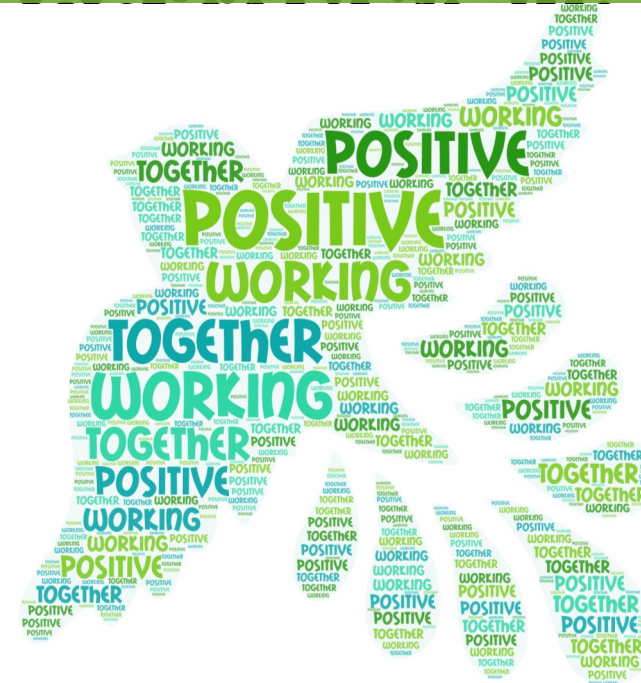


Birmingham Methodist Circuit

Positive Working Together Lent Resources 2019



Positive Working Together Lent Resources for worship and small groups



About This Booklet

This booklet is produced by Birmingham Methodist Circuit for use within its organisation and churches and it is shared for the benefit of other churches, circuits and districts around the country.

Contents

1. Introduction to these resources
2. Lent Resources: from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day
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1. Introduction

Positive Working Together was adopted by Methodist Conference 2015 and establishes a 'code of conduct' or 'shared commitment' to how we behave together, as Methodists, in the lives of our churches. The intention is not to stifle discussion or disagreements (which approached creatively lead to new ideas) but to make it clear that as people in the Methodist Church, we can agree or disagree and still always be kind, respectful, thoughtful, and gentle in the process. Positive Working Together covers face-to-face behaviours and also our behaviour online and on the phone.



Positive Working Together is for us all and can help us to make the Methodist Church the safe and inclusive space it intends to be – for people already part of our church's life, and for other people we want to invite and share with. Positive Working Together was adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2015 and so is part of who we are as the Methodist Church. There are resources in how to start implementing Positive Working Together and getting it really 'working' in your church on the Birmingham Methodist Church website: <https://www.birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk/circuit-teams-training-and-resources/positive-working-together/>

The resources in this booklet are intended to be used **after** having started this process, as they assume some existing knowledge of Positive Working Together and of the Shared Commitment.

The **Lent resources** are intended for either small groups or in leading worship services– or for both! Each session has **Lent Reflections** which are intended to help guide the leader in the session—these can either be used as is, or developed into a sermon. The **questions to consider** are for small group use, but could be used in cafe style worship or worship where small group discussions are possible, or addressed in a sermon with some interaction.

There are some **hymn suggestions** each session, and further suggestions for hymns on general Positive Working Together themes are in the booklet, 'Using Positive Working Together in your Churches' on the Birmingham Methodist Circuit Website (address as above).



4. Other Useful Information

Resources for churches

There are several resources which might be helpful for churches to use to share the good practice that Positive Working Together is championing in our communities. These are:

- The Methodist Church's Positive Working Together Document
- Positive Working Together: the Shared Commitment (one Page Summary from the Positive Working Together connexional policy).
- Printable Birmingham Circuit 'Positive Working Together Posters'.
- Printable Birmingham Circuit 'Our Commitment' cards.

You can find these documents linked on our circuit website on the web address in the green footer at the bottom of the page.

Advice and Guidance

If you'd like advice or guidance on how to implement Positive Working Together in your church or a particular situation, please talk to your Minister for advice, or contact our Positive Working Together Champion via the circuit office on 0121 616 1800 or contact@birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk

Where can I read more about Positive Working Together Connexionally?

The Methodist Church has plenty of more detailed information about positive working on its website which you can find at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-ministers-and-office-holders/guidance-for-churches/positive-working-together/>

Sources for this booklet:

'Active Prayer Suggestions' adapted from Vicki Atkinson, some hymn suggestions from Vicki Atkinson. Content not otherwise credited is by Ruth Yorke. Design by Tom Milton.

With thanks to Vicki Atkinson, Karen Webber, Nick Jones and Tom Milton.

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As the material suggests reflection on our own behaviour, and that of churches, please be aware that this could raise some difficult things for some people (which is partly why we need Positive Working Together so much). Please ensure that people know who to talk to if they need to discuss things personally, and to direct people to do that if a group discussion became difficult.

It will be wise to start off group discussions with our 'Shared Commitment' as your group's 'ground rules' and to ensure that there is no 'naming names' when there is reflection on behaviour.

The opportunity to reflect on behaviour (our own behaviour, the poor behaviour of others which has affected us, and when realising our own behaviour has not been helpful) may be difficult. Whilst there is encouragement to re-think our negative behaviours, it is also the case that Positive Working Together, by creating a 'baseline' for how we relate in the whole Methodist Church, enables and empowers anyone in church life to, for example, kindly, gently, but firmly challenge behaviour, stop a meeting and request a pause to reflect on God's presence with us and remind ourselves of the Shared Commitment, or to request help with difficult behaviour.

At the end there is a session for Mothering Sunday for use on Lent 5 if you choose.

Art in discussion and reflection

Each session offers a suggested image/s for discussion and reflection. All of the images can be used on a powerpoint/screen or printed for use. The Methodist Modern Art Collection images cannot be given to people to take away and are all copyright of Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. The images can be used alongside the questions, or can be used as an additional activity as you prepare for the Examen. The photographs are available online on the Birmingham Methodist Website.

Active Prayer suggestions

These are offered with small groups in mind, but could also be suitable in some wider worship contexts. Any additional resources needed are noted. These offer a way for people to take some literal 'action', which for some people, helps their learning and growing, and can help to consolidate the session. These are optional.

The Examen

“The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God’s hand at work in our whole experience.” (more on www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen)

Included (pp.25, 26) are an Examen from the Ignatian Spirituality website, and also the version used by the Methodist Diaconal Order. There are many other versions, these are offered to get you started.

It is suggested that the Examen is used at the end of each session. Please allow 10-15 minutes. If you use these resources for Lent services, you could spend a little time in the first service explaining the Examen and make it available to people, and hopefully find a way to use it within the worship.

Reflecting on both our own behaviour, the way our church behaves together, God’s response to both, and God’s word to us as we move forward together, is a valuable part of the process of implementing Positive Working Together.



Films

At the end of these resources there is a list of films suggested for use with questions for discussion on the themes in the resource.



Examen from The Methodist Diaconal Order

Examen - Personal Reflection

Take a few minutes of prayer time at the end of the day to discover where God has been present in the details, moods and feelings of the day.

Thanksgiving

Linger on the moments and events you have enjoyed and say, ‘Thank you’.

Reflection

Review the day quietly.

*sense your moods and feelings

*what stands out for you?

*where did they come from?

*where did they lead you?

Discover the underlying attitudes, remembering that your actions and choices flow from these attitudes.

Is there something in your life that God is asking you to look at?

Forgiveness

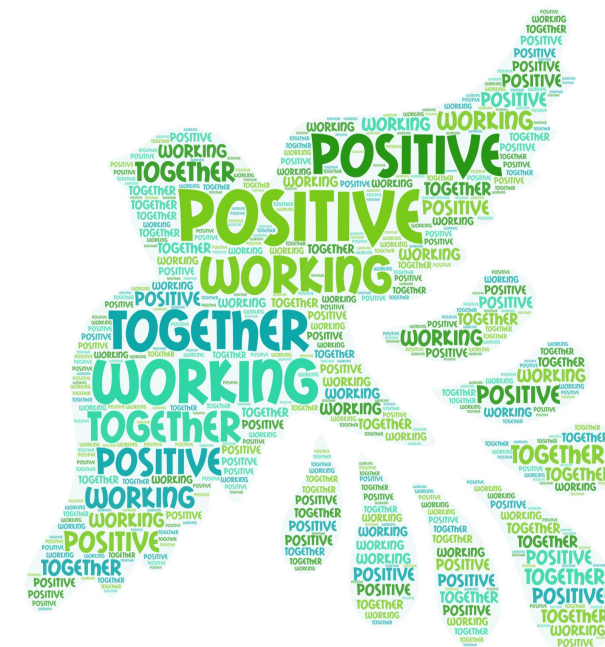
Look at the times you have not responded to god during the day and ask God’s forgiveness, knowing that it is always given.

And remember to thank God for those times when you have responded to God.

Looking Forward

Take time to look forward and ask for God’s guidance and a deepening trust in God’s forgiveness as you continue to serve.

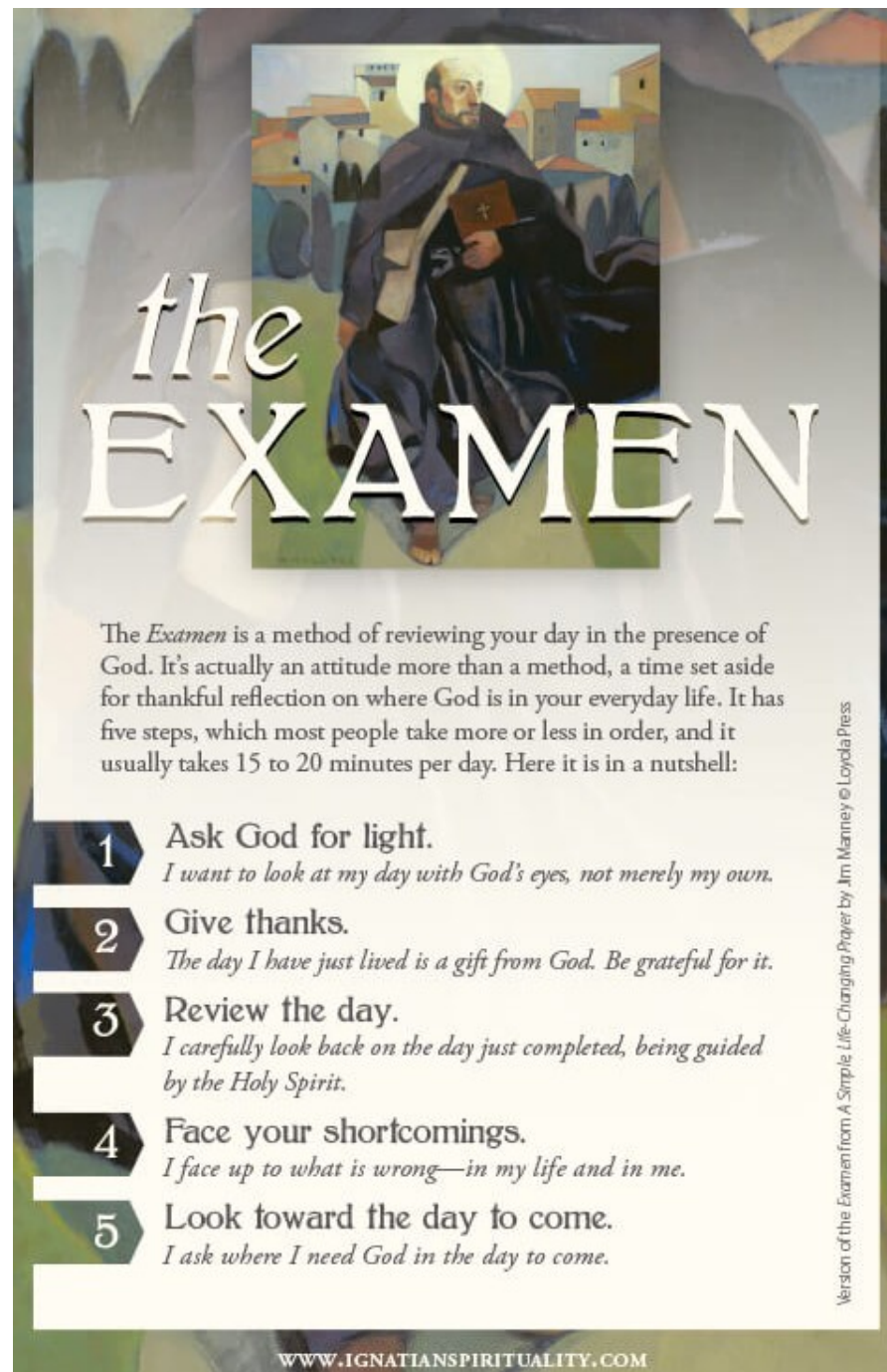
From: The Methodist Diaconal Order



Examples of The Examen

The Examen is to be used at the close of every session, or if using it in worship, incorporated in some way in the service. You may also use it for personal reflection each day. Here are two examples—there are many others available (e.g. on the internet).

Examen from the Ignatian Spirituality website



This card free to reproduce from: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/examen-prayer-card/>

2. Lent Resources from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day

Ash Wednesday. Letting go before we can move on.

Bible Passage Matthew 3: 1-3

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 238 Lead us, heavenly Father lead us, 395 Spirit of the Living God, 513 Take this moment, 565 Only by grace.

Lent Reflections and introduction to Positive Working Together John speaks about repentance and preparing the way for Jesus. The repentance, leaving behind of sinful ways, is essential to John before the new life of Baptism and is part of 'preparing the way' for Jesus.

This Lent we will be looking at Positive Working Together and especially at the Shared Commitment, which was adopted by Methodist Conference in 2015 and is part of what it means to be Methodist. (Share the basics of the Shared Commitment) This helps us to establish a church which is safe and inclusive for everyone. We can't just repeat our own home 'ways' in the Church. The Shared Commitment gives us a 'baseline' which is shared by the whole Church.

For all of us, there will be ways of behaving/relating which are not ideal and which do not have a place in Positive Working Together. Moving forward is a process, and we commit ourselves to that as we start Lent.

Questions to consider

1. Look together at the Shared Commitment. How might using this challenge us?
2. As we start Lent, what is there in your own way of relating with others which you would like to leave behind?
3. What is there in your church's relationship and the way meetings and groups happen that you would like to leave behind?
How are decisions made?
4. How can we be 'preparing the way of the Lord'?

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Swim' by Gerd Altmann (Pixabay, permission for free use) (Right)



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need: a cross; a stone for each group participant.)

Take stones for the group. At the end of the session, and before the Examen, invite each to take a stone, think about things they want to leave behind. After the Examen, invite each person to lay their stone at the foot of a cross as a symbol of letting go to enable us to move on.

The Examen

Lent 1. Temptation and Power.

Bible Passage Matthew 4: 1-11

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 250 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult, 274 Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice, 362 Meekness and majesty.

Lent Reflections We all have power and we use our power, and respond to power in others in different ways. Often, the way we use our own power and the way we respond to power, is integrated into our character by watching others, learning what 'works' as we grow up, and by how power is used by those we admire. If we do not realise or understand our own power, we are less safe to relate with. You may think of 'power' or 'influence'. Where do you have 'influence' or power?

Power can be used well, and power that has 'gone bad' can be redeemed by God. How can power be used to lift up others or encourage/build up/give others voice and strength?

Questions to consider

1. How was Jesus challenged to use his power? What did he choose to do? How is other power used and shown in this passage?
2. Who do you admire? How do they use their power?
3. Can you share examples of power being used for great good? And for great ill?
4. Think about your power and influence. Discuss what kinds of power and influence you have e.g. In relationships, at church, as a voter, consumer? How do you use your power? Who is most aware of your power? Are there ways in which you could consciously change how you use your personal power?

Art in discussion and reflection *You could also use in this session, 'flower' by Klimkin (top p.7, left) and compare with 'Fantasy' by Stefan Keller (top of p.7, right) (Pixabay, permission for free use)*

Film suggestions

Below is a list of films which could be used along with these resources. There are suggestions on which weeks the films can connect with the Positive Working Together themes and some suggested questions for small groups.

Frozen (PG). (letting go of past before we can move on, finding a new way to feel safe without being isolated)
Find resonances in sessions for: Ash Wednesday, Lent 2, Mothering Sunday, Easter Day.

1. What do the characters they need to let go of before they can move forward?
2. How do the main characters try to create safe space for themselves?
3. What do they learn?
4. How does this relate to our church life?

Downsizing (R). (Use of Power, shared goal, betrayal, hope for a new future)

Find resonances in sessions for: Lent 1, Lent 3, Lent 6, Maundy Thursday, Easter Day.

1. Who has power in this film? How do they use it?
2. How does size (in literal and personality terms) relate to power?
3. "Power can be used to help ourselves, used to help the greater good, and sometimes for both" - discuss.
4. How does this relate to our church life?

Apollo 13 (1995, PG). (working together, very different characters, for a shared goal)

Find resonances in sessions for: Lent 1, Lent 2, Lent 4, Lent 5, Holy Week.

1. What are the examples of good working together and poor working together in this film?
2. How did the characters find ways to work for the shared purpose?
3. How does this relate to our church life?

High School Musical (TV-G). (people who seem to oppose each other, finding a shared goal)

Find resonances in sessions for: Ash Wednesday, Lent 1, Lent 2, Lent 3, Lent 5, Lent 6, Easter Day.

1. How do the very different groups find a shared purpose?
2. What do they learn about their 'opposing group' along the way?
3. How does the film create sympathy for certain characters?
4. How does this relate to our Church life?

Hidden Figures (PG). (challenging the systems and people who oppress and silence people)

Find resonances in sessions for: Lent 1, Lent 2, Lent 5, Holy Week.

1. Who are the obviously powerful people in this film at the beginning? Who else do we later see as powerful?
2. Who demonstrates their power in the film?
3. In the film, which systems and people oppress and which empower and enable?
4. In the film, the silenced and oppressed people's lives change - how does that happen?
5. How does this relate to our church life?

3. Mothering Sunday, Film suggestions, examples of The Examen

Mothering Sunday. Love, appreciation, and Safe Space

Bible Passage 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 78 Give thanks, 81 Now thank we all our God, 409 Let us build a house.

Lent Reflections Mothering Sunday encourages us to celebrate and appreciate relationships which have helped form us in positive ways, rather than take them for granted. For many of us, mothers will be in that category of relationships, for some of us there will be someone else who took that role instead. I hope for all of us there is someone we feel grateful to have been influenced by as we were growing up and whoever they are/were, we give thanks for them today.

What we are trying to create in church life is a ‘safe space’ for everyone – a place where the kind of love explained in this reading is evident – a safe space for people in all kinds of transition and different levels of vulnerability, people of different ages, people from different backgrounds and families.

Whilst some behaviours may be acceptable in our own family homes, they may not be part of a 'safe space' in church. For example, some families like a 'good shout to clear the air' – that is fine if it works for them, but in church life, we are all from different backgrounds and families, and for some people, shouting indicates threat, intimidation, or that things are out of control. So in church, Positive Working Together makes clear that, for example, shouting, is not acceptable as it is not part of creating a safe space for each other.

Questions to consider

1. Who in your life has helped you to feel safe?
2. What behaviour would you expect to find in a 'safe space'?
3. How does the Shared Commitment help us create safe space?

How could we use it to remind each other of the kind of community we are called to be?

Art in discussion and reflection: *You could also use in this session, 'Love' by John Hain (Pixabay, permission for free use) (right)*

Active prayer suggestion: (Leaders will need paper, pens (the paper can be in a heart shape if you have time/means.)

What is it about certain people that makes us feel safe? Write this on the paper to keep. We thank God for people who make us feel safe, and ask God to help us to be someone who makes others feel safe.

The Examen



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need a world map (a simple sketch will do), matches/ cocktail sticks)

Invite people to place a match/stick on places in the world where power is being used for good, and for ill. Pray together for the world and for a better use of power. Pray that we will use our own power in ways that benefit God's kingdom/purposes.

The Examen

Lent 2. Forgiveness and growth.

Bible Passages Matthew 6: 13-19. Ephesians 4: 11-16.

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 423 Forgive our sins, 435 We come to you with no pretence, 503 Love divine.

Lent Reflections It can happen in church life that the expectation to forgive is foisted on other people who have been hurt/abused/treated badly. 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' (Matthew 6: 12)

On reporting or commenting on poor behaviour, sometimes people get the response of, 'oh that's just *(person's name)' or 'oh we have to keep forgiving *', that's just how s/he is'.

The Christian imperative to forgive isn't the same as giving permission for bad behaviour.

The Shared Commitment helps us to find positive, kind, and constructive ways to relate — we don't all come from the same backgrounds and cannot assume that what we find acceptable is acceptable in church life. 'Growing up into the stature of Christ' doesn't mean 'doing as I say', but becoming more like Jesus. God's forgiveness of us should enable us to be forgiving, but also to change, with the help of God, to move forward in a different, and more Godly way.

Questions to consider

1. How do you respond when you realise you are wrong?
2. How difficult do you find it to apologise to someone?
3. 'saying sorry is a start, but it's not enough – we need to then live differently' – how do you respond to this quote?
4. How can we use the Shared Commitment of Positive Working Together to help each other to 'grow into the full stature of Christ' (Ephesians 4: 13)? How can we guard against using these bible verses to get our own way?

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Sunset' by Rene Rauschenberger (Pixabay, permission for free use) (below)



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need: cup of water, either an 'alka seltzer' or dispersible aspirin/paracetamol)

As the tablet disappears in the water, invite people to ask God to help them let go of any burdensome grievances. What changes might we need to make, and what apologies may we need to make, for things to be 'clear' in our relationships with others? Pray for God's help in making these changes.

The Examen

2. 'This new life (of Jesus' resurrection) is not one where you get your own way, where 'your way wins' or where you are prime. It is also not a way in which you are trodden down, or ignored, or pushed aside unheard. The kingdom of God involves justice and equity and dignity for all. ' – how do you respond to this quote?

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'The empty Tomb' by Richard Bavin, from the Methodist Art Collection (this can be reproduced for use in your church/group but not given to people to take away) (C) TMCP



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need pieces of paper, pens, large bin/bowl with a cover – the bin/bowl will be in a different room/space; a candle and matches/lighter.)

Ask each person to write/draw on the paper the things/behaviours/ideas which they want to 'leave in the tomb' this Easter. When they have finished, invite them to scrunch up their paper and all go to the place where the 'tomb' (the bin/bowl) is, and throw it into the 'tomb' (bin/bowl). Cover the bin/bowl completely. Return to the original space. Today, as we pray, we leave these things in the tomb, walk away, and start anew. Light a candle and pray that God will help us move forwards in Jesus' light and resurrection life.

The Examen

Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need a nail for each participant.)

Give each person a nail. We think together about the nails in Jesus' crucifixion and how they represent suffering. Pray together for how we can stand by Jesus in his suffering, and ponder how Jesus stands by us in our suffering.

The Examen

Easter Day. Renewal and New Life.

Bible Passage Mark 16: 1-8, Matthew 16: 24-25

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 447 Jesus, be the centre, 555 Jesus, all for Jesus, 594 Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord), 678 Come all who look to Christ today.

Lent Reflections Jesus is risen – alleluia! Death has been conquered. Love wins. Hoorah.

We are all offered resurrection life.

Today is an opportunity to 'start afresh'. To build on all we have been thinking about throughout Lent and commit to living lives focused on Jesus – a life which reflects Jesus, which honours Jesus, which looks to Jesus in how to use power, which looks to Jesus to decide our priorities, which uses Jesus' example in how we treat people who are not usually listened to or respected, to follow Jesus' example in ensuring we speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, and empower those who can.

This new life is not one where you get your own way, where 'your way wins' or where you are prime. It is also not a way in which you are trodden down, or ignored, or pushed aside or unheard. The kingdom of God involves justice and equity and dignity for all.

Jesus' resurrection life offers us opportunity for transformation. We can learn to 'kindly keep each other in check' and living in ways that keep focused on Jesus, and in church life, to keep our church life and decisions and ways of being, focused on Jesus.

Questions to consider

1. What would a 'renewed life' be like for you? What would you like to 'leave behind in the tomb'?

Lent 3. Self-denial.

Bible Passage Philippians 2: 1-8

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 286 What kind of Love is this?, 432 O the bitter shame and sorrow, 446 I will offer up my life

Lent Reflections Consider self-denial in terms of relating patterns and power. Fasting is a long held tradition for Lent.

Do you recognise any of these phrases?

'Whatever you say, you're wrong', 'I must be heard above everyone else', 'my view must prevail', 'history, as I recall it, must be revered and repeated so that I am not challenged', 'change must only be things I'm happy with'.

No? No, you probably don't! People tend not to actually SAY those things, but can you think of behaviours which give that message, or insist on these things?

If, instead of wanting to get our own way, we genuinely want to see God's will done and God's Kingdom come, we may (all of us!) need to give up some things, and may run deeper than giving up sweets and treats.

The Desert Mothers, notably Amma Syncletica, spoke about the most important fasting not being about food:

Fasting may take the form of giving up something other than food, such as excessive commitments, overachieving, unhealthy attitudes, and old resentments. The desert ascetics began by fasting from food, possessions and social relationships. They then progressed to fasting from interior attachments, such as anger, jealousy, envy, or possessiveness. The desert ascetics understood that fasting creates the space in our bodies, minds, and spirits for God to *be* within us and new things to grow." (Laura Swan, 'The Forgotten Desert Mothers, Paulist Press, 2001 pp.44-45).

Questions to consider

1. Which general patterns of your relating don't fit with Jesus' example and with our Shared Commitment? Could you 'fast from' as a start to leaving those ways behind entirely? (This could be talking to someone at your church about enabling you to be heard, or for some, making more space for others to be heard)
2. What could you fast from this Lent as a start to making it a long-term change?
3. How can we 'make space' for God to be heard and make space for others to be heard?

- What can we collectively and personally 'work on' from Positive Working Together, as part of our Lent devotion?

Art in discussion and reflection You could also use in this session, 'Crucifixion' by John Hain (Pixabay, permission for free use) (below)



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need small pieces of paper/post it notes, pens)

Ask each person to write/draw on the note something they will do this Lent to make a positive long-term change. Ask each person to take this and keep it somewhere where they will see it often as a reminder.

The Examen

Good Friday. Staying with Jesus.

Bible Passage Mark 15: 33-41

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 270 Come and see, 272 From heaven you came, 780 Stay with me.

Lent Reflections Reflect on how this young man, God in human form, gave up his power, and allowed himself to be put to such suffering and such an awful death.

Reflect on how this was for the women who stayed with him – Mark says that many women were there, not only those well known enough to be named.

Questions to consider

- How can you be someone who stands by Jesus even in suffering?
- What would Jesus say to you in suffering?

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'The Crucifixion' by William Roberts, from the Methodist art collection

(the image may be reproduced for your church/group but not given to people to take away)

(c) TMCP



Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)' by Mark Cazalet, image from the Methodist Art Collection (this can be reproduced for use in your church/group but not given to people to take away) (c) TMCP



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need some blank paper/finger labyrinth sheets/mindful colouring sheets, colouring pens/crayons or music and player)

Spend some time doing mindful colouring, drawing, or praying through a finger labyrinth whilst thinking about this session. Alternatively play some reflective music (e.g. Nimrod, by Elgar or some other suitable music). We focus on Jesus as we listen.

The Examen

Lent 4. Storms and Safety.

Bible Passage Mark 4: 35-41

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 18 Be still and know, 20 Be still for the presence of the Lord, 447 Jesus, be the centre, 624 Calm me Lord.

Lent Reflections In the bible, 'sea' is usually a symbol of 'chaos' and a place where God is not allowed/in control. (Hence in Revelation, 'there will be no more sea' Rev. 21:1.) Storms cause fear and chaos. In this gospel passage, Jesus' friends are panicking as he appears unconcerned about a storm. He calms the storm and then wonders why they didn't just trust God.

Questions to consider

1. Storms happen in life – literally and metaphorically. What would it be like to be in a literal storm? (share)
2. What kinds of 'storms' happen in church life? Do some of our meetings or discussions sometimes resemble storms?
3. In church life, how could using our Shared Commitment from Positive Working Together help us to avoid 'storms' in the way we are with each other?
4. In this storm, Jesus says, 'stop, be calm!' and the storm stops. This could be a model for us if a meeting/situation has become 'stormy' – to take a pause, focus on Jesus, and refocus on our purpose. Can you imagine using this? (You may role play it in your small group.)

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Storm over the Lake' by Eularia Clarke, from the Methodist Art Collection (this can be reproduced for use in your church/group but not given to people to take away) (c) TMCP.



Active prayer suggestion (No additional resources needed.)

All sit comfortably, close eyes, take a deep breath in, hold it, then slowly breathe out. Think about the situations in which it can be wise to ‘take a pause’ rather than react too quickly. Repeat the breathing exercise. Ask God to help us know when to ‘take a pause’ and become calm before responding to things/people.

The Examen

Lent 5. Whose will be done?

(n.b. a session for Mothering Sunday is in Section 3, p.23) .

Bible Passage Mark 15: 1-13 (n.b. the questions relate to the whole narrative of Holy Week)

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 495 Dear Lord and Father of mankind, 497 God in my living, 551 Giving it all to you.

Lent Reflections Sometimes we deliberately behave in certain ways to get what we want. It is easily seen in small children, but also in adults. As disciples, we are wanting to move from ‘behaviour that gets me what I want’ to ‘living a life that honours Jesus in every way’.

Questions to consider

1. In the Holy Week narrative, look at these people in relation to what behaviour they use to get what they want:

Judas The Jewish Leaders Pilate

Herod Barabbas

Man on the cross next to Jesus

The crowds (at the start and end of Holy Week)

2. If more of these people were focused on doing God’s will, what could have been different?
3. Apply our Shared Commitment to each character (above) in Holy Week. How would the outcome be different?

Maundy Thursday. Being aware.

Bible Passage Mark 14: 32-41

Hymn suggestions Taize: ‘Wait for the Lord whose day is near’, Singing the Faith 289 When my Love for Christ grows weak, 780 Stay with me.

Lent Reflections What does it take to properly attend to someone? (discuss) (eg. stop talking ourselves, stop what we’re doing, humility...) How could this record have been different if the disciples had stayed awake and attentive to Jesus?

When we truly attend to someone, it is a sign that we expect and assume that they are worthwhile and valuable. To attend to God and to other people is effectively a message that we expect and assume something worthwhile is to be shared. Jesus asks his disciples to stay awake and pray with him. Jesus is struggling and praying that if it be God’s will, the cup of suffering could be taken from him. Jesus in Gethsemane made clear to his friends that he was distressed. They did not really understand what he needed and they slept through one of his most difficult times. Jesus didn’t expect them to be mind-readers - Jesus shared his needs and they still did not respond.

Jesus needed his friends to be aware of the ‘bigger picture’. Sometimes, like the disciples then, it is very easy to get caught up in our own emotions/needs and miss what God is doing (Jesus is distressed and needs his friends, they are tired and despite his requests, they nod off – understandable, but they could have, for example, taken turns in staying awake).

It is very easy to get ‘caught up’ and miss what God is saying or doing. It is very easy for church life to get ‘caught up’ with personalities and business and meetings and finances and miss what God is doing – one of many reasons that we need to learn to be church in a way that properly attends to God and to each other, to demonstrate that we understand the preciousness of God and of all the people God loves (everyone).

Questions to consider

1. What does Jesus need from you this evening? How can you give Jesus your full attention? Can you wait, watch and pray, without him needing to explain any more?

(Time of silence, or time with reflective music and opportunity to reflect and to focus on God)

Holy Week. Self giving Love

Bible Passage Philippians 2: 1-8

Hymn suggestion Singing the Faith 283 The desolate Messiah dies, 432 O the bitter shame and sorrow, 489 All I once held dear, 555 Jesus, all for Jesus.

Lent Reflections How does the kind of love in Philippians 2 compare to celebrity culture? (ref to Palm Sunday above)

Jesus was prepared to be powerless, to say nothing to defend himself, to act entirely in Love and in no self-interest.

Jesus is being entirely true to himself in the same way as he responded to the temptations at the start of his ministry. Offered the opportunity/idea to use his power to make his ministry easier and get more obvious following and even more power, Jesus refused. It should be no surprise then, that this is how Jesus approaches death.

Questions to consider

1. Are there other examples of self-giving love in Jesus' life where he offers up self-giving love instead of taking more obvious power?
2. How might this example affect our church life?
3. How does Jesus' example of self-giving love relate to power in the end?

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Crucifixion Polyptych' by Francis Hoyland, available from the Methodist art collection (see p.13)

Active prayer suggestion (No additional resources needed.)

Ask each person to sit comfortably and deliberately breathe in a slow and measured way. Invite them then to take a breath in, and as they breathe out, to say, 'Jesus'. (Depending how well the group know each other, they may prefer to do this almost silently, or out loud.) Do this for several breaths. This is a simple meditation that we can do in times of stress/decision making/temptation/anger – it is a way of focussing our attention on Jesus. Pray together that God will help us to be like Jesus, focussed on God, able to Love as God Loves.

The Examen

Art in discussion and reflection

You could also use in this session, 'Crucifixion Polyptych' by Francis Hoyland, from the Methodist art collection (this image may be reproduced for use in your church/group but not given to people to take away) (c) TMCP. (see right)



Active prayer suggestion (No additional resources needed.)

Invite all to close their eyes and clench their fists. Think of situations where you would like to get your own way. Focus any negative energy into your clenched fists. Hold for a few moments. Invite people when they are ready to take a deep breath in, and on the breath out, to release their fists. Invite all to have their hands open on their laps and ask God to help us be open to God's will, and focused on God.

The Examen

Lent 6. Palm Sunday: Crowd Power and Discernment.

Bible Passage Matthew 21: 1-11

Hymn suggestions Singing the Faith 264 Make way, make way, 277 My song is Love unknown

Lent Reflections If we find out someone famous or publically extraordinary is coming to our town/city, how does the town/city respond? (share)

How do we give honour personally? And in church life? (Awards? Prizes? Always revering what certain people say?)

It is very easy to get into a situation where we honour, praise and attend to certain people, and not to others.

It has been said that 'celebrity is the new religion' – people need others to admire, aspire to, even adore. There are plenty of people who have been publically adored and then has 'fallen from grace' and been publically shamed. Jesus was praised on Palm Sunday by crowds who soon shouted 'Crucify him!'. We cannot just assume that the loudest or majority voices are necessarily right. This bible passage reminds us that Jesus was not as some expected—we may miss what God is doing if we do not listen to God or to each other. Having an open heart to see what God is doing and teaching us now is essential for the disciple.

Questions to consider

1. Someone once said of George Best, 'he was lucky to live when he did, before everyone thought that footballers were responsible for the morality and youth of the country'. Do we have expectations of others which are hard for them to live up to? And low expectations of others which mean we don't pay them much attention?
2. Which people is it easiest to take more notice and give more time to?
3. One of the dangers of democracy as a way of running church life is that if we are not careful, we can end up only listening to the loudest majority voices, and not necessarily discerning God's voice. The path of the most popular/loudest/richest/hardest-to-live-with-if-they're-upset, is not necessary God's way. What warnings does Palm Sunday have for us in terms of crowd-power, majority and democracy? How can we avoid that in Church life?

Art in discussion and reflection You could also use in this session, 'Christ enters Jerusalem' by Sadao Watanabe, from the Methodist Art Collection (this image may be reproduced for use in your church/group but not given to people to take away) (c) TMCP (top p.15)



Active prayer suggestion (Leaders will need: a busy picture, e.g. 'where's Wally' or similar)

Invite people to look for the 'Wally' figure in the picture (or for some small item in a busy picture). Ask for God's help in looking for, and paying attention to, Jesus, even when other things crowd for our attention.

The Examen