

GUIDANCE

Seeking wisdom's way during change and uncertainty

- The service outline below is a guide, which you can adapt in any way you wish.
- **The sections in dark blue comprise an outline lasting about 10 minutes. Sections in light green can be added for a longer version.**
- Introductions to each section may be spoken by the leader or by different members of the group.
- Please feel free to adapt them so that they are natural to what you would say.
- Text in *italics* represent instructional text for you, all other text are the words to be spoken.
- The participants' version is a separate document. You are welcome to print it off and give each person a copy, and/or use the PowerPoint slides if you have projection facilities.
- Participants will be most helped if your words **are spoken slowly**.
- **Don't forget to review how it went afterwards.** Take five minutes to ask: what went well? What could we do better next time? Do this on your own or with others who help you.

Coming together for guidance

Welcome people by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

A Welcome to SoulSpace. Our theme is guidance. Some of you may have an important decision to make. Others of you may regret a past decision and wonder how to undo it. One or two of you may feel you are drifting through life and would like a greater sense of direction. Still others may be grateful for an awareness of being guided by a higher power. As we bring our different experiences of being guided, let us be thankful for one another.

OR

B Welcome. In this session we shall be thinking about where we go for guidance, whether that is from family or friends, from other trustworthy people, or from a source we recognise as divine. Please feel free to take part in whatever way that is comfortable. You can talk, or not talk; share, or not share. Use this time to relax and explore.

OR

C Welcome everybody. You are here among friends. Jesus, one of the world's greatest spiritual teachers, opened his arms to everyone, the children, the sick, the beggars and the powerful,

even the thief on the cross next to him as he went to his death. On one occasion he said, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26)
Let's welcome into our hearts others in the group, and be thankful that God cares for them.

OR

D *Your own words.*

Encourage people to open their hearts to wisdom. Here are three examples, which you can accompany with a track from the playlists supplied on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Music playlists').

Option 1 *Invite a few moments of quiet reflection as you adapt one of the following or make up your own. Speak the words slowly.*

A Take a moment to pause and look at someone here with you. Surround them with thoughts for them. Ask silently that in the busyness of life, they pause and seek the voice of wisdom. May wisdom give them clarity, patience and a discerning heart. May they find the source of wisdom and rest in it.

OR

B Soften your gaze and think about the people in the room. You might find a spot on the floor to focus your thoughts. Think about all the guidance you have received that has brought you to this point in your life. Where or to whom have you turned for guidance? What have been your best sources of support and wisdom?

OR

C We gather as fellow pilgrims:

Life is a pilgrimage. From the cradle to the grave we wander this earth; each day we make journeys of the ordinary; we never stop moving, whether our steps be small or large.

Along the way life happens. And when life happens, God happens.

The pilgrim's way is a journey to the heart of faith in the heart of creation. It is a voyage that goes deep into our selves, and takes us out into the world.

We are not always sure of the way forward, not always sure we're on the right path.

Yet we can take comfort from these words of an ancient prophet, to be found in the Christian Bible: "The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." (Isaiah 58.11)

Quietly ponder these words for a few moments.

OR

D *Your own words.*

Option 2 *Light a candle. As you or another person does so, adapt one of the following or make up your own.*

A When life feels uncertain and chaotic, or when your mind is so full that it becomes hard to see the wood from the trees, it can be helpful to focus on one thing and tune out the noisy confusion.

A candle flame is a good thing to focus on. It's not still or lifeless; it moves and dances, but it is also peaceful and comforting. Be still, and know that the source of life is good and will not leave us lost. Think quietly about this for a few moments (as you listen to some music).

OR

- B** Guidance can help bring us out of the dark toward the light. Focus on the candle's flame, and ask where you need wisdom or guidance in your life now. Bring these aspects of your life toward the light, and imagine how you would feel if you found clarity.

OR

- C** As we light our candle, pray that God will guide the others gathered with you.

One of the poets in the Christian Bible wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Watch the flame. Its gentle glow lights up its surroundings, reminding us that God's guidance shines even in the shadowed moments of life.

Its warmth dispels the cold and brings comfort, reminding us that God's guidance is personal, caring, and can warm our hearts.

The flame moves softly, reminding us that God often speaks in gentle whispers.

Imagine lighting another candle with the flame of yours. One light becomes two, then many, filling the room with brilliance. Pray that God's guidance in your life can become a source of light for others who are with you now or in the different contexts of your life.

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

Option 3 *Download some pictures showing scenes from everyday life - for example, urban and rural, domestic and workplaces, wealthy and poorer people, older and young.*

To avoid copyright issues, try the Unsplash and Pixabay websites, which have photos you can download for free. Invite people to select a picture, and then adapt one of the following or make up your own.

- A** Wisdom can be present in all aspects of life. As you look at your picture:

Does it speak in any way of the need for wisdom?

What might wisdom look like in that context?

Does this remind you at all of your own life?

OR

- B** Look around the photos available and see if a particular one stands out to you. Don't think about it too hard; trust your gut and pick the first one that stands out. Spend some time in silence looking at it. What might it be saying to you? Do you see any wisdom or guidance in it? It is fine if not. There are no wrong answers.

OR

- C** The spiritual leader Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). Sometimes, guidance comes through resting or pausing. As you look at your picture:

Does it contain anything that would make you pause?

Does it suggest a need to calm down and reflect?

Does it include anything that would help you to be still and open to God?

When you have thought about these questions, silently say this prayer on behalf of someone else who is gathered with you: "Lord God, help (*name of person*) to rest in You. May s/he lay down any burdens and trust in you direction. Amen."

OR

D *Your own words.*

Shared reflection

Adapt one of the following or make up your own.

A As we draw this opening time to a close, are there any thoughts or feelings you would like to share with others in the group? (Please don't feel you have to.)

OR

B We have a time now to share some of your reflections, if you would like to. There is no pressure to say anything and there are no right or wrong answers. You might like to sum up your reflection in just one or two words. For example, "I felt...(leader supplies their own example).

OR

C I wonder if anyone feels prompted to share a thought or a feeling that they've had? (Don't feel you have to.) Might this be God speaking through you?

OR

D *Your own words.*

Seeking guidance

Choose from one of the following.

Option 1 A reading from the Bible

Select from:

A *This reading from Psalm 25: 1-7.*

In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.

I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame,

but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.

Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways;

according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.

OR

B Select a reading from those offered on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Bible readings').

Introduce the reading by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

I shall now read a poem from one of the world's most famous spiritual books, the Christian Bible. I shall read it through twice, and as I do so you may want to ask yourself, "What is this reading saying to me?"

OR

C This reading comes from a song book in the Bible, known as the book of Psalms. The psalms contain songs of joy and sadness. Often the writers are calling out for answers. (*For alternative readings, rephrase as appropriate.*) I will read this through twice. Feel free to just sit and listen to it the first time. Then I will read an explanation (*provide your own*) and read the passage through again. Perhaps think about what images or pictures this reading brings to mind.

OR

D We shall now have a reading from the Bible. I shall read it through twice, and as I do so you may want to ask yourself, "What is this reading saying to me?"

OR

D Your own words.

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection on the reading, then continue to the next section, "Bringing guidance to the world".

If you sense people would like to discuss the passage, you can choose from the questions in the 'Discussing the Bible Readings' download on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to 'Discussing the Bible readings').

Option 2 Reflecting on a picture

Instead of the reading, you can reflect on a picture. To avoid copyright issues, try the [Unsplash](#) and [Pixabay](#) websites, which have photos you can download for free.

Invite people to consider one or two questions as they look at the photo. You can choose from the following:

- What is the piece doing? Does it tell a story? Evoke a feeling? Document an event? Present an idea? If so, what? Do any of these speak of the need for guidance?
- How does it make you feel?
- Does the piece bring to mind any situations when you wish you had found guidance or did so?
- Does the photo connect you to something greater (maybe the source of wisdom)? If so, in what ways?
- How have your feelings changed from the time you started looking at it till now?

Introduce this section by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

A We are now going to reflect silently on a photo, and as you do so you may want to ask yourself (*choose one or two questions from the above*).

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.

OR

- B** Spend time looking at this photo. Perhaps think about how this photo makes you feel and how you connect to it. There are no wrong answers; what does it make you think of? You might like to write down some thoughts either on the photo itself or around the border. You can use just one word if you like.

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.



OR

- C** We are going now to look quietly at a photo. Sometimes photos can spark spiritual feelings or thoughts. They can even be vehicles for a higher power or for God to speak to us, however we understand God. As we look at this photo, you may want to ask yourself (*choose from the above questions*).

At the end there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like.

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection on the photo, then continue to the next section, "Bringing guidance to the world", or carry on with the option in light green below if you're having a longer session.

After the silent reflection, adapt one of the following:

- A** I wonder if anyone has any thoughts they would like to share? Have you noticed things that bring stillness or make you feel more open to wisdom?

OR

- B** Give each person a copy of the photo and then say: If you feel comfortable, place your photo (with your written thoughts on it) on the floor and gather round to see how other people have responded. If you would rather not share your reflections, that is fine; just fold your photo in half to indicate this.

OR

- C** I wonder what you have noticed in this photo. Are there things that quieten your thoughts and open you to God's guidance? I'd now like to share this quote from Marianne Williamson.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God... We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

Option 3 Using a poem or reflection

You can read either a poem or a reflection. Both are written by Mark Berry, a chaplain. You are welcome to give each person a copy. It can either be read out loud by yourself or someone else

in the group, or it can be read silently. Introduce the poem/reflection by adapting one of the following or by making up your own.

- A** We are now going to ponder quietly a poem “Walking” (or a thought piece about pilgrimage) written by a chaplain, Mark Berry. You may want to focus on an image or phrase and ask why it strikes you.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share the phrase or image if you would like to.

OR

- B** We are now going to read through a poem called “Walking” (or a thought piece about pilgrimage) written by Mark Berry, who works for the Church. I shall read it through twice. As you listen, perhaps see if one or two things speak to you and what they might be saying. You don’t have to think about this too much; go with your gut reaction and don’t stress about coming up with a perfect answer. Think about what speaks to you and why.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share the phrase or image if you would like to.

OR

- C** We are going now to ponder silently a poem “Walking” (or a thought piece about pilgrimage) written by Mark Berry, a chaplain. Sometimes poems or thought-pieces can spark spiritual feelings or ideas. They can even be vehicles for a higher power or God to speak to us, however we understand God. As we think about this poem, you may want to focus on a phrase, an image or an idea.

At the end, there will be an opportunity for you to share any reactions if you would like to.

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

The poem, “Walking” by Mark Berry

Soaking streets, polished by the evening rain to reflect the lamplight tone. Drawing me in solar hue, passed cars running with trails of clarity down tinted glass.

On, following behind the rain, breathing the nature smells, the trees and grass, lavender, reaching to me through the pavements drenching.

My feet move through, through the gaps where there is no resistance to my walk.

Buildings shade the sky against the deep violet, domes and towers block the light of night.

I am aware of the people still and stiff watching my walk, but I see no faces. They stand and then they fade as I walk on.

But there are some who I see and who stay, those who have committed to me and those I have promised. They are always there, even as they sleep. Their colours tint the streets and I feel their presence in the glowing heart.

Green flows with the stream as the new day shifts the view and I walk on, toward.

A thought-piece about pilgrimage:

The journey of faith is often referred to as a pilgrimage. Pilgrimage can even be a journey in the footsteps of others, the saints and the holy people, the good and the great. We walk with them as part of the whole history of faith and love of the divine.

We mark the places of meaning, the thin places, the places where God and the human story meet, we are part of the story, **we are** the story.

Father of the holy, Mother of the good, we thank you for the inspiration of the saints throughout history; from the first apostles to those who died for your way, from the desert fathers to the celtic wanderers, from those of great renown to the people who touch our lives in small ways, from the ancient to the present, they are part of your story, they are part of our story.

Our lives are pilgrimages, stories of God.

- What do you think it means to be a pilgrim?
- What are the signs that might lead us on the journey?
- Who are my companions, and do I really know them?
- What is the story of the people and places we travel through?

Leave a few moments for quiet reflection, then continue to the next section, “Bringing guidance to the world”, or carry on with the option below if you’re having a longer session.

After the silent reflection, adapt one of the following:

A I wonder if anyone has any thoughts that they would like to share?

Were there any images, phrases or ideas that struck you?

What emotions did you have as you read/listened to the piece?

Were there any words or phrases that surprised you?

OR

B We now have time for you to share some of your reflections, if you would like to. There is no pressure to say anything and there are no right or wrong answers. You might like to write down some of your thoughts before we start. *(Short time of silence.)* Would anyone like to share a thought, word, or idea?

OR

C I wonder what reactions you had to this poem/thought-piece?

Were there any images, phrases or ideas that you relate to most?

Did this poem/thought-piece remind you of any personal experiences or feelings?

If you could ask Mark one question about the poem/thought-piece, what would it be?

OR

D *Your own words.*

Bringing guidance to the world

This section follows the reading, photo or poem. If you want some music to accompany it, you can play a track from the playlists supplied on the [Church Support Hub](#) (open the link and scroll down to ‘Music playlists’).

Adapt one of the following introductions or make up your own:

A We now have a short time of silence when you can think about an item in the news, a person you are concerned about, or a situation you face. You can send wisdom to the situation through positive thoughts, or ask God as you understand God to guide the people involved.

OR

B Think about or write down three ways in which you find guidance. This might be from within yourself, or from trusted people, or from something that you think of as divine. *(Period of short silence.)* Now write down or think about some ways that you might offer guidance to other people.

OR

- C** If God exists and was here with us, what situation or person would you ask God to bring wisdom to? We'll have a few moments of quiet while you think about this, and then an opportunity to share your thoughts if you would like to. **(At the end, if appropriate, you could ask people to say a collective 'Amen'.)**

OR

- D** Your own words.

To bring this section to a close, use the following prayer.

Using the words in bold, let us all pray together.

Lord, of the elements

Lord, of the wind and the rain

Lord, of the sun and the snow

Lord, of fire and water

Lord, of the land and the sky

Lord, of the field and the stream

Lord, of the path and the highway

Lord, of the hill and the valley

Lord, of the city and the country

Lord, of the old and the new

Lord, of the good times and the hard lessons

Lord, of the story and the journey

Lord, who does not stand and wait

Lord, who joins us on the road

God be with you in every pass

Christ be with you on every hill

Spirit be with you by every stream

We all say together: **God go with me**

Headland, ridge and field

Sea and land, moor and meadow

Times of rest and pushing on

On each street and motorway

In park and mall, village and tower block

On foot or train, on bike or car

Whether traveling in company or alone

We all say together: **God go with me**

God be with you in the story

Christ be with you on the journey

Spirit be with you every step of your life

We all say together: **God go with me**

We all say: **Amen**



Conclusion

Use one of the following:

- A** We conclude our time with a poem, based on a piece written by Mark Berry:

May your day be blessed by moments of quietness,
light in your darkness,
grace in your openness,
love in your attentiveness,
joy in your willingness,
and strength in your boldness.
Together, **Amen**

OR

- B** Focus on one or two things that have spoken to you from this session. Hold them in your mind for a few moments. You might like to think about this over the next few days. We give thanks for the time we have spent together, for the thoughts we have had, and for the trusted people who guide and support us.

OR

- C** To end our time together, I'd like to share this blessing written by Juli Allen from juliaallen.blogspot.com.

May you be blessed as you continue to seek out honesty, and truth, and peace, desiring more than passing, cheap, flippant intimacy.

May you be blessed as you travel through seas of strangers, desperately wanting to be seen and not merely passed by, yearning for a touch, a word, a presence.

May you be blessed as you authentically try to respond to the God-given wrenching of your gut, making you aware that a need is near and someone is waiting on your touch, your word, your presence.

May the blessing of a love that transcends indifference and brings reconciliation be in your heart and in your mind and in your hands as you travel to and fro – constantly aware that even now you are surrounded by love.

May you seek, may you be completed, and may you be blessed.

Together: **Amen**

OR

- D** *Your own words.*

Too much silence?

The shorter version will be largely silent, with the option of accompanying music. If people would like more time to talk, you could:

- Use some of the discussion questions with the reading in the **Discussing the Bible Readings download on the Church Support Hub** (open the link and scroll down to 'Discussing the Bible readings').
- Allow time for reactions to the photo or poem, as suggested in the light green sections.
- Invite other members of the group to read the poem and the prayers (if you use them).