We go out in confidence knowing we are loved.</p> <p>Remind the young people to keep their marble away from younger siblings.</p>

Week 3 – To love with all our heart, soul, mind and strength

Aim	To learn about the fullness of love that God desires from us and what it means to love God with our all.
Passage	Mark 12:30 The Greatest Commandment
Overview	Christians believe that the greatest commandment given by Jesus is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This kind of love encompasses all aspects of our being and influences our actions towards others.
Ice-breaker activity: Games to demonstrate mind, strength, soul, heart	<p>You will need: bubble gum</p> <p>Divide into teams. Each team sends one player from their team to the front of the room.</p> <p>Soul – breath</p> <p>Give each contestant a piece of bubble gum, then tell them that together they will unwrap, chew, and then “bubble”. The person who has their bubble last the longest will win.</p> <p>Make sure you explain that they get only one chance to blow their lasting bubble and that all players have to do it at the same time.</p> <p>Mind</p> <p>Sudden death round.</p> <p>New challenger:</p> <p>Have each player say an element from the periodic table or, if you have younger youth, things you would find in a park.</p> <p>No repetitions or hesitations.</p> <p>Strength</p> <p>New challenger:</p> <p>Players lie down and raise legs by 1ft. Balance a toilet roll on feet/legs for as long as possible.</p> <p>Heart</p> <p>New challenger:</p> <p>Players takes it in turn to say to other players, “I bet I can make you laugh” in funny ways to try to get the other players to laugh. If you laugh you are out.</p>
Prayer	Dear God, help us to love our neighbours as ourselves and serve them with kindness and compassion. Teach us to see every act of service as an act of love. Amen.
Video	Come and See: To love with all our heart, soul, mind and strength
Reading	Mark 12:28–31 Ask the young people to close their eyes and open their hands. Read Mark 12:28–31 out loud a couple of times.
Contemplative practice: Filling	See page 21. You will need a stone in a bowl, a sponge, water and a drink – or these things can be imagined.

Illustration

You will need: heart, shoe, fitness weight/measuring scale, dictionary/heavy maths book.

We tend to put our trust in our own strength or how clever we are and put our relationships and friendships first, but here we are asked to love God first with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (our whole being, physical and spiritual).

Before all else, we give everything to God. And from that flows the capacity to love others. If I am not connected to God and being rooted and strengthened by him, I will struggle to love others in gracious and forgiving ways.

Look at these objects.

What does it mean to love God with **all** your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

How can you practically do this? Choose one thing you could do this week.

What do you need more help with?

- Loving God with your heart – maybe God comes second in this area?
- Maybe you are more concerned with putting your faith in your strength and how you look?
- Do you cram during your revision and don't see anyone for ages?

How can the passage help you in these areas?

Why do you think Jesus made loving others the second part to this commandment?

Share an example of a time when you found it challenging to love someone. How can the Great Commandment guide your actions in such situations?

In what ways can we, as a youth group, demonstrate love in action in our school, community, or even within our church?

How can we remind ourselves daily to prioritise loving God and others fully in our lives?

Reflection

“Be my everything” – Ben Cantalon

Use this time to press pause on our busy lives and to start this week saying to God, “You are my everything.”

Dear God, help me to notice you more this week and dwell in your presence, to see those around me who need help and to love you with everything that I am. Amen

Week 4 – Loving our neighbours as ourselves

Aim	Learning to practise God’s command of love in service to our neighbours.
Passage	Luke 10:25–37 The Good Samaritan
Overview	This is the second Great Commandment. By serving others with kindness and compassion, we demonstrate God’s love. In the story of the Good Samaritan, we see an example of loving service.
Ice-breaker activity: Neighbours quiz	Who are these famous neighbours, and what TV shows do they come from? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilson (<i>Home Improvement</i>)• Ned Flanders (<i>The Simpsons</i>)• Chandler and Joey (<i>Friends</i>)• Lucky (<i>Bluey</i>)• Sheldon Cooper and Lenard Hofstadter (<i>The Big Bang Theory</i>)• Fred (<i>Despicable Me</i>)
Ice-breaker activity: Neighbours quiz – true or false	Which famous celebrities used to be on <i>Neighbours</i> ? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kylie Minogue (Charlene Robinson)• Russell Crowe (Kenny Larkin)• Hugh Jackman – False (was offered a role, but turned it down)• Mel Gibson – False• Chris Hemsworth (Jamie Kane) and Liam Hemsworth (Josh Taylor)• Olivia Rodrigo – False• Jason Donovan (Scott Robinson)• Margot Robbie (Donna Freedman)
Introduction	How do you get on with your neighbours (people on your road)? Gru warns wayward dog owner – YouTube

Reading and contemplative practice: Noticing	<p>Luke 10:25–37 Who is my neighbour?</p> <p>Follow the passage with the Noticing practice (see page 22, or use the version below).</p> <p>Close your eyes, breathe deeply, smile.</p> <p>What are you grateful for? – Thank God.</p> <p>Where have you seen kindness and love? – Thank God.</p> <p>What has stood out? Who have you met? What have you done? – What would be your tweetable headline?</p> <p>Where have you not been your best self?</p> <p>Have you ignored or hurt someone? – Tell God you are sorry.</p> <p>Is there a practical way you can bring kindness or love to those around you? – Ask God to help you.</p> <p>Open your eyes, smile.</p>
Prayer	<p>Dear God, help us to love our neighbours as ourselves and serve them with kindness and compassion. Teach us to see that everyone is loved by you and help us to act out of love. Amen.</p>
Videos	<p>Come and See: Loving our neighbours as ourselves</p> <p>Sharing faith with friends #christian #faith #jesus</p>
Questions	<p>What are some of the ways you can serve your neighbours? Write these down or draw them.</p> <p>How does serving others show love?</p>
Reflection	<p>You will need: Lego, worship music in the background.</p> <p>Invite the young people to build in Lego their practical way of helping/loving their neighbour. Those still undecided could build a house showing ways they can have fun with their neighbours or friends.</p>

Week 5 – Caring for the environment

Aim	To understand the importance of caring for our environment as a form of loving our neighbour and seeking justice.
Passage	Genesis 2:15–20 God’s command to care for the earth
Overview	Christians believe that God commands us to care for his creation. By doing so, we show love to our neighbours and seek justice for all of God’s creatures.
Worship	<p>You will need: card, glue, recycled junk/organic items, organic paint, brushes, etc. (you can make paint out of mud/organic materials such as beetroot, turmeric, etc.)</p> <p>Use creation to make posters of Psalm 19:1–6.</p> <p>In twos and threes go outside and collect leaves, twigs or use the junk provided.</p> <p>Provide space for the young people to feed back and show what they have done, and what part of the psalm they have chosen and why.</p>
Superhero activity	<p>You will need: fruit and vegetables, and photocopied cartoon eyes, nose, mouths, arms, legs, etc. For example: cartoon ninja faces</p> <p>Create your own ninja/superhero out of fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>Give a piece of fruit or a vegetable to the young people and let them create their own superhero using the items provided. Let them name it and come up with a back story. Why did they become a superhero/ninja?</p>
Videos	Come and See: Caring for the environment
Care for the Environment	This is a Rubbish Campaign – Tearfund Change-makers film series – Tearfund
Videos	Choose to Lose (YOUR PHONE) – Open Doors Youth (opendoorsuk.org)
Seeking justice	Children’s and Youth Resources Christian Aid
Questions	<p>You will need: Paper/clean rubbish, pens.</p> <p>How is taking care of our environment showing love for our neighbour?</p> <p>What can you do practically to help take care of the environment in your daily life?</p> <p>Write or draw these, either on paper or a piece of clean rubbish (yoghurt pots, toilet rolls, drinks bottles, etc.)</p>
Prayer	Dear God, help us to love our neighbours by caring for the world you have created. Guide us in seeking justice and preserving your beautiful creation. Amen.

Reading and contemplative practice: Genesis 2:15–20 (See page 18 to prepare for the Dwelling practice.)

Dwelling: As you read the passage from Genesis, what do you notice?

What words or phrases stand out to you?

What is God saying to you in this moment?

Are there any questions?

Reflection **You will need: tea lights**

Worship Song: "We must go", Tim Hughes Have unlit tea lights around the room and reflect on the song. During the song invite the young people to come and light a candle (or click on a battery tealight) as a way of saying "I choose to do something to make this world better."

Week 6 – Sharing faith

Aim	To understand the importance of sharing our faith and the good news of God’s love with others as a way of loving our neighbour.
Passage	Matthew 28:19–20 The Great Commission
Overview	We are called to spread the good news of God’s love and redemption to everyone. This act of sharing is also a demonstration of love for our neighbour, and blessing to those around us.
Aeroplane activity	You will need: paper, plane templates Invite the young people to make their own paper aeroplane for a competition. You can print off various templates for the planes. All stand behind your starting point in a line, one at a time get them to throw their paper aeroplane. At the end you can see which plane went the furthest.
Questions	How does flying these planes represent sharing the good news? Can you think of ways we can spread God’s love and good news?
Worship	“Let it be known” by Worship Central, “Reckless love” by Cory Asbury
Reading	Matthew 28:18–20
Videos	Come and See: Sharing faith The start of Tangled – Mother Gothel hiding the flower, keeping its gift for herself (stop at 2:30)*
Questions	Why can it be hard sharing our faith? What could help with this? *If showing <i>Tangled</i> , Mother Gothel hid the flower that would help others under a basket. Does this remind you of anything in the Bible? Why should we share our faith?
Contemplative practice: Blessing (see page 23, or use the version here).	Invite the young people to close their eyes and sit/lie comfortably. What are the ways you are blessed? <i>Pause</i> Think about your friends and family, hold them in mind and ask God to bless them. <i>Pause</i> Who doesn’t yet know the love of God? Ask God to soften hearts and reveal himself to them. <i>Pause</i> Joy in the Christian life is often experienced by being a blessing to others in simple everyday ways. Think of a way you can bless someone this week.
Prayer	Dear God, give us the courage to share our faith and the good news of your love with others. Help us to show love to our neighbours, and even those we don’t always get on with, by spreading joy and blessings. Amen.
Reflection: Kindness Stones	You will need: stones, permanent pens/paints/brushes, examples of Kindness Stones. Invite the young people to paint or write messages of faith, love and positivity on stones. Throughout the week, they can place these Kindness Stones in places where others will find them, as a simple yet powerful way of sharing good news and love with their community.

Contemplative practice: Dwelling

Dwelling is the practice of loitering in God's word, allowing it to dwell in us as we dwell in it.

Dwelling is a cultivation of the Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina (or holy reading of Scripture), which was also thoroughly embedded in Ignatian spirituality. This practice invites us to listen to and dwell with a story, psalm or piece of scripture, by inviting us to choose words or phrases that catch our attention, cause us to question, or with which there is a personal connection.

The name 'Dwelling' is intended as an invitation to linger, to wait and remain. There is no sense of rush or hurry. This is a safe and brave space, where dwellers can take the risk of waiting, noticing and wondering. Each person is then invited to listen to another person and share what caught their own attention. This listening and being listened to helps us grow in our connection with God, self and others, and is a precious gift to give and receive.

This practice is a way to go deeper into the Bible. Be thoughtful about the version you use. The language of the Contemporary English Version is very accessible to a wide range of ages and abilities.

How to dwell

Before you start, brief the group on what will happen, describing the three stages of 'listen, pair, share':

Listen

We are going to listen to a Bible passage together.

As you listen, notice the part that catches your attention or you like the best.

The passage will be read again.

Invite two volunteer readers and encourage them to read it slowly.

Read the story/passage through twice.

If it's helpful to print out the sheet overleaf with the reading on, please do so.

Pair

After the story/passage has been read through twice, ask the group to get into pairs and listen to their partner. Tell them to ask each other what they noticed, liked best or wondered about the scripture.

Taking notes is allowed if it helps!

Pay attention to what they say - you'll be sharing what you heard into a bigger group in a few moments.

Swap and share so each person speaks and listens.

Join up with another pair and each person shares what they heard their partner say. Each contribution is valued even if it sounds 'unusual, silly or slightly inappropriate'.

Share with the group

Invite each person to present to share what they noticed. Encourage careful listening.

Notice what you are noticing about the passage! It's interesting when a number of people like a particular verse or phrase.

Remember, the invitation is to notice which part grabbed your attention, you liked the best, or feels important (even if you're not sure why).

1 John 4:7–19

⁷ Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. The person who loves has become God's child and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his only Son into the world to give us life through him. ¹⁰ True love is God's love for us, not our love for God. God sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins.

¹¹ That is how much God loved us, dear friends! So we also must love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us. If we love each other, God's love has reached its goal. It is made perfect in us.

¹³ We know that we live in God and God lives in us. We know this because God gave us his Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. That is what we teach. ¹⁵ If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God. ¹⁶ And so we know the love that God has for us, and we trust that love.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him. ¹⁷ If God's love is made perfect in us, then we can be without fear on the day God judges us. We will be without fear, because in this world we are like him. ¹⁸ Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love takes away fear. It is punishment that makes a person fear. So love is not made perfect in the person who has fear.

¹⁹ We love because God first loved us.

International Children's Bible

Contemplative practice: Stilling

Stilling is settling yourself – in posture and breathing – and practising a reflection on the day, in order to notice God.

Life is very full. Busy. Bustling. We can recognise the need to slow and still ourselves, but it can be difficult, especially when our minds decide this is the moment to fill us with busy thoughts, worries, memories, wonderings and all sorts of other stuff. Let's acknowledge this as perfectly normal for children, young people and adults alike.

We are more than our anxious thoughts, we are 'body, mind, soul and spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Slowing down and being present is of enormous benefit. It allows us to encounter God, connect with ourselves, be open to each other and to the world.

Contemplative prayer is a way of putting our pride and defences out of the way, and simply being with Jesus.

What you will need

- A fidget toy or an object to hold (not an electronic device).
- A snow-globe, or a bottle containing water and a little mud. *You can make a your own 'snow' globe by filling a bottle or jar with water and adding a tablespoon or two of mud (sandy compost is best) or wax crayon sharpenings. For the sake of the environment, please avoid using glitter.*
- Before you start, consider how you will finish the Stilling practice. You might write or choose a prayer, psalm or Bible verse, or a call and response prayer that you write together.

Look

Shake a snow globe or muddy bottle and watch it settle. Pay attention to the clearing and settling.

Feel

Each person holds a toy / object as they watch the snow globe or muddy bottle settle.

Say

Say the following words that Jesus said as you breathe in and out. Repeat them slowly three times to help you slow your breath. The script provided is designed so that children, young people or adults can lead. Encourage a slow pace...

Sit, lie down, get comfy. Close your eyes if it helps.

Take some deep breaths and continue to breathe deeply in through your nose (as if you are smelling a lovely flower), counting slowly 1... 2... 3...

and breathe out slowly through your mouth (as if you are gently blowing out candles on a birthday cake), 1... 2... 3...

After you next breathe in, say these words:

'Jesus said, "I am the light".'

Breathe out slowly and pause.

'Jesus said, "I am the light".'

Breathe slowly and pause.

'Jesus said, "I am the light".'

Breathe slowly and pause.

Repeat the pattern above as many times as feels OK.

When this time naturally comes to an end, finish with the words or prayer you had pre-planned.

Then gently come back to the room. Open your eyes, smile, stretch, giggle, thank each other for joining in.

Be aware of...

- Your own feelings during Stilling. These are OK.
- Did it feel as if more space or time was needed? That's OK.
- Smiling, laughing and being a bit silly is a 'normal' reaction when Stilling ends. This is also OK.

Contemplative practice: Filling

Welcoming the Holy Spirit into our beings to refresh, lift and ease us throughout life.

Filling is about inviting the Holy Spirit to be present and to fill each disciple with God's power and love. Filling can be done quietly, for example lying down with soft music on, or more actively, with movement and actions. Do what is most right for your group.

The Filling practice helps us to notice where we are feeling empty and open ourselves up to the flow of God's life-bringing spirit.

In this practice you can either ask the group to imagine the stone, the sponge, the water, and the drink. Or you can assemble these things (including a glass of water for everyone) and enact the steps alongside the script.

Script

Breathe deeply, smile for yourself. Remember that you are part of this filling practice too, receiving for yourself. Then smile and make eye contact with the group.

Invite everyone to sit or lie down comfortably and to close their eyes.

In this practice, we notice where we are feeling empty, and open ourselves up to the flow of God's life-bringing spirit. Jesus says, "those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a well of water springing up to eternal life."

To begin, we will simply smile... and breathe.

(Pause)

Now deepen your breathing and bring your attention to the moment. If your thoughts start racing, bring your attention back to your breath.

Imagine (or look at) a stone that is having water poured on it. See how the stone is cold and hard. It doesn't become soft. It doesn't soak up any water.

Think about where your life, or heart, has become hard like the stone.

Keep silent for 60 seconds

Now imagine (look at) a sponge, and the water being poured once again. See how the sponge is soaking up the water, drawing it in, absorbing the water, becoming fuller.

Think about how you can be refreshed and become the person God made you to be.

Keep silent for 60 seconds

The Psalmist says our hearts are restless until they find rest in God. His cry is "as the deer longs for the water, so longs my soul for you, O God"

Think about your hopes, needs and longings. Where is your soul thirsty?

Keep silent for 60 seconds

Imagine (or now drink) drinking a refreshing glass of water, quenching and transforming your thirst. As you do, invite the Holy Spirit to similarly flow and refresh, and bring you life in all its fullness.

Keep silent for 60 seconds

When you are ready, open your eyes and come back to the room, smile and stretch. Have a deep breath and a giggle if you want to.

Contemplative practice: Noticing

The practice of connecting our story with God's story and God's story with our story.

The practice of Noticing is based on the 'Examen', a spiritual exercise developed by St Ignatius of Loyola in around 1580. Ignatius realised that even the apparently small and insignificant details of life are incredibly powerful to our spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing, both as individuals and in community with others. The Examen invites us to pay attention to when we feel energised and full of life, and to the things we enjoy, but also to when we feel empty, hopeless, lacking in energy and to the things that make us sad. This practice allows us to attend quietly, reflectively and prayerfully to noticing these dynamics in our lives. Ignatius, when asked which of the many spiritual exercises he thought was of greatest value, answered without hesitation: "the Examen".

Say

Say the following words. The script provided is designed so that children, young people or adults can lead. Encourage a slow pace...

Hold up your hands and use your fingers during this practice. We're going to start with a 'thumbs-up'.

Thumbs up represents 'thank you', which is about being grateful and thankful.

What are you feeling thankful for today? Bring some things to mind.

Now hold up your pointing finger.

Where have you seen God or good things today?

Have you pointed someone towards God by being kind or helpful?

Has someone pointed you to God by giving you kindness, love or help?

Next, we come to the tallest finger.

What has stood out from today? A person, story, conversation, time of quiet, a game?

Now the ring finger, which is the weakest finger. It's called the ring finger because people who are married or engaged wear a ring on this finger to show they are in a relationship. Relationships are often lovely but they can also be difficult sometimes.

What do you notice about how you've been with your friends, teachers, brothers and sisters today?

Lastly, we come to the little finger, the smallest one. Small things can make a big difference. This could be a time to simply say "sorry".

Reflect on one small thing you could do that will make a difference tomorrow.

Be aware of...

- Your pace. Allow plenty of pauses so that the participants can think about the questions you're asking and answer them silently.

Contemplative practice: Blessing

Becoming more aware of the blessings we receive and being a blessing to others.

Our final practice is blessing, celebrating the blessings we have received and turning our focus to how we are actively a blessing in the world. The Jesuits have a phrase, 'contemplatives in action', which captures beautifully that our inward journeying is always linked to outward action and expression.

Relax and start in the same way that you have the previous practices. Explain that we are now exploring the practice of blessing: noticing our blessings and exploring where we can be a blessing to others and the world around us.

Script

Could I invite you all to sit comfortably and centre ourselves as we have before, lengthening our breathing and being present to the now. You may find it helpful to close your eyes. Again, simply smile and breathe (*pause*)

Think about yourself; your strengths and weaknesses but most of all, the essence of you which comes from God. Notice the ways in which you are blessed; bring these things to heart and mind with gratitude.

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute (or more)

Thinking about friends and family, hold in mind and heart those you love with gratitude. You can say, "God Bless each of my friends and family, keep them as your beloved children."

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute (or more)

Now think about those who we do not know so well, maybe even those we struggle to like. Bring them to mind and bless them in prayer and thought as we again say, "God bless each of them, keep them as your beloved children."

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute (or more)

Bring to mind the creation and the world around us.

Hold its beauty and goodness in your memory and imagination with gratitude. Again we might pray, "God bless all creation, keep it safe and sacred."

KEEP SILENCE 1 minute (or more)

Joy in the Christian life is so often experienced in being a blessing to others in simple everyday ways. Think of those you could bless this week through an act of kindness.

(*pause*)

I invite you now to open your eyes, bring your attention back into the room, have a stretch, and smile. Discuss as a group the words and actions of blessing each of you could you use to bless others.

"May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord show you his kindness.

May he have mercy on you.

May the Lord watch over you

and give you peace."

Being a blessing in the world

Discuss what the group could do together to serve others. Young people can often get involved in helping at church events. Together, choose what time, effort, and energy to give to an event. Help the group according to their age and stage, but don't do it all for them. Enabling them to work together, and with adults and children, is an important part of your church becoming an intergenerational community. You can find out more about becoming an intergenerational church at oxford.anglican.org/disciples-together

COME AND SEE

Answering deep questions of faith

Come and See returns for Lent 2024. It's our big open invitation to ask deep questions of faith. Join us.

oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see