

**COME
AND
SEE**



**GUIDE FOR LEADERS AND
PARTICIPANTS 2026**

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INTRODUCTION

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

Come and See 2026 is a series of resources offering a holistic approach to those with an established faith, as well as enquirers, to explore Christian beliefs. This booklet provides the content for the six weekly sessions and is designed to be accessible to both participants and leaders.

Background

Under Bishop Steven's leadership we have begun to develop a simple pattern of Christian formation focused on the Church year: a season of invitation in Epiphany; an invitation to explore faith and go deeper in Lent; and a season of deepening faith and sacramental life after Easter.

Come and See, which takes place each Lent, is part of our common vision to become a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world. It invites new people to discover Christ and helps the whole church to be formed as more confident disciples, living out our everyday faith.

This year's course – Bishop Steven's last before his retirement in – looks at one of the core celebrations of the church, the Eucharist, examining it from a Biblical and theological perspective as a means of building our faith and growing our relationship with Jesus. These six, weekly sessions offer enquirers and established Christians a new perspective on the Eucharist and its place within the Christian faith.

Sunday and small group content

The core of this Come and See booklet is a series of six sessions exploring different viewpoints on the celebration of Holy Communion. The content can be used in small groups or as part of a series of Sunday services. Meetings can be held online, in person, or a hybrid approach, whichever suits your group.

Each week, the small group sessions will consider what the Eucharist means for Christian faith and practice. Plus, from 2026, each week also includes integrated intergenerational activities for families, children and youth groups which can be used at or between sessions.

Daily emails (Lent 2026 only)

Whether or not people are planning to join a small group or other session, be sure to ask everyone (your congregation, church families, enquirers and the local

community) to register online for Come and See at oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see

Everyone who signs up will receive a daily email with a short, written reflection that they can also listen to if they wish. Each Sunday, they will receive a link to a short film from Bishop Steven (see below).

It's important to remember that Come and See is invitational. Not everyone in a small group will use the daily content, and not everyone using the daily content will attend a small group. The materials are designed to complement one another or can be used on their own.

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

Six films by Bishop Steven are released each Sunday through Lent (though remain available throughout the year). The films are 10-15 minutes long and available to download or stream. A transcript is provided along with a subtitled version of each film. The films tie in with the weekly Sunday/small group sessions in this booklet and can be used as part of Sunday services.

Church and group leaders will receive a link to the film at least a fortnight in advance.

Feedback from previous years shows that Bishop Steven's messages were highly valued and widely appreciated.

Contemplative Toolkit

Creating space for encounter with God is another key element of Come and See, so we have included complementary prayer practices from the Contemplative Toolkit. Again, the practices, which you can find in the back of this booklet, are suitable for enquirers and those with an established faith. They can be used by individuals, or when you meet as a small group, and with all ages.

GETTING YOUR PARISH/ BENEFICE INVOLVED

1. Invite your parish

Order free promotional postcards to hand out, and print ready-made posters to invite your congregation to register. Church and group leaders can sign up to receive all the resources at oxford.anglican.org/organiser-materials

2. Invite people in your local community to Come and See

Your organiser's email will include a link to resources for you to share on your own social media channels and via email. You'll also find artwork to include Come and See advertising in your parish newsletter and pew sheets. The registration link for participants is: oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see

3. Tag your parish on A Church Near You

This is a good moment to check your parish/benefice ACNY listing to make sure your on-site and online services are listed and to tag them with 'Come and See'.

4. Ask your PDA for support

Our Parish Development Advisors (PDAs) are available to help every parish/benefice, so feel free to contact them at any time for help and support to offer Come and See in your area:

Berkshire and City of Oxford

Rhodri Bowen

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FORMAT OF SESSIONS

Gathering and re-connecting

To help people "arrive", chat, and have time to reconnect with one another. Sharing what we've been up to during the week builds a sense of community and mutual understanding.

Opening prayer and reading

We formally start our sessions with an opening prayer and have provided one for you to use.

Leaders: You may also like to include space for prayer in your church's own worship style.

Conversation starter

Each session includes an open question to help the group get to know each other: "Where have you seen God at work this week?"

A way of noticing where God has been at work may be to reflect on your week using the fruits of the Spirit. Where have you seen kindness, gentleness, patience, faithfulness, or generosity in your week? Where have you experienced love, joy, peace or justice?

Opening a discussion

These are questions which begin to bring people back into a space of discussing about God and faith. They give you a space to share your own experience of faith and your thoughts about the course so far.

Film from Bishop Steven

We have found that if everybody can watch this in advance, it really helps the quality of the discussion. It's a good idea to watch it again together if time allows.

Leaders: Your resources include a download link, so that you're not reliant on a Wi-Fi connection.

Bible reading

This is a reading connected with the theme for the day.

Leaders: You may like to ask a participant to read this out.

Reflections on the reading

Following the Bible reading is a written reflection, expanding on the themes introduced in Bishop Steven's film and the Scripture. This is designed to help guide you into thinking a little bit deeper about God and faith, in away accessible to believers and enquirers.

Leaders: You may want to ask someone to read this section out loud during the session.

Discussion questions

Come and See is designed so that enquirers and practising Christians can explore the faith in fresh and thought-provoking way, at a level appropriate for their experience of Christianity.

This section is all about discussing with your fellow participants and learning together through sharing in a safe and inviting atmosphere. The most important thing is to allow each other the space to openly and honestly discuss the week's theme.

Leaders: It is important to let the conversation flow organically but sometimes you may need to stimulate the conversation, so we have prepared optional questions to support you to do that. Don't feel you have to work your way through a list of questions – see

them as support, not an agenda. The questions are divided into two sections: introductory and going deeper. This is to allow you to tailor your questions to the level of theological experience of the participants

Do remember that often the most lively conversations begin from a single thread. As you guide the discussion and conversation, go in the most helpful direction for the group and especially for those who are exploring faith.

Concluding prayers

This section recommends a practice from the Contemplative Toolkit. This is a distinct prayer resource and can be found at the back of this booklet.

Next steps for everyday faith

This section contains suggestions for further reflection or activities to do during the week that help you live out the week's theme in your everyday life. It can be a good idea to use these as bases for the conversation starter discussion in the following session.

Space Makers Practice

Dedicated intergenerational activities and reflections aimed at families, children and youth groups which can be used to engage your families and the church's young people with the weekly theme.

One last note

The terms Eucharist, Holy Communion, Communion, and Lord's Supper will be used interchangeably in this text. Different church traditions tend to default to different names and this booklet will try to use all of these terms equally.

The important thing is that none of the names are more appropriate than any of the others and you are encouraged to use whichever you feel most comfortable with.

Additionally, in week one there is space to discuss with your group which term(s) people prefer to use.

WEEK 1: THE SERVANT (WHO WELCOMES US)



Gathering and connecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are.

Opening prayer

Holy Father, thank you for this time to come together and explore the mystery of Holy Communion. We ask that you give us open hearts and ears to hear the offer you make to us of a seat at your table, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Conversation starter

- How does Holy Communion (or the Eucharist) feature in your church's worship life?

Opening a discussion

- Do you prefer the name Eucharist, (Holy) Communion, or maybe even the Lord's Supper?
- What comes to mind when you think of Holy Communion?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together and/or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?

READING

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.

She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.

But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care

that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'

But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Luke 10:38-end

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

The image of a shared meal is common to pretty much all cultures across the world. The idea of sitting down with family, friends or strangers and taking the time to eat together; to talk; to hear each other's stories is a deep act of generosity and connection that unites us as fellow human beings. This image takes on a different hue when we become the ones offering the meal. Not only do we get to share with our guests but we also become – as Bishop Steven has said – a servant, gifting them not only with food and drink but with care, hospitality, and a space to encounter one another.

In the reading from Luke 10 we see Jesus visiting the house of his friends Mary and Martha, whom we know from John's Gospel to be the sisters of Lazarus. Poor Martha gets a bit of a bad press in this story. Imagine you are Martha. You have a very important guest and you want to do your absolute best to welcome them into your home. You've been busy all day preparing, cleaning, cooking and now you're running around looking after everyone whilst your sister sits chit-chatting with your guests and leaving all the hard work up to you. I think I'd probably be a bit annoyed with Mary too.

Martha is doing her very best to go above-and-beyond for her guest. She is working really hard to make sure Jesus feels welcome and cared for, and she's been left alone to do it all by herself. But when she raises this with Jesus he gives her a gentle rebuke, reminding her that she's forgotten what's most important, the one thing that hospitality is all about – encounter. Going above and beyond for your guests is an unfulfilled act unless it's accompanied by a genuine time of simply being together and relating to one another. Mary's action represents the value of entering into the presence of Christ and engaging in a genuinely relational encounter with him.

Perhaps there is a rebuke to be shared with both sisters. Maybe Mary is indeed being a bit lazy by not helping her sister, whilst Martha is missing the point of all her hard work by forgetting to take some time to just "be with" Jesus. Each sister has something to tell us in this story. Martha's commitment to going above and beyond for her guests is an example of what it means to welcome people into a relational space, and Mary is a reminder that welcome is pointless unless it leads to a real relational encounter.

This is what Holy Communion is all about – the formation of a relationship. In this service we gather together as Christians to share a holy meal, becoming both hosts and guests in a single celebration.

As hosts we welcome God to dwell among us and we welcome our neighbours and friends as beloved friends, becoming a single people of faith with them through our joint worship. This is summarised in Communion Prayer B from the Church of England liturgy, which says: 'Send the Holy Spirit on your people and gather into one in your kingdom all who share this one bread and one cup, so that we, in the company of all the saints, may praise and glorify you for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' In God's Kingdom we become one people, united in our meal and in our faith, welcoming God and one another into an act of true relationship.

At the same time we become guests of both each other and of God. At another point of the service we remember that it is God who is inviting us to his table, as the celebrant reminds us: 'On the night before he died, he came to supper with his friends and, taking bread, he gave you thanks. He broke it and gave it to them, saying: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' (Prayer G)

In the Eucharist Jesus is the ultimate host, inviting us to his table. Every time we take part in Communion we accept that invitation through the simple act of coming together with our Christian sisters and brothers to eat and drink with each other as friends. This is the central act of Christianity and it is to this that the Lord invites us.

This image is expressed beautifully in a worship song by Chris Tomlin (singer of *How Great is our God*). In his hymn [The Table](#), Tomlin proclaims

*I know He has a place for me
Oh, what joy will fill my heart
With the saints around the mercy seat of God
Come all you weary; come and find
His yoke is easy; his burden light
He is able; He will restore
At the table of the Lord*

*At the table of the Lord
I'm invited to the table of the Lord
I'm invited to the table of the Lord
He says, "Come just as you are"
To His table*

As we start our journey of rediscovering what it means to be a people who share the Eucharist, let us begin in the knowledge that God is offering us a seat at the Lord's table and a relationship with him.

In the words of Bishop Steven, Jesus is both host and friend in the Eucharist, and you are the guest of honour at this meal. Christ has prepared this meal for you and, in turn, we are called to welcome God and our neighbours as guests into this meal, each having a part to play in this ministry of host and servant which is the ministry of Christ.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the Going Deeper questions.

- How do you respond to the offer of a seat at God's table?
- What is an example of a time you felt cared for as someone's guest?
- What might it mean to be God's guest?
- What is your experience of Holy Communion?
- Seeing yourself in the Eucharist as a guest at God's table, how might that change the way you welcome new people into your church?

Going deeper

- How do Bishop Steven's words 'you are the guest of honour at this meal' resonate with you?
- What do you think it means to form a relationship with your Christian brothers and sisters?
- What is God's role in the Eucharist?
- What is the congregation's role in the Holy Communion service?
- How is the Lord's Supper like the Last Supper?

Concluding prayers

The Contemplative Toolkit Stilling practice can be used at the end of your meeting.

Next steps for everyday faith

This week, before each meal, you are invited to recite the following prayer:

Wise and gracious God, you spread a table before us; nourish your people with the word of life and the bread of heaven. Amen.

(Prayers at the Preparation of the Table 7)

Optional

You may also like to contemplate the following Prayers at the Preparation of the Table (4) commonly used in the Eucharist:

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this bread to set
before you,
which earth has given and human hands have
made.
It will become for us the bread of life.
Blessed be God for ever.*

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this wine to set
before you,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become for us the cup of salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.*

SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: STILLING

As we think about feeding and being fed this week, could you bake cake, muffins or biscuits and meet up with a neighbour, friends or family to share these treats or a meal together?

You could even design an invitation, create a menu and make a table decoration.

When you gather, give each other the gift of listening through the question below. It doesn't matter if the answer is someone fictional, historical or present, but do ensure that everyone present has the opportunity to share and have their contribution valued.

If you could invite anyone to dinner, who would it be and why?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



WEEK 2: THE LAMB OF GOD (WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD)



Gathering and connecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are.

Opening prayer

Holy Father, cleanse us that we may have hearts and souls open to faith and to the message of salvation in your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Conversation starter

- Where have you seen God at work this week?

Opening a discussion

- How did you feel after last week's session?
- How did you get on with the next steps for everyday faith?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together and/or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?
- What challenged you, or left you with a question?

READING

Warning: Mentions of blood and animal sacrifice

Aaron shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord, and offer it as a sin-offering; but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, so that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

He shall slaughter the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel,

and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

Leviticus 16:7-22 (abridged)

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

In this week's video Bishop Steven summarises the whole story of creation (thus far), saying:

"In the long story of the Universe, God made the whole of creation and declared that creation was good. Sin, wrong doing, falling short, missing the mark, entered the world through human disobedience, disobedience in which we all share. God sends his son to give his life once and for all for the sins of the world so that our sin can be taken away and forgiven and so that the world can be restored and be remade."

The Bishop mentions a few examples of the background of Christ's sacrifice in the Old Testament, the most famous being the Passover Lamb. In our reading from Leviticus we see another example – that of the annual sin offering on the Israelite Day of Atonement. As part of this annual ceremony two goats are sacrificed; one is killed and its blood used to cleanse the Tabernacle (the precursor to the Temple) and the other becomes a vessel for all the sins of Israel, taking them on its own head and being sent out into the wilderness, symbolically taking away the sins of the people.

This is where we get the term scapegoat. The second goat literally becomes a scapegoat for the people of

Israel, taking all their sins on their behalf. If this sounds familiar it's because we use this language to describe Christ (the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world). The goats here are prototypes of Jesus, foreshadowing the work of salvation that he would undertake when he came into the world.

But there *are* some major differences between Jesus and the goats (aside from the obvious difference in the animal types). First of all, the scapegoat doesn't die, instead being released to live in the wilderness. It's the other goat who dies, as an offering to cleanse the Tabernacle. Jesus fulfils the role of both goats, combining their ministries. He takes all our sin onto himself, he makes a blood sacrifice through his death, he cleanses the temple (the world), and he enters the wilderness (death).

Jesus goes further than the goats, though, by perfecting his ministry through the Resurrection.

St Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23); the goats in Leviticus take these wages owed by the sinful Israelites as a blood sacrifice, or in the form of a life spent in the wilderness exiled from the presence of God's people. Jesus also takes these wages but the story doesn't end with his death.

Again in the words of St Paul 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Death has been beaten.

This is also the cause of the other major difference between the goats and Christ. The goats had to be sacrificed every year on the annual Day of Atonement, but as Bishop Steven and the prayer book tell us Christ made – by his one oblation of himself once offered – a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. The ritual of the goats was temporary and had to be performed every year; Christ's sacrifice was the

once-for-all victory over death and so does not ever need to be repeated again.

So why are we also told that Christ 'instituted and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death until he comes again'? Because unlike the goats where the actual sacrifice had to be repeated every year, the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus can be participated in by us all through the action of Holy Communion. In this sacrament we bind ourselves to the sacrifice of Jesus and to his Resurrection, through which he takes on our sins and gives us new life. This is the miracle of the Eucharist because every time we partake of the body and blood of Christ, his one-time sacrifice is refreshed and renewed in us as the perfect oblation, taking away our sin and the condemnation of death.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the Going Deeper questions.

- Sin is a very heavy subject, how do you feel after today's video and reflection?
- What do you think sin means?
- How might knowing that Christ became a sacrifice for our sins change the way you feel about yourself?
- And how might it change the way we see sin?
- What might it mean to refresh and renew Christ's sacrifice within us through participation in Communion?

Going deeper

- What other Biblical prototypes can you think of for Christ's death and Resurrection?
- We have seen St Paul say 'the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law'; what might this mean for a legalistic view of sin? (1Corinthians 15:56)
- Some people believe the Eucharist is a literal participation in Christ's death and Resurrection and others think it is just an act of remembering by copying the original Last Supper. What do the people in your group think?

Concluding prayers

The Contemplative Toolkit Mending practice can be used at the end of your meeting.

Next steps for everyday faith

Sin doesn't have to be something devastating or Earth-shattering, it can just be a simple act of choosing to do the wrong thing. At the end of every day try to take a couple of minutes to reflect on anything you did where you feel you could have chosen to act better. Ask God for forgiveness and, knowing that that forgiveness is achieved through Christ's sacrifice, tell yourself that God has forgiven you for your mistakes and ask for help to make better choices tomorrow.

Optional

Bishop Steven's video discussed the Prayer of Humble Access, you may like to reflect on the full text of this prayer:

We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: MENDING

When God's people don't match what they believe with what they do (say or think or even don't do, say or think), they need a special way of expressing their sorrow to God. We do this today when we say the special sorry prayer called confession and we can do it this way because Jesus swapped in, taking the blame for our wrongs instead of us.

When we confess it's like us being squeaky clean after a shower or bath, so as your activity this week, how about you give some time to cleaning and tidying for the good of your church, school, local community or household?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



WEEK 3: THE BREAD OF LIFE (WHO FEEDS US)



Gathering and reconnecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are.

Opening prayer

Lord, thank you for this time together. We ask that you send your Spirit among us that we may be refreshed in the knowledge and love of you. Amen

Conversation starter

- Where have you seen God or love this week?

Opening a discussion

- How did you feel after last week's discussion about sin?
- How did you get on with the next steps for everyday faith?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together and/or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?

READING

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living

water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but 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 spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

John 4:7-15

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

Bishop Steven's video this week uses the Gospel of John to talk about Jesus as the Bread of Life, repeating the famous line 'Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."' (John 6:33). The Bishop further points out that this imagery is found throughout John's Gospel and we see it again in our own reading from chapter 4 in which Jesus describes the gift he offers of Living Water which will prevent those who drink it from ever being thirsty again.

Now, I've always struggled with this imagery. I'm someone who likes his food; I've got a big appetite and a correspondingly large waistline. I spend my life dieting and here Jesus is promising me that if I come to him I'll never be hungry again. A childish part of me is annoyed at Jesus not following through with his promise. If he did I might be able to lose some weight. Of course, I tell myself, this is silly and I hope you'll forgive me a little foolishness here. My rational mind reminds me that Christ isn't promising to stop me feeling the physical sensation of hunger, this is a metaphor about spiritual nourishment.

But I'm not so sure that the entire train of thought is actually very silly. The passage may be metaphorical but the desire to find in it a literal meaning is good and correct. The problem is that we can often mistakenly position a literal and a spiritual meaning as polar opposites. If Jesus is promising we won't

be thirsty or hungry again, just because it's about spiritual hunger and thirst doesn't also mean that this isn't literally true. Spiritual hunger and thirst are very real things. I do not believe that it's a coincidence that loneliness and disconnection are growing during a time when we're increasingly losing touch with our spiritual selves. Being a human involves a craving for spiritual fulfilment and this is what Jesus is offering to us in Communion. Jesus is offering us the food and drink we need to nourish our souls – that spiritual part of us that connects us to each other and to God. This is spelt out in the prayer of thanksgiving quoted by Bishop Steven:

*...as we eat and drink these holy gifts in the presence
of your divine majesty
Renew us by your Spirit
Inspire us with your love
And unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our
Lord.*

Communion is a spiritual gift offered to us as a real nourishment for our souls.

This is why we call the Eucharist a sacrament. It is, as Bishop Steven has said, an outward sign of an inward and invisible grace. Just because we are eating bread and drinking wine doesn't also mean that we are not literally receiving spiritual food. What we see and taste is the outward sign of what is truly happening on the inside.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the Going Deeper questions.

- What do you think of the idea of Communion as spiritual food?
- When do you find yourself hungering or thirsting for spiritual nourishment?
- How might receiving the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist nourish you in your daily life?
- If Communion is an offer of spiritual nourishment, how might you incorporate it into your spiritual life and your relationship with God?
- If you've never had communion, how do you respond to the offer of spiritual nourishment?

Going deeper

- The Agapé Meal is a term used to describe the practice of sharing a fellowship meal either separately or following the Lord's Supper. How might this be a literal response to Jesus' promises in the Gospel of John?
- What is your understanding of the term "sacrament"?
- If we don't find ourselves being nourished by the Eucharist, how might we consider new ways to approach the Lord's Supper?

Concluding prayers

The Contemplative Toolkit Noticing practice can be used at the end of your meeting.

Next steps for everyday faith

This week there are two options and you can choose to do one or both:

- Try to attend a mid-week Communion service and reflect afterwards how this felt different to your normal church service.
- If you're unable to attend a mid-week Communion try to take a few minutes at the end of each day to reflect on times when you've felt in need of spiritual nourishment, asking the Lord to send his Spirit to be with you in moments like those and to feed you with grace.

Optional

You may also like to reflect on this Prayer of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion:

Almighty and ever-living God, we thank you that you graciously feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. By this you assure us of your favour and goodness towards us: we are incorporated into the mystical body of your Son, the blessed company of all faithful people; we are heirs, through hope, of your everlasting kingdom, by the merits of Christ's precious death and passion. Assist us with your grace, heavenly Father, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and walk in goodness the way you have prepared for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen

SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: NOTICING

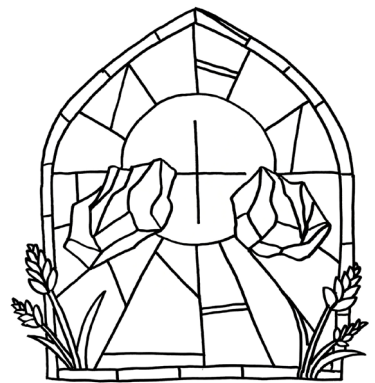
Yeast is the magic ingredient in bread that causes the dough to grow bigger, lighter and fluffier. When you eat bread you can't see the yeast, but you can remember the work it's done and can be happy and thankful for yummy bread.

Take some time each day to remember what you've

done. Who are the people who've helped you encounter God, how did they do it?

Write or draw them and keep them safe in a jar or box. Keep adding to the jar each day. At the end of the week have a look at them and see all the ways God has been with you in life and say a thank you prayer.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



WEEK 4: THE VINE (WHO OFFERS REST AND LIFE)



Gathering and reconnecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are. If need be, remind each other of names, perhaps share a joy and challenge from the week.

Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for gathering us together today. As we reflect further on what it means to have a relationship with you we ask for your help to stick with you when it is easy as well as when it is hard. Amen

Conversation starter

- Where have you seen God or love this week?

Opening a discussion

- How did you feel after last week's session?
- How did you get on with the next step for everyday faith?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?

READING

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:9-end

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

In this week's video Bishop Steven issued a real challenge to us in how we think about what it means to live a Christian life, saying:

"Joy and suffering are not alternatives or opposites. Joy and suffering are both an inescapable part of what it means to be human, of what it means to love, of what it means to be a Christian. Joy and suffering are held together in this most glorious sign and symbol of wine. This wine is offered to you and I, Sunday by Sunday, in the heart of our worship and we meet Jesus there together, sharing the common cup."

This is quite the statement for us to grapple with. It can be easy to talk about the joy of having a relationship with God but saying suffering is a proper part of Christian faith probably makes many of us feel quite uncomfortable. But Jesus never shies away from reminding us that following him can be hard. Right at the end of John's Gospel, as he is commissioning Peter to lead the Church, Jesus tells him:

'Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go. (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."' (John 21:18-19).

In other words, in choosing to follow Jesus, Peter would also be willingly choosing the path of suffering.

I recently spent some time living together with a number of Christians from places in our world where they suffer serious, violent persecution. For these sisters and brothers in Christ, simply being a

Christian involved the genuine risk that, like Peter, they could suffer death for their faith at any moment. What I found, though, was not that they shied away from suffering but embraced it. The promise that joy and suffering are both parts of what it means to be a Christian was actually a comfort to them because they knew that Christ, Peter, and all the other martyrs (people killed for being Christian) stand with them in their suffering.

As the Bishop reminds us several times in his video, the bread and especially the wine which we eat and drink in Communion remind us of the sufferings of Christ himself. In fact, in Communion we still mix some water in with the wine in commemoration of John 19:34 when we read that the soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear and out flowed blood and water. The Eucharist is a reminder that even though we may suffer, Christ suffered for and with us first, so that we can have confidence in knowing that when we struggle Christ is right there standing beside us.

And the call from our fellow Christians suffering persecution is that we stand with them too. In our reading today Paul tells us to 'rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep', and Bishop Steven reminds us at the end of the video that 'as we are united with Christ, so we are united with one another around the table of the Lord.'

That joy and suffering are both a part of the Christian life doesn't mean that in order to be a Christian you need to be suffering, it means that as we abide with all our fellow Christians in the true vine, Jesus, and share in his Body and Blood in the Eucharist, we must be ready to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in their joy and in their suffering because we are all one in the Body of Christ.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the [Going deeper](#) questions.

- What do you think it means to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep?
- How do you respond to the idea that joy and suffering are both part of being a Christian?
- How does your church rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep?
- There are lots of other ways that we suffer as human beings (outside of religious persecution); how might you be able to stand with those church members who suffer in this country?
- How might we follow the words of St Paul and overcome evil with good?
- How might the church support you when you are suffering?

Going deeper

- What efforts does your church make to discover and address the ways people in your church family and parish community are suffering?
- What is the significance of martyrdom as a form of Christian witness?
- In what ways does or doesn't our 21st-century political landscape follow the words of St Paul in today's reading?
- Read together the story of the [21 Martyrs of Libya](#). How do you respond to this?

Concluding prayers

The Contemplative Toolkit Dwelling practice can be used at the end of your meeting.

Next steps for everyday faith

Embrace the Middle East is a well-known charity working to help marginalised and vulnerable

communities in the Middle East. During this week try to watch one or two of the videos from the [Embrace Prayer Room](#) to learn more about the persecuted church and to pray for God's grace and love.

Optional

You may also like to use the following prayer from Fred Drummond, Director of Prayer at the Evangelical Alliance, published for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, 2014:

*Gracious and almighty God, We thank you for the miracle of the Church.
We thank you that the Church is made up of weak and strong, Rich and poor, men and women and children; People of every tongue, tribe and nation.
We thank you that we are the body of Christ, one people united through the grace, mercy and love of Jesus.
When one part suffers, we all suffer. When one weeps, we all weep. When one laughs, we all laugh. We are mysteriously and marvellously united for eternity. Across generations and time together we are yours.
Lord of mercy we pray for all our brothers and sisters across the world who are facing persecution for your name.
We ask that your deeper, more tangible presence may be with them and that they may know you. May they know your hope and strength in the times of doubt and weakness.
Lord, may your promise that you "will never leave nor forsake" be a word of comfort.
We also ask that you may allow all who suffer for the sake of Jesus to know that they are not alone or forgotten.
Soften our hearts Lord and give us boldness and creativity in finding ways to support our Christian brothers and sisters in time of trial.
Help us to pray with faith and advocate with courage for the sake of the persecuted.
God of justice we thank you for the example of those who give up all things for your sake. May they find comfort in the knowledge that you are Lord of all and that one day in Christ, all sorrow, pain and mourning will end and prize and vindication will be found in you.
In Jesus' name,
Amen*

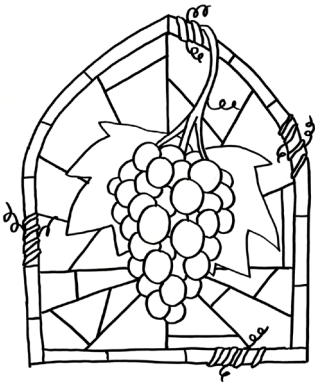
SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: DWELLING

As we think about the vine this week, we are mindful of where we dwell, inhabit, have our roots and what enables our roots to grow deep. You are invited to create a prayer space in your home. You could make it big with a den, a pop-up tent, a suitable corner or cubby. You could make it small with a blanket and a box or tray on the sofa. Ask each person in the household to contribute something to the prayer

space – an ornament, book, picture, photograph, cushion.

Spend time dwelling in the space and consider where are you rooted? What do you need to help your roots grow deeper? How might you help others to grow too?

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



WEEK 5: THE SON OF GOD (WHO DRAWS US INTO THE WORSHIP OF HEAVEN)



Gathering and reconnecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are.

Opening prayer

Holy Father, we ask you to send the Holy Spirit among us as we meet together today. May your Spirit come to us as a gift and bind us together in the love of friendship. Amen

Conversation starter

Last week's topic was very heavy. It would be a good idea to check in with everyone to see how they felt immediately afterwards and throughout the last week.

Opening a discussion

- How did you get on with the next steps for everyday faith?
- Where have you seen God or love this week?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?

READING

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that

Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart.

1 Peter 1:3-22 (abridged)

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

Bishop Steven this week shares the call to enter into the worship of heaven. The meal, he writes, in which we share is a foretaste of God’s banquet in heaven, the meal to which we are all invited, the great celebration which will mark the renewal of the heavens and the earth. Similarly, St Peter describes how we have been given a new imperishable, undefiled, and unfading hope being kept in heaven for us until Christ’s second coming. You could be forgiven for thinking, therefore, that the sole purpose of being a Christian is to make ourselves holy in preparation for the coming salvation. Prepare your minds for action, Peter says, in order to make yourselves ready for Jesus’ grace.

But there are a couple of clues in the text that may help us see this differently. Firstly, he says ‘you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.’ Note that Peter doesn’t say that you *will* receive salvation but you *are* receiving it. This is something happening right now. Similarly at the end of the passage he writes ‘now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual affection, love one another deeply from the heart.’ This time there’s a sense of completion to the action. The suggestion is that once you have prepared yourself to receive grace you should then be changed in the way you interact with the world around you right now.

Bishop Steven highlighted the Lord’s Prayer in his video. As part of this he reminded us of the line ‘Your Kingdom Come’, describing it as both looking to the future together in hope and crying out with longing for this world to be changed. Christianity is a religion of the future and the present. Receiving salvation is a process of preparing ourselves for the future by building God’s Kingdom here on earth right now. St Peter uses striking language to describe the Second Coming, writing:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God. (2 Peter 3:10-12a).

This dramatic language is once again an exhortation to prepare ourselves. Peter uses this terrifying imagery to present us with a stark choice. Do we want to pass away or do we want to be ready for Jesus’ return? Remember in week one we discussed the idea that the wages of sin is death. Our choice as Christians is death and destruction or life in Jesus and, if we are to choose the latter, that means not only waiting for the second coming but also hastening it on through

the building of God's Kingdom on Earth. How do we do this? The answer Peter gives us is simple: we must purify our souls through obedience to the Gospel so that we can love one another deeply, with genuine mutual affection, and from the heart.

The Lord's Supper is an integral part of this process of mutual loving. In the action of eating and drinking together we are united like a family sat around the dining room table. We change from strangers to brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. As Bishop Steven says, together we are drawn into the fellowship of God the Trinity. Together we are forgiven and fed. Together we rest in the vine.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the Going Deeper questions.

- What do you imagine God's Kingdom on Earth to look like?
- How do you feel about the Lord's Supper being like a family sat around the dinner table and drawn into the life of the Trinity?
- How is your church involved in building God's Kingdom?
- What do you think St Peter might mean by 'leading lives of holiness and godliness'?
- How can the Eucharist help us love our fellow Christians?
- What might it mean that the Eucharist connects us to past, present, and future?

Going deeper

- As Christians how are we at risk of focusing on Heaven at the expense of building God's Kingdom on Earth?
- St Peter says that we are [continually] receiving salvation. What might it mean that salvation is not a one-off thing but something we continue to receive?

The Eucharist is the definition of the present and the future, in fact, being past, present, and future all in one. It commemorates the historic sacrifice of our Lord, it brings Christians together now in the act of gathering for a meal, and it unites us in the promise of the resurrection and the new life to come. In Communion all of these things are happening at the same time and because of that it forms the basis of our self-preparation, connecting our present selves to what Christ has done for us and to what Christ calls us to in the future.

- What can we do if we're struggling with the call to genuinely love one another?
- What might Peter's words tell us about sin?

Concluding prayers

The Contemplative Toolkit Noticing practice can be used at the end of your meeting.

Next steps for everyday faith

Before leaving the meeting write down the names of each of the participants on a piece of paper. During the week pray to God for each of the members of your group and ask for God's help to love them as God loves them.

Optional

You may like to share the Prayer of Preparation for Holy Communion for further reflection:

As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now united on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together from the corners of the earth into your kingdom. Amen

SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: NOTICING

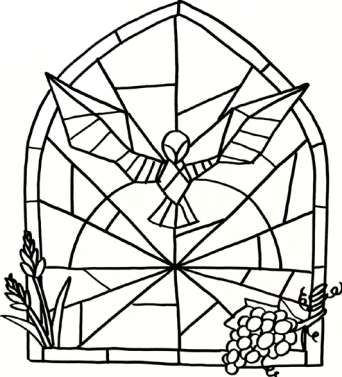
This week Bishop Stephen invites us to look at Rublev’s Icon of the Trinity. [Have a look at it here...](#)

I wonder what you notice about the icon?

I wonder where you are in this picture or which part is especially for you or about you.

Have a go at drawing, painting, creating, building your own icon of the Trinity.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



WEEK 6: THE APOSTLE (WHO SENDS US)



Gathering and reconnecting

To help people settle, take time to reconnect and hear how people are.

Opening prayer

Holy Father, thank you for guiding us through this season of Lent and our exploration of Communion. Help us to continually develop our relationship to you, to our church family, and the world that we may ever live in the knowledge and love of Christ. Amen

Conversation starter

- Where have you seen God at work this week?

Opening a discussion

- How did you feel after last week's session?
- How did you get on with the next steps for everyday faith?

Weekly film from Bishop Steven

This can be watched together or you can agree to watch before you meet. Based on the film and daily reflections this week:

- What have you heard that intrigued you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?

READING

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house,

eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near."

Luke 10:1-12

REFLECTIONS ON THE READING

This week's video is all about being called and sent to share the Good News of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This evangelistic commissioning goes right back to the Gospel, as we see in today's reading. Jesus sends out 70 of his followers to preach the Gospel and to communicate to the world that the Kingdom of God has come.

In this sending-out Jesus tells us to prioritise our mission. If we are spending our time preaching the Gospel to those who don't want to hear it, what is the point of that? Christ tells us to brush the dust off our feet and move on. But if we find fertile ground, if we find people who are ready to hear the message of the Good News, then we are to stay there. Jesus tells us to live in that place, to eat and drink with them, to cure the sick, and to bring the Kingdom of God to them. In modern terms we might call this *dwelling with people* by spending an extended period of time just "being with" them and sharing the Kingdom.

This call and commission from Jesus offers us a challenge. It challenges us to reconsider how we work to declare the Gospel to our world. As Christian communities it's easy for us to "do" church the same way we've always done it and assume that what worked in the past is right for what the world needs now. The reading today asks us to look again at what we're doing and ask: is this right or should we be brushing the dust off our feet and moving on to a new house?

At the same time it challenges us as individuals to think about how we receive the Gospel. Do we allow it to sit with us, to be present in our day-to-day lives

and to support us when we are suffering or is faith something we leave at the church door after the Sunday service, forgetting to welcome it into our homes?

As we come to the end of this Come and See discussion of the Eucharist we might remember the example of Bishop Gregor MacGregor, one-time mission priest in Wester Hailes in Edinburgh. A convert to Anglicanism, Bishop MacGregor had a great belief in the evangelistic beauty of the Eucharist and as missionary he and his wife moved onto the Wester Hailes estate and began a simple ministry of "being present" with the people in their joys and sufferings and through it all hastening the coming of the Kingdom by the regular celebration of Communion. This simple act of "being with" and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ led to a local revival of the church. Just as Jesus commands in the reading today, Bishop MacGregor and his wife ate and drank with the people of Wester Hailes in the sharing together of the Holy Meal. The Eucharist is, as we saw last week, like a family gathered around the dinner table, except this time the church took the table to the people and set it up amongst them (John 1:14).

If we are called this week to be with others as we share the Gospel with them and, in turn, to let the Good News be with us in our daily lives, it is the Eucharist that is the beginning and end of that journey. Through it we present the living Christ to the world in the form of a meal and through it we feed on Christ as spiritual sustenance, taking him with us as we go from worship out into the world.

Introductory questions

These sessions are designed to give everyone the space and freedom to ask questions about each week's topic. But if you'd like some pointers to get your conversation started, you could try discussing any of the questions below. Or, for something more theologically advanced, you can have a look at the Going Deeper questions.

- How do you respond to the idea of being called and sent out to announce the Kingdom of God?
- What might it mean to "be with" the people with whom we're sharing the Gospel?
- How can you allow the Good News to sit with you in your everyday life?
- How has exploring the Eucharist this Lent grown or changed your understanding of the Eucharist?
- How might you incorporate Holy Communion into your ongoing relationship with God?

Going deeper

- Why do you think Bishop MacGregor's example of celebrating Holy Communion in a house church may have inspired the people of the Wester Hailes estate to explore faith?
- How could your church undertake Eucharistic mission?
- What is the significance of the Lord's Supper as a meal?
- What are the challenges that prevent your church doing mission differently and how could you overcome them?

Concluding prayers

You may like to offer a personal prayer or receive prayer for renewal in the life of the Spirit.

Next steps for everyday faith

- How might you put what you have learnt into practice in your faith journey?
- What are the next couple of steps in your faith journey?

To help you continue to grow in your faith there are courses for individuals and small groups on the diocesan [Learning Hub](#).

Optional

You may like to reflect on the following alternative Prayer of Humble Access:

*Most merciful Lord,
your love compels us to come in.
Our hands were unclean,
our hearts were unprepared;
we were not fit
even to eat the crumbs from under your table.
But you, Lord, are the God of our salvation,
and share your bread with sinners.
So cleanse and feed us
with the precious body and blood of your Son,
that he may live in us and we in him;
and that we, with the whole company of Christ,
may sit and eat in your kingdom.
Amen.*

SPACE MAKERS PRACTICE: NOTICING

When we live the way of Jesus, we are called to be a blessing to others as we receive good things from God and are equipped by the Holy Spirit. We can give because we receive. We can love because we are loved.

How could you be a blessing to others this week?

One way is to go on a Prayer walk around your area. As you walk, be mindful of people - neighbours, friends, family, strangers. And be mindful of places - school, church, nursery, uniformed group, sports team. Say prayers and ask God to bless them as you walk by each person and place.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS:



Stilling

Stilling is a powerful practice. In our busy world we often forget the ancient wisdom that we are human beings not human doings.

For this practice you sit still, notice your breathing and gently call to mind good things received, difficult burdens carried or things you long for. This helps you become more grateful, humbler and more purposeful. It is also a beautiful and profound way to pray, and Christians have been doing it for most of their history.

1. Place

Find a comfortable chair, and maybe a cushion, in a place where you will be undisturbed for 10 minutes. Bring a rug or blanket if you like.

2. Posture

Sit back in the chair, upright and alert but at ease. You could support your back with the cushion and wrap the rug around you. Put your feet flat on the floor if possible. Check your neck and shoulders – are they relaxed?

7. Pray

Psalm 46 says: 'Be still and know that I am God'. As you finish, say these words to yourself a couple of times as you slowly breathe in and out.

6. Palms up – please

Imagine someone is placing something good into your hands. What do you long for deep inside? It might be for yourself or for others. Ask God for this: 'Please God...'



5. Palms down – sorry/sorrow

Imagine you are dropping or letting go of something; it might feel heavy, sad, tiring, burdensome or shameful.

It might be something you've done, or something that was done to you.

You might want to say sorry, or say sorry to God: 'God, I feel sorry/sad about _____ help me to let go.'

3. Presence

Breathe in slowly, counting to three:

1... 2... 3.

Visualise or feel what you hope to receive from this time.

Then breathe out slowly counting to three:

1... 2... 3.

Let go of anything that feels heavy or difficult about today. It's often helpful to close your eyes.

4. Palms up – thank you

Turn the palms of your hands upwards. Call to mind good things from the past day, weekend, week, the good things placed into your hands. Christians believe that God creates all good things in our world. You can thank God for those good things: 'Thank you God for...'

**COME
AND
SEE**

oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see

Dwelling

Christians believe that God uses the Bible to communicate with us. This practice is about the way the Bible can 'come alive' as you read it.

It's a way of reading a passage which goes back to St Benedict in the sixth century. It isn't about looking for the right answer to a question or increasing your knowledge. It's about finding individual words or phrases which resonate with you or challenge you, and then wondering why. You pay attention to the words that feel good or catch your attention, and the way you respond to them.

1. Place

Find a comfortable seat, in a place where you won't be disturbed for 10 minutes. You will also need a short passage from the Bible. You could use the one on the back of this sheet. Bring a pencil and something to lean on.

2. Grace

Take some slow deep breaths as you count to three, and then breathe out slowly, also counting to three. The word 'grace' is another word for a gift. What gift do you want or need from this time? Express it clearly to yourself and, if you want, to God.

3. Space

Read the passage very slowly to yourself a few times, out loud or in your head. St Benedict, who pioneered this exercise, asks us to imagine that we are a cow chewing the cud. What words or phrases 'taste' good or draw your attention? You could imagine that you are 'in the passage' as one of the characters.



6. Finish

As you think about today's practice, what are you grateful for? God loves to hear even the shortest prayer saying 'thank you' for the good things that he gives us.

4. Face to face

Imagine you are having a conversation, face to face, with Jesus or someone you deeply respect about what you found in the passage. Explain why it felt important to you. Imagine what they would say back to you.

5. Trace

It can be helpful to trace your responses to the Bible over time. Often certain ideas or themes return or develop. Jot your ideas in a journal with the date. Christians believe that God communicates with us through these gentle nudges and prompts as the Holy Spirit speaks to us.

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Mending

As we move through these practices, we touch on some of the more difficult aspects of life. We address the hurt within ourselves. You can decide whether you choose something small or something big to offer to God for mending and healing.

For this practice you ideally need a stone or pebble which fits in your hand, but you could use something else which feels heavy. The practice focuses on forgiveness: forgiving others, forgiving ourselves, and receiving forgiveness from God to live more freely. It is at the heart of Christianity, and it is something that all humans need to do to live well and flourish.

1. Pick up

Find a comfortable, quiet place. Start with your pebble on the ground. Pick it up and think about something which has hurt you. It might be a small thing or a bigger thing. It might be a situation close to you, or more distant.

5. Go

You can leave the pebble on the ground or you can leave it with God. You could find, draw or make a simple cross, and place the stone there. Jesus had many 'stones' thrown at him, but he refused to throw them back and instead forgave.

Perhaps you also feel the need to be forgiven?

2. Hold

Hold your pebble tightly in your non-dominant hand (the hand you don't use to write). Picture the time you were hurt by this situation or person and allow yourself to feel the pain you still carry. It is a bit like being hit by a stone that has been thrown at you. Observe which emotions are involved. Notice what you feel in your body. Notice your thoughts too.



3. Throw?

Move the stone to your dominant hand (the one you use to throw). The stone could be used as a weapon; it was thrown at you and you could throw it back. Would that make anything better? How might it make things worse?

4. Let go

Feel the burden of the hurt inside. Ask, 'Who is suffering? Have I carried this weight for long enough? Am I willing to forgive?' If the answer is no, that's OK. If you are ready to let the burden go, silently say: 'Breathing in, I acknowledge the pain. Breathing out, I am forgiving _____. Repeat these words for as long as feels helpful.

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Noticing

This practice is based on a simple spiritual tool developed by St Ignatius of Loyola. It is about noticing apparently small and insignificant details of life and realising that they are signs pointing to personal, spiritual and community truth.

You are invited to notice times of consolation, when you feel energised, alive and full of life and possibility, as well as times of desolation, when you feel empty, drained, hopeless and lacking in energy and vitality. Open your hand. Start by touching your thumb, and then touch each finger in turn.

2. Where is God?

This is the index or pointing finger. It asks the question 'Where?' Withdraw a little from the busyness of the day. Take time to step into the stillness. Where did you find goodness? Christians believe God is the source of everything good.

3. What has stood out?

The tallest finger stands out. What has stood out in your day? Rewind the day, calling to mind the people you have met, the situations you encountered. If you were to write the newspaper headline for today, what would it be?

4. Where have you been at your weakest?

The fourth finger is the weakest finger. What might you have done differently today? Where have you not lived up to your commitments to yourself, to others, the world, or God? Where might you have hurt others and failed to notice at the time? Say or pray 'sorry'. You can ask for God's help.

1. What has been good?

A thumbs-up denotes what is good. What do you have to be grateful for? Think about where you have been blessed. You can thank God for those moments.

5. What little change can you make?

The little finger provides balance when writing, typing, or holding a cup. Is there anything in your life which is out of balance and needs adjusting? What small change could you make to rebalance your life and the world around you?



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