



GO IN LOVE

Theme and
Discussion Guide
2017 - 2018



“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong doing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

I Corinthians 13:4-8

Start here. Start now.

SHARE THIS PACK!

It's that time of year again when you sit down as a group or committee to plan the Guild session. We hope that you are bursting with ideas! For some people, preparing the syllabus is a bit of a headache. We hope that this resource takes away some of the stress and helps you to plan an interesting and varied programme.

These resources are for you and your Guild so please feel free to photocopy them as required.

Why not share them with your Minister or Kirk Session.

Maybe you could think about:

- an aspect of the Church's wider work that you have perhaps not looked at before - the various Councils of the church can provide speakers.
- the Guild projects - great resources and speakers are available. Remember to use your Council's Project Co-ordinator.
- inviting someone from the leadership team of your Presbyterial Council - the Resource Co-ordinator or Ecumenical Rep may have news to share.
- asking your Council Convener or National Committee representative who may welcome an invitation to visit.
- speakers involved with organisations whose business is appropriate to the theme.
- inviting members of the Kirk session and other congregational groups.
- encouraging friends from other denominations locally to join you.

To increase awareness of the Guild, you could:

- launch your Guild year with a dedication service or a promotional slot during Sunday worship.
- publicise your meetings - posters are available and Guild Week is an ideal opportunity for outreach.
- invite people along - a personal invitation can mean a lot to someone and is very effective.
- include your Council's events into your schedule and try to avoid a clash with your own Guild meeting.
- have some fun built into your programme - time for parties, visits, celebrations... quite apart from all the unscheduled laughter there will be!
- share that sense of 'family' the Guild is known for by caring for those who can no longer attend.

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Look out for hearts like this throughout the guide - each one will offer a top tip or helpful hint!



Introduction



“Be Bold, Be Strong”

Once again I'm sitting at the computer ready to write the introduction for the 2017/2018 Theme “Go in Love”, the last for the three year strategy. This is not my favourite task but one that has made me think about the theme for the session and the privilege it has been to do so.

If asked how you would describe love, I'm sure you would give me many different replies. Within the guide there are many examples of the way “Love” is described. I'm sure that you could tell us of the many ways you show love within your family lives, workplaces, church and of course within the Guild.

I think during the past year we have seen many changes in approach within the Guild. I trust you all thought that the change to the format and cover of the Theme Guide was an improvement and showed that the Guild is going forward, in the words of the strategy, “Be bold, be strong”.

Another way in which the Guild has been “Bold and Strong” has been with the decision to include the Discussion Topic within the Theme Guide. The committee hope you agree with this change.

We are now known as the Resources Group and our remit will be to help identify and produce resources that support your Guild to develop interesting and innovative programmes.



WE HOPE THIS THEME GUIDE WILL HELP YOU TO FIND

PRACTICAL AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO “BE BOLD,

BE STRONG” AND “GO IN LOVE” IN YOUR OWN GUILDS



My sincere thanks to the committee for their contributions and particularly the new members of the committee. All have worked hard to help produce the Guide. Remember it is a GUIDE, and it is hoped that members who have held office for a while will dip in and out; and, for those new to office that it will help them to plan programmes and devotions. We will continue to add resources to the website over the year, so do check for updates.

Once again there was an increase in the number responding to the questionnaire for the Theme Guide “Go in Peace”. To those who did, I say a big thank you; and can I ask that those who did not, to seriously consider doing so in future. This year the questionnaire will also be available to complete online.

We continue to show that the love of this wonderful organisation is not only through our individual branches but worldwide through our generous donations to the many projects we have supported throughout the years of this venture.

We hope this Guide will help you plan exciting and thought-provoking meetings, and find practical and innovative ways to “Be Bold, Be Strong” and “Go in Love” in your own Guilds.

PATRICIA ROBERTSON | RESOURCES GROUP CONVENER



Exploring ‘Go in Love’

As we move on from the themes of **“Peace”** and **“Joy”**, we come to **“Love”**, which is the binding force gathering all together in one.

Love is not exclusive; it is inclusive, drawing in those who are lonely, who feel marginalised or rejected or who have a sense of failure in life.

In Paul’s beautiful passage on love in I Corinthians chapter 13, he shows the positive side of truly Christian love – its patience and kindness; its readiness to forgive and accept; its striving for truth and its determination never to give up on any person.

On the negative side, he warns us about those all-too-human traits that are the enemies of love: jealousy, conceit, pride, selfishness and lack of consideration for others.

Within each Guild, problems have to be faced and coped with and differing personalities brought together and blended into one fellowship.

Meeting, worshipping and working together in a spirit of love makes for a sense of belonging within the Guild, both local and national.

With such a strong basis, we can attain the goal of each particular meeting through the love that binds us together.

Let
Our
Voices
Encourage



What the Bible says about love

Love is at the very heart of who we are as Christians. It defines God's relationship with us and sets out how our relationships should be with one another.

In the Old Testament

Leviticus 19:18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Joshua 23:11 So be very careful to love the Lord your God.

Psalms 18:1 I love you, Lord, my strength.

Psalms 31:23 Love the Lord all his faithful people! The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full.

Psalms 91:14 Because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

Psalms 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May those who love you be secure.'

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up conflict but love covers over all wrongs.

Ecclesiastes 3:8 A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.

Song of Solomon 2:4 Let him lead me to the banquet hall and let his banner over me be love.

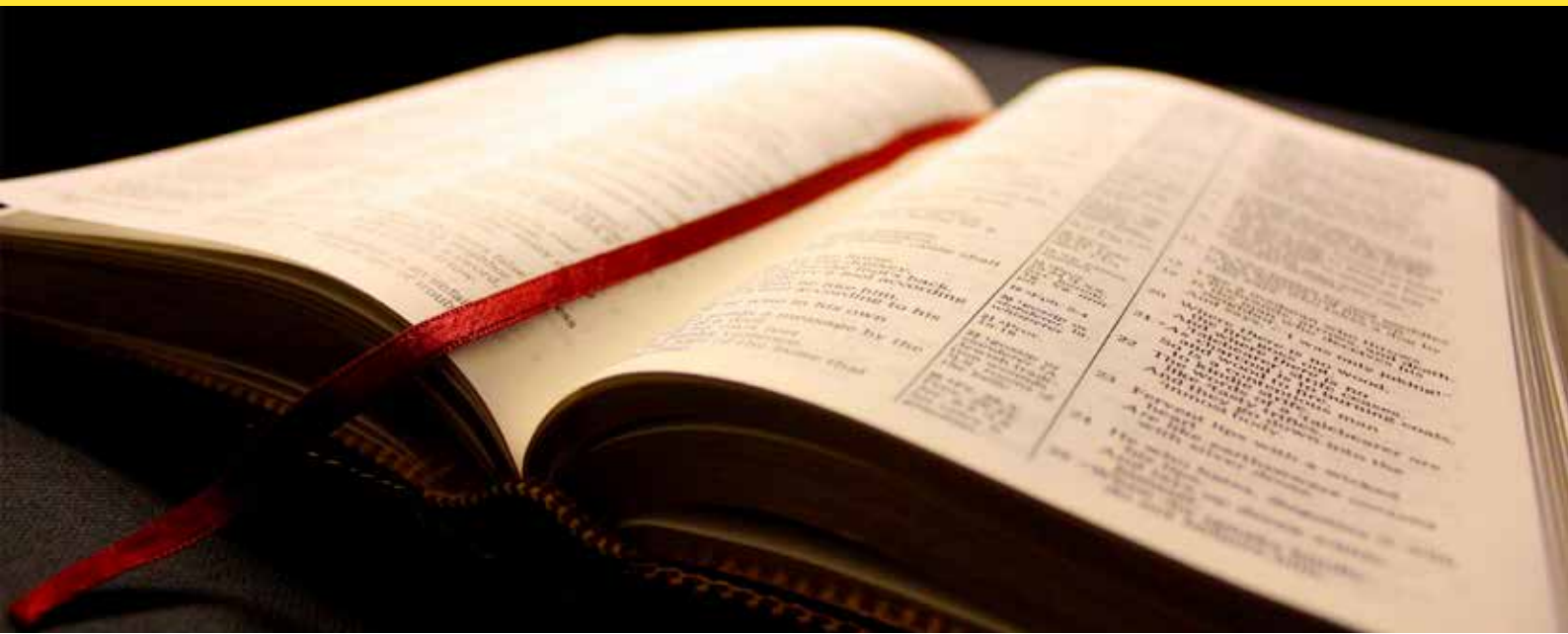
Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Jeremiah 31:10 Hear the word of the Lord you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: he who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'



Make sure guest speakers, leaders and presenters each understand their roles and the format of the meeting.

Try not to let the business or notices break up the flow of the meeting. Maybe have them all together at the start or end.



In the New Testament

Mark 12:31 The second is this: “Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

I Corinthians 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Philippians 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

I John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Jude 21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.



If something doesn't quite work out, don't worry! Move on and don't be upset by it for the rest of the meeting.

Suggested Hymns

Below are a selection of hymns that may help in planning your worship, there are lots more!

Hymn	CH4	CH3	CMP	CG
How lovely is thy dwelling place	52	4	247	
You are before me, God, you are behind	96			
O God, you search me and you know me	97			
Fill your hearts with joy and gladness	103		147	
Glory be to God the Father	110			
Love is the touch of intangible joy;	115			80
God is love: let heaven adore him	123		187	
Immortal, invisible, God only wise	132	32	327	
Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father	153		200	43
O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder	154		506	53
Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided	159		428	74
Let's sing unto the Lord	176			
Give thanks with a grateful heart	180		170	
God is love, his the care	193	416		
Let us build a house where love can dwell	198			4
New every morning is the love	214	47	480	
Look forward in faith	237			73
I the Lord of sea and sky	251		857	50
Inspired by love and anger	253			63
Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord	286	164	631	
Christ is our light! the bright and morning star	336			
Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity	356		465	86
Jesus Christ is waiting	360			67
We have a gospel to proclaim (Easter)	363		728	
From heaven you came, helpless babe (Easter)	374		162	128



Hymn	CH4	CH3	CMP	CG
When I survey the wondrous cross (Easter)	392	254	755	
My song is love unknown (Easter)	399	224	478	
Christ the Lord is risen today (Easter)	441	275	76	
Lord, the light of your love is shining	448		445	110
Rejoice, the Lord is King	449	296	575	
At the name of Jesus	458	300	41	
The King of Love my Shepherd is	462	388	649	
Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart	465	87	51	
Come down, O Love Divine	489	115	89	
Lord of creation, to you be all praise	500	428	440	
Take my life Lord, let it be	502	462	624	
To God be the glory, great things he has done!	512	374	708	
Love divine, all love excelling	519	437	449	
The Church is wherever God's people are praising	522			
Make me a channel of your peace	528		456	
How deep the Father's love for us	549		988	
As the deer pants for the water	550		37	
Just as I am, without one plea	553	79	396	
O Love that wilt not let me go	557	677	515	
Through the love of God our Saviour	562			131
Jesus loves me! This I know	563	418		
We sing a love that sets all people free	622			
O Jesus, I have promised	644	434	501	
Brother, sister, let me serve you	694			16
'I have a dream' a man once said	710			
Christ's is the world in which we move	724			1
A new commandment			1	
Bind us together			54	
Such love, pure as the whitest snow			619	



If there is a hymn which is completely new, teach it at the beginning rather than expecting people to just stand and sing it. If possible, use a piano, as it is easier to hear a melody than using an organ or guitar.

Remember, the more there are hymns and items which people can take part in, the more involved they are and the better their impression of the meeting!

Hymns written by Guild member Lesley Donaldson of Hawick Teviot Guild

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
You give me peace and joy always;
For you have lived and died for me;
And I will always sing your praise.

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
You bring a fellowship of love;
Your spirit moves in those you call
And walking with you is enough.

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
I'm called to live in chains for you;
But yours are chains of love, I know;
They set me free to live anew.

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
You set me in this place to love,
To treat my neighbour with your care,
To serve this world as heaven above.

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
You call me to be bold, be strong,
To share the gifts you rain on me,
To love and serve in joyful song.

Lord, whose I am and whom I serve,
I offer all my love to you.
And, in your name alone, I go
In love, to do what I can do.

Tune: O Waly Waly (or other Long Metre)

O Lord, may I be yours today

O Lord, may I be yours today
in what I do and what I say,
in how I am, and how I pray;
may I show love in ev'ry way.

O Lord, may I be yours today
where'er I go, where'er I stay,
in how I listen and obey,
may I be yours in ev'ry way.

O Lord, may I be yours always,
to know your love and sing your praise
in peace and joy for all my days,
to show your love in ev'ry way.

O Lord, may I be yours always;
be ever bold to walk your ways,
and strong to face life's darkest days
for love shines brightly from your face.

O Lord, help me be yours today
in all I do and all I say,
in how I love, in what I pray,
may I be yours in ev'ry way.

Tunes: Tallis's Canon or Gonfalon Royal or Old 100th

God, whose we are and whom we serve

God, whose we are and whom we serve,
yours is the love that we proclaim –
Christ came in love, to die for us –
we live forever, in your Name.

You placed us in this world to serve,
to love creation as you love,
care for our neighbour as for you,
live here as those in heav'n above.

We walk in fellowship with you;
we share your love with those around.
And through your Spirit we know love
and joy and peace will all abound.

So in your love we boldly go,
your loving presence makes us strong;
let apathy be crushed; and may
we go in love our whole lives long.

God, whose we are and whom we serve,
strengthen our hearts that we may sing,
in joyful, boldened acts of love,
our worship of our Saviour King!

Possible tunes: Warrington; Church Triumphant or Duke Street

Bible readings

Love: God's love; 'Agape', is unconditional, calling all to put others before ourselves. It is a love that will not let us go and that calls us to love one another.

Old Testament

People who showed love:

- David and Jonathan - 2 Samuel 1:23-26
- Elkanah and Hannah - 1 Samuel 1:5
- Hosea for his wife - Hosea 3:1 and 11:4
- Daniel - Daniel 9:4
- Ruth and Naomi - Ruth 1:6-22
- Joshua - Joshua 22:5
- God's love for his people - Deuteronomy 7:6-13

New Testament

- What is love - 1 Corinthians 13
- Remain in my love - John 15:9-17
- The deep love of Christ - Ephesians 3:14-21
- Nothing can separate us from God's love - Romans 8:35-39
- Love your neighbour (Good Samaritan) - Luke 10:25-37
- Love may abound - Philippians 1:9, 2:1-4



Try to choose readings that fit in with the theme of the meeting. Your readings may help you choose hymns which in turn could be the basis of prayers.

BE BOLD!

Why not try a different translation?

Old Testament

2 Samuel 1:23-27 (Refresh for Life Bible)

Saul and Jonathon were loved and pleasing in their life. And they were not divided by death. They were faster than eagles. They were stronger than lions. O daughters of Israel, cry for Saul. He dressed you in fine red clothing. He put on your clothing objects of gold. How the powerful have fallen in the centre! Jonathan has been killed on your high places. I am troubled because of you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasing to me. Your love to me is greater than the love of women. How have the powerful fallen, and the bows and swords of war destroyed.

Hosea 3:1-4 (The Poverty and Justice Bible)

Once again the Lord spoke to me. And this time he said, "Hosea, fall in love with an unfaithful woman who has a lover do this to show that I love the people of Israel, even though they worship idols and enjoy the offering cakes made with fruit". So I paid fifteen pieces of silver and about a hundred and fifty kilograms of grain for such a woman. Then I said to her, "Now you are mine! You will have to remain faithful to me, though it will be a long time before we sleep together". It will also be a long time before Israel has a king or before sacrifices are offered at the temple or before there is any way to get guidance from God. But later, Israel will turn back to the Lord their God and to David their king. At that time they will come to the Lord with fear and trembling, and he will be good to them.

Daniel 9:4-12 (The Poverty and Justice Bible)

Our Lord, you are a great and fearsome God, and you faithfully keep your agreement with those who love and obey you. But we have sinned terribly by rebelling against you and rejecting your laws and teachings. We have ignored the message your servants the prophets spoke to our kings, our leaders, our ancestors and everyone else. Everything you do is right, our Lord. But still we suffer public disgrace because we have been unfaithful and have sinned against you. This includes all of us, both far and near - the people of Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel, as well as those you dragged away from foreign lands. And even our

kings, our officials, and our ancestors. Lord God, you are merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against you and rejected your teachings that came to us from your servants the prophets. Everyone in Israel has stubbornly refused to obey your laws, and so those curses written by your servant Moses have fallen upon us. You warned us and our leaders that Jerusalem would suffer the worst disaster in human history, and you did exactly as you threatened.

Joshua 22:1-8 (The Living Bible)

Joshua now called together the troops from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. And addressed them as follows: You have done as the Lord's disciple Moses commanded you, and have obeyed every order I have given you, every order of the Lord your God. You have not deserted your brother tribes, even though the campaign has lasted such a long time. And now the Lord our God has given us success and rest as he promised he would. So go home now to the land given you by the Lord's servant Moses, on the other side of the Jordan River. Be sure to continue to obey all of the commandments Moses gave you. Love the Lord and follow his plan for your lives. Cling to him and serve him enthusiastically. As Joshua sent away these troops, he blessed them and told them to share their great wealth with their relatives back home, their loot of cattle, silver, bronze, iron and clothing.

New Testament

John 3:10-21 (New Living Translation Bible)

Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not

perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

I John 4:7-16 (The Message)

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God is love, so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us; God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about, not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other: No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us – perfect love. This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us; he's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Saviour of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

I John 4:17-21 (The Message)

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgement Day; our standing in the world is identical with Christ's, there is no room for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life, fear of death, fear of judgement, is one not yet fully formed in love. We though, are going to love - love and be loved. First we

were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The commandment we have from Christ is blunt; loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

Romans 8:34-39 (The Living Bible)

Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us there in heaven. Who then can ever keep Christ's love from us? When we have trouble or calamity, when we are hunted down or destroyed, is it because he doesn't love us anymore? And if we are hungry or penniless or in danger or threatened with death, has God deserted us? No, for the Scriptures tell us that for his sake we must be ready to face death at every moment of the day - we are like sheep awaiting slaughter; but despite all this, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us. For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are - high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean - nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us.

Ephesians 3:14-21 (The New Living Translation)

When I think of this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all the glory to God who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think, glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus, through all generations, forever and ever, Amen.

Prayers

Call to prayer

Some short Bible verses (or parts of a verse) that can be used as brief prayers or openers.

- Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. (Psalm 143:8)
- May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thessalonians 3:5)
- However, as it is written: What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived; the things God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)
- The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. (Psalm 103:8)
- But you, child of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:11)
- By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me - a prayer to the God of my life. (Psalm 42:8)
- When I said, "My foot is slipping," your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. (Psalm 94:18)
- Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)
- Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. (Psalm 63:3-4)
- Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

Opening prayers

Living God, we seek guidance, hungry to know your will and understand your purpose.

We come bringing the life of our fellowship before you – our practical and spiritual needs, our hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, successes and failures.

Give us faith and wisdom to discern your will; vision and courage to respond to it,

Give us patience and understanding in our discussions together; openness to other opinions, and a spirit of love where we disagree.

Living God, we do not think only of ourselves but also those not with us at this time – those prevented from coming by ill-health, age, infirmity or other commitments.

Teach us to respond sensitively to each person, making real our love in Christ, and showing a genuine concern for all.

Living God, we thank you for the privilege of meeting together.

Open our hearts to you, to one another, and to all around us, so that we truly meet in heart and mind and soul.

Help us hear your voice, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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Loving Father God,

As we gather together as Guild Members and friends may we put aside our problems, shopping lists, domestic jobs, holiday plans and all the things which have been on our minds today.

We know you are with us to take our burdens from us; may we feel the Holy Spirit in this place as we worship and sing Your praise.

We pray for those who cannot be with us, either through illness or other commitments.

May they know they are in our thoughts and prayers.

(Add a blessing on your speaker as they lead or deliver a presentation)

We ask all this in Jesus' name,

Amen

General prayers

Dear Lord, as we proceed to another exciting new year of the Guild, we thank you for the boundless love that you have shown to us here, at home, and everywhere else in the world. There have been many tragedies in our world, but with your love and mercy we can carry our burdens, though heavy hearted, at times, with your love in us.

Your only Son died for us, so that we may live through you. Give us guidance in our guilds as we meet together in fellowship, friendship and love. Amen

Our Father we thank you that you are a God of love who showed us your love by sending your son Jesus to be our Saviour. We thank you for his loving example to us and his teachings about love.

Help us to show that love to one another, to our family, to our neighbours, to those we meet in our daily lives and to those in the wider world.

Help us to love those we find difficult to love, and forgive us when we fail to forgive in love.

Keep us each one in your love, and may we show in our lives the fruit of the Spirit, especially love.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Dear God and Father

We know the love you have for us and our families so if we stray please forgive us. Help us to show our love for fellow beings, whether they are neighbours, friends or people from other lands.

Encourage us to show our love in so many different ways, keeping those most dear to us in our hearts at all times.

We think of the compassion you had in your troubled life, to forgive others for what they did.

All this through your love.

Amen

Dear Lord

Thank you that we live in a part of the world where we can worship without fear of persecution.

We thank you for all the good things in life that we can enjoy. The sunshine and the rain, the animals and the flowers, the love of our family and friends, for all this we thank you.

We would ask you to be with those less fortunate than ourselves and give them your comfort, let them feel your love around them. Be with those who are hurting in body or in mind; let them know you care.

We know that your love will never fail us. May we through

our actions let others know of your great love.

All this we ask in your dear name, Lord.

Amen.

Love is not something we can reach out and catch. Love comes from deep within us.

Lord, we thank you for all your many blessings, for our families and our friends.

For the beauty of this earth, for nature, the skies, the lakes and mountains.

We thank you for your deep and enduring love that surrounds us each day, supports us in times of sorrow and in times of joy.

Sometimes it is not easy to show love towards others, especially those who would cause us harm or whose words cause hurt.

Teach us, through the power of prayer, to demonstrate through action, deeds and words the power of love to all whom we meet in our daily lives.

Three things last forever, faith, hope and love, and the greatest of them all is love.

Amen

Lord, you call me to worship you as my one true God, to love you with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength. And I reply, Lord, that I am weak. And you answer, that all my strength is in you. And I rejoice, and I am strengthened, and my love is strengthened. Lord, you call me to love you, to serve you with all my heart and soul. And I reply, Lord, what does it mean, to love? And you answer, that I am to fear you, to keep your commandments.

And I rejoice, for your command is love. And my love is strengthened. Lord, you call me to walk in all your ways. And I reply, Lord, what are your ways? And you answer; defend the cause of the weak and vulnerable, love strangers, feed and clothe them. And I rejoice, for you feed and clothe me, and give me enough to share; you defend me, and you give me strength enough to support others. Lord, you call me to hold fast to you.

And I reply, Lord, I will hold fast to you; I will worship you with my love, with all my heart and soul and strength, I will love you with my obedience and respect, I will walk in your ways by defending my neighbours, by sharing my food and clothing and love with them. And I will rejoice in your provision and your strength and your love.

Lord, I will walk in your ways, towards my neighbour, towards you. I will walk in love.

Amen

Offering prayers

Father, your Son Jesus Christ commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

May these offerings, a token of our love, be shared with all those in our world who face problems and difficulties.

Most bountiful God, you have given us so many blessings - the love of friends and family, food to eat, warm comfortable homes and a safe environment in which to live and worship; we give these gifts in response.

As our gifts are used to help others, may they, in turn, be aware of your great love for them. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen

Gracious God,

We bring you these gifts, not to settle a debt or buy your favour, but as an expression of our love, a token of our gratitude, an outpouring of our worship and a symbol of our commitment.

Use them, and use us, in your service, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Gracious God,

There are no words deep enough to thank you for all your goodness, no deeds great enough to thank you for your gift in Jesus Christ. But we want to make some kind of response, to express our gratitude for all you have done for us. So we bring you now this money as a token of our love, a sign of our worship, and a symbol of our discipleship, offered to you, through Christ our Lord, in joyful and grateful praise.

Amen



Never be afraid of a microphone! It is important that everyone can hear everything.

In particular, those on a loop system or those with hearing difficulties will benefit if you use a microphone.

O God, our Heavenly Father,

We come once more in prayer with thankful hearts for who you are – our God of infinite love. You have created us, you sustain our lives and provide us with all our needs.

Thank you for our families and friends, for our church community and for the fellowship we enjoy in the Guild. We ask you to accept our offering of this money, of ourselves and of our service. Use them and us for the work of your kingdom.

Hear us now as we pray for your world – a world torn apart by wars and suffering, by lust of power, by hunger and greed. We pray for all who have had to flee their homes, who live in constant anxiety and fear that we cannot begin to comprehend. Grant them shelter and sufficient food, grant them hope through those who offer a helping hand.

We pray for all those who work with the homeless, whether in our own country or abroad that they may have courage, patience and compassion for all with whom they work. May we be diligent in supporting them in all ways open to us, but especially in prayer.

We pray for the current Guild projects, that through them, and all who work in them, the needy will be served in your name. Lord be with and work through all who seek to mend broken relationships, who work to break down traditions that cause harm and suffering, and all who work tirelessly to give peace to the troubled, joy to the suffering and love to the hopeless that your name may be praised.

We pray for the Guild and all its members, that each may know your love and be bound together in fellowship. Make us instruments of love, keep us informed of your will for each of us, and diligent in prayer and service, for your Son's sake.

Amen



Remember to pray before planning anything! Keep in mind what it is you hope to achieve through the meeting, asking for God's guidance in your deliberations.

Closing prayers

Dear Loving Father,

We thank you for the meeting we have had tonight (today). We thank you for our speaker (name of speaker or leader) and for what we have learned, delivered in such an interesting way. We thank you for the fellowship we share and the caring that our Guild membership encourages in us.

Keep each of us safe and well and may your light shine through us in our daily tasks, so that others will see you are whose we are and whom we serve.

Shall we say the grace together:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for evermore.

Amen

Lord, as we part from one another now and go to our own homes, may we go with hearts over-flowing with your love and may that love spill over into the lives of everyone we meet in the coming days.

Amen

Go with us as we go, Lord; let us always walk hand in hand with you in the paths of truth and goodness; let our faces so reflect the light of your love that, in meeting us, others may in some small way meet you.

Amen

A prayer from the Liturgy of St Mark

(a very early prayer book)

O sovereign and almighty Lord, bless all your people, all your flock. Give your peace, your help, your love unto us your servants, the sheep of your fold, that we may be united in the bond of peace and love, one body and one spirit, in one hope of our calling, in your divine and boundless love.

Amen

May the God of grace breathe health into your body, love into your heart, peace into your mind, and joy into your spirit. Go now, your life filled to overflowing, and be poured out in his service, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

The grace of God thrill your hearts, the mercy of God transform your minds, the peace of God flood your souls, and the love of God flow through your lives, to the honour of his name.

Amen

Bless us as we go from this place, Lord. May peace be in our hearts, may joy be in our faces and may love be in our hands as we serve others in your name.

Amen

Further prayers can be found on www.cos-guild.org.uk



Worship Ideas

Sample 1

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

Reflection:

Love is patient.

I don't know about you, but my patience is sometimes not very long lasting. We nearly all have busy lives and if something or someone holds us back we may lose our patience at times. I try at these times to think, why am I being held up? What or who has caused this? Most times it is outwith anyone's control and no one is to blame.

That is when the song, *I'm in his hands*, comes to mind and calms me down. "I'm in his hands, whatever the future brings I'm in his hands."

God loves every single human being, but it is up to each individual to recognise that love and show it to the world.

With God's help our love can be patient and kind and it is up to each one of us to show that to the people we meet.

Hymn: MP 89: Come down O love divine

Closing Prayer MP 460:

May God's blessing surround you each day,

As you trust him and walk in his way.

May his presence within guard and keep you from sin,

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.



Sample 2

Reading: 1 John 4: 7-12

Hymn: CH4 181: For the beauty of the earth

Reflection:

There are many words for love in the English language, dozens of words for many different types of love. In Jesus' day, the Greek language had four different words for love;

Eros was the romantic, emotional, sexual love.

Agape was love for everyone - all humankind, and it was this love which Jesus shows to all of us and which he commanded us to have for everyone.

Phileo was a deep friendship, affectionate, warm love.

Storge was strong family love; the love that accepts unconditionally, that ignores flaws and faults and soon forgets about them.

We have all experienced these different kinds of love - as children, as spouses, as parents, aunts and uncles, as friends and as Christians.

"Love makes the world go round" is a very true statement; we have a wonderful God who provides us with his love in the first place, and then gives us so many chances to experience and share love. We all have so much capacity for love - why? We love because God first loved us. Go and love!!

Prayer:

Loving Father, who chose us from the beginning to be family, you love us more than we can ever imagine. That love was shown when you sent Jesus, your own Son, to die on the cross that we might live. We thank you tonight for that wonderful gift of love. As it fills our hearts, may we willingly share it with others; family, friends, those in your church, those we know and those we do not. Make us channels of your love, strengthened and encouraged by your presence in our daily lives.

Hymn: MP 622: We sing a love that sets all people free

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we thank you for the love and fellowship shared here tonight. Go with us into tomorrow and each new day, help us to love as we know we are loved. In Jesus' name we ask this. Amen

Sample 3 *(contributed by Naomi Dornan, the National Youth Assembly)*

Reading:

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

Reflection:

Across the expanse of time we can physically comprehend, we have sung about love. We have spoken about love. We have acted with love. We have disappointed with love. However, does the current position of humankind show that we fully understand the deep-rooted-ness of love? Perhaps not!

The scriptures - the centre of our faith - are littered with promises, acts and expressions of love, perhaps most crucial is God's love for his children; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16). This sacrificial expression of deep love is the ultimate action taken by a Father to benefit his children. When we think of what our parents gave up for us, or what we would give up for our children, we can only understand a mere morsel of what this deed meant. Today, there are many sacrifices being made across the globe, and yet, it's not enough. There are still men, women and children living in war-torn countries, devastated by poverty, and struggling to face an enriched world that claims to understand their plight. Without walking in their shoes, we can never truly understand the devastation they have experienced; therefore, our only action can be that of love.

We are told in Galatians 5:14 that "the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This command to love our neighbour as ourselves is a plea from a Father asking that his children love one another - to live in perfect harmony. So much so, that he commands this under the sternest of all authority; the law. The word of the law should be sown with love. This, therefore, would translate into our daily lives - all of our actions, words and lives would be led by love. The only expression of any value we can show is to continue to love our brothers and sisters as we might love ourselves. If we lived in a world spinning on the axle of love, imagine the potential. Think of those finally able to reach their potential.

Our position as peacemakers, joy-bringers and love-lights to our brothers and sisters would sow the seed of love to

flourish across our shared land. To lead with this love is to lead with God.

Prayer:

Father, forgive our foolish ways as we have attempted to navigate the roads of this world you have granted us. As we continue to strive for the roads ahead, in our haste we have often forgotten those struggling behind us, or ignored those in need beside us.

Help us to find our brothers and sisters, help us to unite with them in love.

Our united song of love unknown is your precious son, who taught us of love, of joy and of peace through you. Help us to continue to see this in the presence of a world littered with greed.

Help us to become the beacon lights of your glorious love. Your goodness shines purer and higher than any skyscraper or attraction the modern world can bring.

Thank you for the gifts of one another, and when we might struggle with one another, help us to experience these gifts afresh.

Lastly, O God, guide us to see ourselves as you might see us. Guide us to help others see themselves in the image of you; in the image of love.

In the great name of your precious son, please shine great blessings on those here in need.

Amen.

Hymns: CH4 801: Ubi Caritas et Amor

CH4 685: For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table



Reflective Worship

Sample 1

Based on part of Psalm 46 - NIV

Be Bold, Be Strong: Go in Love – ‘Love casts out fear’

Read Psalm 46:1-2

Prayer: O Lord God our Father, you are indeed our refuge and strength. You welcome us into your presence and there is nothing to fear. We praise you that through your grace alone we are able to be bold and strong in our faith.

Read Psalm 46:4

A few moments' silence

Prayer: Lord, we picture peace and calm, awesome holiness and joy, and a love that will not let us go. We thank you with all our hearts for the love you long to shower on us, the love we are to show and pass on to others.

Read Psalm 46:8-9a

A few moments' silence

Prayer: Lord, how your heart must ache and be filled with sorrow at the suffering in your world and of your people; the wars, the hunger, the loss of life and the fleeing from homes. How your world needs your peace, your joy, your love. Use us, O God, as your instruments of love – to be faithful in prayer; to welcome the stranger; to work for your kingdom.

Read Psalm 46:10

A few moments' silence

Prayer: Almighty God our Father, all things are possible through you. Help us to be strong and bold in putting our faith into action; that your name may be raised above all others and that our neighbours may be drawn to your love.
Amen

Sample 2

Based on hymn *You are called to tell the story*; CH4-680

Reading 1: Mark 16:15-20

Reading 2: Matthew 28:18-20

Prayer:

Sing verse 1 of Hymn 680

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Sing verse 2

Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Sing verse 3

Lead us – not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sing verse 4

Prayer:

A: Living Lord, you have called us to tell your story, to sing your song, to sing to others of our love for you; to sing with others, in love for you. Give us courage to speak of you; grace to join with others in your name; words to sing in every circumstance, as we go in love, for you.

B: Incarnate Lord, give us inspiration to teach, to spread your gospel; give us the joy and energy of dancing hearts, to share your good news; give us grace to dance in tune with others, to blend our steps with theirs as we go in love for you.

C: Saviour Lord, prepare us to feed others in love, to be willing to give ourselves to them, as you gave yourself to us. Forgive us when we forget how much we too need your feeding, your love, your forgiveness, your water of life. Give us humility to accept when others can feed us in your name; give us grace to share both our want and our plenty, as we go in love, for you.

D: Creator Lord, you are beyond our imagining, your love is beyond our comprehension. And yet, your love IS. Your love is here. In the beginning you were the Word: and your word is love. May we ever speak your word, sing your word, dance your word, live your word, as we go in love, for you.
Amen.

[Alternatively, instead of using the Lord's prayer between the hymn verses, the sections of the prayer above marked A, B, C, D may be used, one after each verse of the hymn.]

Sample 3

Based on hymn *Lord, the light of your love is shining*
CH4 448; MP 445

Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of
the darkness

Sing verse 1 and refrain

Prayer:

Lord, I pray that you will set me free, that you will set
my heart on fire with love.

And yet, when your light shines on me, it clearly
shows all my faults. In the face of your glory, your
grace, your light, I know that my love is lacking; that my
love is more often for myself than for you or for my
neighbour. In your awesome presence I am ashamed
of my weakness, my inaction, my apathy; ashamed of
my darkness.

You bring truth, and the truth is that I am not worthy
of your love.

Sing verse 2 (only)

Prayer:

Lord, I come from my shadows to your radiance, and
you set me free!

Even though I may have darkness inside me, God will
consume it, God's glory will outshine it; and if only I
will let it, God's love will shine out from me to others.
God's loving power will ensure that my darkness is
limited, kept within me, he will not let it creep out to
darken the lives of others.

And I know that others can see the light of God's love
in me.

So although I may be aware of darkness inside me, I
should not feel oppressed by that darkness; for as long
as it's only inside me, it is not preventing God's light
from shining out; and as long as it is contained within
me it is allowing his will to be done.

Sing refrain, verse 3 and refrain

Prayer:

Lord, may I mirror you here. May my life tell your
story. Shine on me. Shine through me. Amen.

**ALL say: Lord we would worship you joyfully, we
praise your name. Alleluia.**

If you wish, sing the refrain again



Bible Studies

OLD TESTAMENT STUDY ON LOVE

Be Bold! Try using different Bible translations; perhaps mix and match.

Love

As in the case of joy, so in love the Christian religion is outstanding. It asserts the mutual and reciprocated affections of God and his people. Other religions make gods so far above men that no such relationship is possible. Christianity does not detract from God's superiority to man. By stressing the idea, however, that man's love of God is not spontaneous, but rather won from him on seeing the Divine love in Christ, the proper balance is preserved. (The Bible Reader's Encyclopedia and Concordance by Rev C. H. Wright DD)

There are many different kinds of love:

Love of God, love of parents, love of siblings, love of partner, love of children, love of friends, love of food, love of art.

So of all these examples let us look at three;

1. Love of children
2. Love of parents
3. Love of friends

1. LOVE OF CHILDREN

Genesis 22:1-12 Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac the son he had waited so long to have.

How would we react to God's command to sacrifice one of our children?

Exodus 2:1-10 Moses's mother loved him so much she hid him for 3 months then made sure he would be found and kept safe.

How would we cope with a situation like this?

2. LOVE OF PARENTS

Ruth 1:16-22 Although Naomi was not Ruth's mother she went with her to look after her. Would any of us be willing to make that sacrifice today?

Samuel 1:21-28 Because God had given Hannah the son she had prayed for, she was willing to give him up to serve God.

Could any of us make such a promise if God answered our prayers?

3. LOVE OF FRIENDS

Esther 4:12-17 Esther was willing to die for her people.

Would we be willing to stand up for our friends?

Samuel 20:17-42 Jonathon defended his friend David to Saul to the point that he would have given his own life. How would we react to a problem like this?

You can discuss these points in small groups.



NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY: GO IN LOVE

Guidance for study leaders

It is not necessary to use the reading in its entirety, nor all the questions or parts of questions offered here. If a good discussion gets going, don't worry about not using all the questions you had intended to!

This Bible Study is based on the 1st letter of John:

- Chapter 3, verses 3, 11, 16 to 24; and
- Chapter 4, verses 7 to 21

You might want to ask 2 or 3 voices to read all verses aloud before you start, or you may prefer just to read the individual extracts indicated.

Prayer - Lord, you command us to love: to love you, and to love our neighbour. We so often fall short, of both. Help us now as we explore your word, to understand how you love us, to understand what you require us to give in love, and help us to find strength and motivation to put our love into action, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Read aloud 1 John chapter 3 verse 1:

Question 1: We are called "children of God".

- What does it mean to be someone's child?
- What other Bible passage about being children comes to mind?
- How does children's love differ from adults' love?
- Who or what did you love when you were a child?

Read aloud chapter 3 verse 11 and verse 23:

Question 2: We know we are to love one another, for we've read and heard it over and over again. Is it that simple? Why, or why not?

Read aloud chapter 3 verse 16:

Question 3: "We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters". John probably meant our fellow-believers.

- Do you think anyone on the congregation would literally give up their life for you?
- (Would you be willing to do so for someone else in your congregation?)
- Might you be more willing to do so for some than for others?

- Do you think John meant it literally, ie actually dying for someone, as Jesus did; or did he mean being willing to dedicate various parts of our lives and abilities to others?

Read aloud chapter 3 verse 17:

Question 4: Is it easier to contemplate giving material possessions to someone else in the congregation, rather than giving up your life? And again, would it be easier to give to some than to others?

Read aloud chapter 3 verse 18:

Question 5:

- It's sometimes said that love is cross-shaped, not heart-shaped – meaning that it's action, not feeling. Is there a difference between feeling and speaking love, and acting out love?
- Do they have to go together?

Read aloud chapter 4 verses 7-10:

Question 6:

- How do we know that God loves us?
- What do you think it must have cost God to show his love for us?

Read aloud chapter 4 verses 11-12:

Question 7: God loves us so we ought to love one another.

- Is there a logical connection?
- Do we have a choice about loving one another?
- If we don't love all other Christians, do we not really love God?

Read aloud chapter 4 verses 13-16:

Question 8: Loving is not always easy. What help or motivation do we have?

Read aloud chapter 4 verses 17-18:

Question 9: In verse 16 we read that "God is love". All that God does is founded on love, including his judgment and justice. We can't be part of the body of Christ if we are unloving. But a loving church can allow God to reveal himself, allow his love to flow to others through our service in his name.

- Do you agree that God's judgment and justice is founded on love?
- Do you personally find that perfect love drives out fear?

Read aloud chapter 4 verses 19-21:

Question 10: God loved us before we loved him. Many Bible commentators say that it's impossible for us to turn to God unless God has first moved towards us.

- Do you agree that it's essential for God to make the first move?
- If God moves towards us, do we have a choice about loving him back?



Wee ideas for your Guild meeting

You could:

- choose one of these as a brief 'starter' activity to get people talking
- select three or four as the basis for a do-it-yourself meeting on this year's theme
- prepare one or two and keep them in your Guild folder to use in an emergency
- use, adapt and change them in any way that suits your Guild.

Thinking and talking:

Most of these should take about 10 minutes; you'll know if people need more time.

1. A quiz always intrigues folk and gets them talking. If your Guild members sit at small tables for meetings, you could put a quiz sheet on each table before members arrive and invite them to get started on it as they come in.

This year, three quizzes related (loosely!) to the theme are available on the Guild website for you to download and print out: Famous Lovers; Love Songs; Hymns.

To find them, and the answer sheets, go to the website Church of Scotland Guild, look down the left-hand side, click on Resources, then look for Theme Guide.

If you don't have the technical skills to do that yourself, please don't say, 'Oh well, our Guild can't use this idea!' There will be plenty of people in your Guild or church who'll be only too happy to do it for you. Better still, get yourself skilled up – get someone in the family to show you how, or ask at the local library (or the library van) for details of classes.

Tip – for fun quizzes for a party, try the website Ken's quiz site, especially the picture quizzes.



2. Definitions. Have one or two posters on display with 'Love is ...' definitions on them; keep an eye out for suitable posters in greetings card shops, garden centres, etc..

Or print some wee posters out from the Peanuts cartoon 'Love is ...' series, eg 'Love is ... sharing your popcorn.' (There's a lot of meaning in that one for all of us!)

Or find some online, or make up your own, to read out, eg 'Love is ... stopping to chat to the Big Issue seller.' 'Love is ... making someone a cup of tea every morning.'

Give everyone a little card (cut 6 or 8 from an A4 card sheet) and ask them to write their own definitions, serious or light-hearted, as they please. Display them where everyone can read them later. A template for eight blank cards, ready printed with 'Love is ...,' is available on the Guild website. This is a really effective way of thinking about what love in action really means.

Many church halls or rooms are used by other groups during the week – a bright, eye-catching display on the Guild board can attract attention and spark off discussion. Don't leave stuff up there for months, though. Change the display regularly to keep people interested.

3. Quotes. Search the internet, or a Bible concordance, or the reference section of your local library, for quotes about love – there are hundreds of quotes to choose from, and they are not all sloppily romantic (though lots of them are!) Print a selection out on an A4 sheet, photocopy enough for one per member, then ask the Guild, in small groups, to talk about which ones they like best, or agree/disagree with. (Ask your most computer-savvy member to help prepare this one!)

Tip - after any wee discussion activity like this, don't ask every group to report back to the whole meeting on every point – nothing kills interest more quickly! You could ask for one quick comment from each group, or just have no feedback at all – the point of doing the activity is talking together, not reporting.



4. Love in action. Save up old copies of newspapers – about half as many as you have Guild members. Organise members into groups of two or three, each group with a newspaper and a pair of scissors, and ask members to cut out pictures or stories of love in action. Stick them all on a huge heart-shaped piece of brightly-coloured paper (eg left-over wrapping-paper) headed 'Love in Action' and encourage everyone to read them in the tea-break.

Tip – if you're drawing a large heart shape by hand, fold the paper in half first, draw half a heart starting from the fold, then cut out the double thickness of paper, then unfold. That way, the two sides of the heart will match up.

Visual images

1. What is love? Ask everyone in the Guild to bring in a photo (from their own collection, or cut from a magazine) that depicts 'love', in as wide a sense as possible. Display them on your Guild wallboard, and encourage everyone to really study them and think about them.

2. Here comes the bride! Have a little display of wedding photos and enjoy looking at how fashions have changed over the years.

Or, as at least one Guild has done, borrow shop window mannequins from every dress shop in town, and organise an exhibition of wedding dresses and christening robes in your church, with floral displays in the form of bouquets and posies. Advertise it widely in the community, serve teas in the church hall and use the occasion as a fund-raiser. A lot of work – but something that will be remembered for years!

3. Children's art. A children's art exhibition on the theme of 'What is love?' might be a little easier to organise! Limit everyone to one A4 sheet, with name, age and contact details on the back. Advertise it widely in your church, local schools and the community – you could offer prizes in different age groups. The local library or Community Education service will have display boards that they lend out – book them early. Again, you could use this as a fund-raiser; perhaps for one of the projects, or a children's charity. Remember to state in your advertisements and other documents where the money will go.



Recruit any new office-bearers in advance of an AGM, rather than ask for volunteers during the meeting.

Music, poetry and literature

1. These you have loved! Remember the old radio programme? Your Guild members might enjoy an evening of favourite music, poems and readings from the Bible or from other literature, chosen by themselves. This needs a bit of preparation, as you don't want to have too much to listen to, and the programme needs to be varied. An alternative idea, if you have a local musical society or choir, or some very good singers in your congregation, would be to ask if they would present a short programme of songs on the theme of love.

2. Nation's favourite love poems. Do you know the 'Nation's Favourite' series of poetry books? The book of love poems (edited by Daisy Goodwin) is excellent. If you can gather together a few copies (you can buy used ones on Amazon for as little as a penny!) you could pass them round the Guild members during the year, then spend half an hour or so near the end of the session reading out some poems that members have particularly enjoyed. This year's Guild theme, 'Go in love', is naturally focussing on the love for others that is part of following Jesus, but we can learn a lot from the imagery of these poems.

Arty/crafty stuff

1. Decorations. Here's a real opportunity to be bairns again, and get together with the Anchor Boys or the Brownies or the Messy Church group for a weekend morning or afternoon session of making decorations for your church Christmas tree or for the parties in the church hall. Lots of heart shapes for this year's theme, and a chance to chat about why we use that shape to symbolise love, and maybe to sing 'Love came down at Christmas' together. And of course, lots of coloured card, gold paper, glue, glitter and tinsel. Plenty of ideas for this in craft books or on Pinterest.

2. Gifts. This year's theme should make us think particularly about how we care for Guild members who are no longer able to come to meetings. Many Guilds have really good arrangements in place for picking up frailer members by car to bring them to meetings, and/or they make regular visits to housebound members to extend the love and friendship of the Guild. We all need to think about how well we are doing with that. Could this be the year we take a little gift to all our older friends? Those of us who are keen 'crafters' always have plenty of ideas, and it's fun to organise a little extra session, maybe in a morning, to make something together – a wee lavender bag with a heart motif? (Those of us who are 'handless' could maybe be on the delivery team!)



Odds and Ends

1. **Heart-shaped biscuits;**
2. **Bookmarks** with a 'love' Bible verse (and a Guild badge!) to give to folk in Guild week;
3. **Speaker** from any charity – they're all 'love in action';
4. **Speaker** on 'looking after your heart';
5. **over to you!**

Drama

‘Love’ You will need 4 people for this drama.

Three generations, Granny, Mum and Daughter (Anna) and a reader.

SPEAKER	
Daughter; (Anna)	But why can't I go. All my friends are going. They will think I am a right baby if I don't go.
Mother	I'm sorry, but I don't like the idea of a party when their parents are on holiday.
Reader	Love is patient.
Mother	Are you sure their parents know?
Daughter; (Anna)	But their parents think it's ok so why don't you?
Granny	Why don't I treat you and a friend to go bowling or something else?
Reader	Love is kind.
Daughter; (Anna)	I wish they were my parents instead of you! I'm never allowed to do anything! I hate you!
Reader	It does not envy,
Daughter; (Anna)	She storms off
Mother	(Looking upset) Oh dear. Why do we always have these rows?
Granny	No one ever appreciates their parents until they are older She has no idea of the sacrifices you have made bringing her up on your own.
Reader	It does not boast. It is not proud.
Mother	I always try and do my best for her. I don't even know this friend's parents, so I can't phone them to ask about this party.
Granny	I strongly suspect they know nothing about it.
Reader	Love does not dishonour others.
Mother	I have made some good friends with parents of children at Anna's school. Some of them are on the Parent Council and do all sorts. I tend to make things for the stalls or help with transport.
Reader	It is not self-seeking.
	Banging of doors and loud music is heard from upstairs, just for a short time.
Granny	I remember when you were a teenager, you wanted to stay out late to go to a disco "everyone was going to". You stomped about and threw things around, when we wouldn't let you go. Nothing breakable though, we noted.
Reader	It is not easily angered.
Mother	I have always felt bad about that. I knew you were right, but I didn't want to be the only one not going.
Reader	Love keeps no record of wrongs.
Mother	Anna, please come down for a minute will you?
	Anna enters
Daughter; (Anna)	What?
Granny	I was just reminding your mother about a time when I stopped her going to a disco when she was about your age. She made almost as much noise in her bedroom as you did. (Anna has a job to suppress a smile)
Reader	Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
Granny	Your Mum is just trying to be a good Mum, just like I was. We don't want to spoil your fun, but we want you to be safe. You are so precious and we want you to fulfil your dreams.
Daughter; (Anna)	Sorry Mum (They hug)
Mother	Why don't we think of something you would like to do on Saturday evening and you can ask one of your friends to come?
Reader	Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love Actually

Three people seated and relaxed, having a chat.

SPEAKER	
A	I love watching “feel good” films. My favourite is Love Actually. Whenever I feel miserable, I watch it. It makes me cry, but mostly from the happy endings.
B	But you have to be realistic don't you? That's all fiction. Not real life.
A	What's wrong with that? There is so much evil in the world. I like to escape.
C	I've stopped watching the news. It is full of destruction, sadness and people who like to hear the sound of their own voice.
A	In Love Actually, they explore different sorts of love. There is the love of a brother and sister, where he is mentally unstable, and rings her up at any hour of the day and night. She stops whatever she is doing to talk to him or go and visit him. He could be suicidal.
B	When people sacrifice their own future and ambition to care for a loved one, that fills me with admiration. You hardly ever hear about them.
A	Then there is this adorable young boy who has a crush on a young girl in the school, who he thinks is way out of his league. He teaches himself to play the drums so he can play in the band where she is a singer.
C	It is easy to forget that when you are young, you think “This must be the only one for me” and it could be someone you've only seen on TV. Their feelings are very deep and we must not be cynical, but understanding. I was sure I was going to marry Cliff Richard.
A	One of the husbands has a fling with his secretary and you see the hurt it causes his wife. They have two children and she puts on such a brave performance to prevent them from knowing what is happening in their marriage.
B	When you see someone who is always happy, you may not be seeing the hurt or sadness they are suffering, whether it's from marital problems, health issues or perhaps financial problems.
A	She manages to make him feel guilty and appreciate what they have together, developed over the years.
C	Relationships are so important. You have to work at it sometimes. Look at your own behaviour and not just criticize your partner.
B	I remember one character we used to know, whose wife was a bit of a nag. She said one day, “Where do you want to be buried, dear?” He replied, “On top of you, dear.”
A	It certainly helps if you can laugh together. Laughter is very good medicine. If you can see the funny side of a situation, you can overcome it.
B	It also helps you keep your friends. It is hard to visit and be friends with someone who is always looking on the black side. Seeing the glass half empty.
C	I had an Aunt who was very ill for a long time. She always had lots of visitors, because you felt better when you left than when you went in.
A	Not everyone has that gift. Faith does wonders. Knowing that there is a place beyond death and knowing there are people who care about you enough to pray for you, gives you the strength to handle whatever should come your way.
C	There are times when having a chat with God through prayer has helped me through the day. I can't imagine how people cope who have no faith. I hope we can show them how our faith helps us.
B	We started talking about films. It sounds as though they may be a way of helping us deal with real life, by watching fictional characters on the screen.
A	So you think watching “feel good” films might not be such a bad idea after all? Who's up for coming round to my house next week to watch “Love Actually” with drinks and nibbles?
B & C together	Good idea or Sounds good to me! (or some other affirmative comment.)

A Dad and His Lad

A sketch for 2 people(change name/s if male actor/s)

SPEAKER	
Alice:	Hello Brenda. How are you?
Brenda	Hello Alice. Not so bad, thank you. And yourself?
Alice	Oh I'm fine, thanks. But did you hear about Evan's lad, Jack?
Brenda	Evan?
Alice	Mr Love.
Brenda	Oh, is that him? – I never knew his first name.
Alice	Yes. He uses his middle name as well och, I just can't mind what it is. But his surname's Love. His family come from Paisley, you know, there's a street named after them.
Brenda	Paisley? Jings.
Alice	Aye. And his uncle – James Robertson – was very big in jam and marmalade.
Brenda	Now, there's a picture!
Alice	(giggling) A sticky situation!
Brenda	Golly! (nudges Alice as she speaks)
Alice	Oh, stop!
Brenda	Anyway, what about Jack Love? He came out as a doctor, didn't he?
Alice	That's right. And a very good one too, by all accounts. Then the lad went to Iraq to work with Tearfund. In fact, I heard that his dad told him to go.
Brenda	(surprised) Never!
Alice	Yes. Evan has always been a great supporter of Tearfund, you know. He encouraged Jack to go.
Brenda	Fancy that. And I thought he loved the lad.
Alice	Oh yes – he doted on him. I've never seen a man as proud as Evan the day his lad graduated from Glasgow Uni.
Brenda	And yet he still sent him to Iraq – in this day and age? I wouldn't want to see a son of mine in such a dangerous place.
Alice	Me neither. But that's what happened. Evan was keen on it, and Jack himself wanted to go, so he went. And when the situation out there turned nasty, the lad could have got out – he was offered a top post back home – but no, he stayed on there in the thick of it.
Brenda	What a brave lad.
Alice	Aye, wasn't he? Mind you, I heard his dad told him to stay.
Brenda	(looking shocked) Told him to stay! That's hard-hearted!
Alice	(seeming puzzled) It seems like it, doesn't it.
Brenda	But then, I suppose the lad had grown fond of the people he was working with, and the folk he'd gone out to help. How long had he been there?
Alice	Nearly 3 years by then. Yes, he loved his work, and apparently he was very close to the folk there, he'd made friends with a lot of them. And his co-workers, as well.
Brenda	Right enough, I mind Mr Love said he was looking forward to meeting Jack's colleagues some day. So – how's the lad getting on now?
Alice	Well (pauses, sighs) He isn't getting on. He was killed in April.
Brenda	(putting hand to heart) Killed! No! What happened?
Alice	Well, you know there are all those different factions out there? A group that didn't want Tearfund working in the country accused Jack of something. It all got out of hand. The authorities said he was innocent, but one of the groups stopped Jack going back to his work, and (pauses, sighs or sniffs) and they hanged him.
Brenda	(looking and sounding shocked) What! Oh no.
Alice	(shaking head) It's dreadful, isn't it.
Brenda	That nice young man. And a doctor, too. What a loss. Och, what a dreadful shame for Mr Love.
Alice	Yes, he was broken-hearted when he was told.
Brenda	(concerned) He must have been. That lad was the apple of his eye. Poor Mr Love. How is he coping? – is he managing to keep his spirits up?

SPEAKER	
Alice	Yes, he is. (sounding amazed and positive) That's the amazing thing. Well, he got a big pay-out from a life insurance policy that Jack had. D'you know what Evan did with the money? – He sent it all to Tearfund to continue the work his son had started.
Brenda	Really!?! You'd think he'd want nothing to do with any of them after they'd done that to his lad.
Alice	Oh, but it's just the opposite. He's even more passionate about the work, and even more involved with the people.
Brenda	That is amazing.
Alice	He hears regularly from his son's co-workers, and from a lot of the people Jack helped, too. He loves it when they write or phone, or e-mail or skype him. It's as if he just lights up. And he replies to each and every one of them.
Brenda	Wow. (thinks for a moment) D'you know, that's love.
Alice	Oh yes, that's Love through and through.
Brenda	How lovely. (pronounces word to sound like "lovelee")
Alice	(clicks fingers) Got it!
Brenda	What?
Alice	Lee. That's his middle name. How could I have forgotten? Evan Lee Love.
	(They look at each other, smile and nod, then return to their seats.)

Points to Ponder

(Pick and choose from the questions (and parts of questions) which follow, depending how much time you want to spend on the discussion. The purpose of the first 2 questions is just to warm people up and ease them into chatting.)

1. What else is Paisley famous for?
(Cotton mills, silk shawls, Paisley Pattern, 12th century Abbey, Coats' Memorial Church (the largest Baptist Church building in Europe), St Mirin's Cathedral, University of the West of Scotland; Paolo Nutini, David Tennant, Gerard Butler, Tom Conti, Gerry Rafferty, Wendy Alexander, Andrew Neil) And Love Street? (St Mirren football team ground, now replaced)
2. Has anyone heard of Tearfund? Do you know what they do? Do you know where the name comes from? (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund – abbreviated to T.E.A.R. Fund.)
3. Why did Jack go?
4. Why did Evan want him to go?
5. Jack was offered "a top post back home" but chose to stay in the thick of the action. Is either position more important than the other?
6. Jack's story has an obvious parallel, with whom?
7. A lot of people find it hard to understand how a loving father could ask a beloved son to go to a dangerous place and die a violent death. Was it hard-hearted of God to ask this of Jesus Christ?
8. Jack Love had a life insurance policy which made a big pay-out to his father on his death. What was the pay-out on Jesus' death? Who received it? How much is the premium for this policy? Is there an excess?
9. Do you "write or phone, or e-mail or skype" God? Does he always answer? Do you visit his house regularly? Is he at home when you go there?
10. Pay-out, pay it back, or pay it on? How do you react when you receive something good? – do you keep it for yourself, or share it, or do/give something good to the person you received from, or do/give something good to another person in need?
11. Jammy! – or not. Where would you turn in a sticky situation?
12. What is the love that makes you "light up"?
13. Does love mean letting go, or hanging on? (We hear of both during the conversation.)
14. How far do you have to go, to Go in Love? Across the world, across the sea, across the country, across the town, across the road, across the room, nowhere at all?
15. The group that accused Jack "didn't want Tearfund working in the country". The group that killed him presumably felt the same. Some people don't want to accept loving actions. How do we react?
16. Does anyone know someone called Jack? Does anyone know someone called Evan? Both names are derived from "John"; what does this name mean? ("God is gracious".)

Books

Book name	Author name	ISBN number (use this to order in book shops)
The Inn of the Sixth Happiness	Alan Burgess	9780553028546
The God I love	Joni Eareckson Tarde	0310240085
Where memories go	Sally Magnusson	ASIN BOONBCWEXU
Edith Cavell; Faith before the firing squad	Catherine Butcher	10:0857216570
Learning of God	Amy Carmichael	0281041848
From Russia to Rwanda with love	Richard Wallis	FM bookshop, Glasgow
Tramp for the Lord	Corrie Ten Boom	
Amazing Love	Corrie Ten Boom	

Music

Claire de Lune	Claude Debussy	I-85345-356-0
Care Selve	G.F. Handel	ASIN: B003UODUJAASIN:
Devotion	Robert Schumann	ASIN: B007QXNHXG
I love you	Edvard Grieg	ASIN: B00FSQ9U5K

Song

Song	Artist
Power of Love	Jennifer Rush
Love Changes Everything	Michael Ball
Can You Feel the Love Tonight	Elton John
All I Ask of You	From Phantom of the Opera
On the Wings of Love	Vitamin String Quartet

Websites

Guild website: www.cos-guild.org.uk

Different Voices: www.churchofscotland.org.uk/blogs/different-voices

Resourcing Mission: www.resourcingmission.com

Bible Gateway: www.biblegateway.com (for lots of different Bible translations)

Alternativity: www.alternativity.org.uk (resources to help simplify Christmas)

Speakers

A wide range of speakers are available on the Guild website.

Introduction

The material in this section of the resource guide is designed to help you with a slightly different approach to the theme. In it, you are encouraged to explore issues around the “other side” of Going In Love, and to do this mainly by methods which engage your group with one another, and this can be done in a variety of ways.

The resources which you will find here can all be used in whichever way is most suitable for the circumstances in which you wish to use them. It is possible to take one exercise as a stand-alone activity, to be used with individuals working alone first, then in small groups to share thoughts and ideas. The underlying issues which may emerge may be very personal so it is important to be sensitive to this as you lead a group in its exploration, and to be ready to give support as appropriate.

**“YES, IT’S EASY TO LOVE THE LOVELY
PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD, BUT IT’S
MUCH HARDER TO LOVE THE UNLOVELY”**

‘Do everything in love’ 1 Corinthians 16:14

As Christians, the Bible tells us that love is unconditional, but even Christians have people in their lives they don’t like and find it hard to love.

In Luke 10:27, we are told to love our neighbour as ourselves, and in Luke 6:27-28 we are implored to ‘Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person.’

(The Message)



Encouraging Discussion

Split your Guild into smaller groups if possible. Remember some may find it difficult to share their thoughts; however others may find this session the first opportunity of sharing their concerns and will be glad to open up.

Discussion starter (1) All of us have examples of times when we found it difficult not to show our dislike for someone, maybe a family member, a work colleague, a friend. Share that situation (if you feel able) with the group. How did the dislike come about? Was it through something said in anger, through jealousy, gossip overheard! How did you overcome the dislike and turn it around to show your love? Was there forgiveness involved? If the situation was not resolved, how have you coped with this? Did someone help you?

Discussion Starter (2) Here are some scenarios which illustrate the type of situation where it may be difficult to sustain a feeling of Christian love. Give each group one of the scenarios, A, B or C and ask them to read through it and then discuss the questions.

- A.** A new member has joined your church. It is soon clear that he/she has been very involved in church life and work where they previously lived, and that the expectation is that they can come straight in to the same level of involvement here.
- People have been quite happy with the way things were being run, so when the new member begins to want to make changes – “where I was, we did it this way!” – you begin to feel rather vulnerable and defensive. Discussions in meetings now seem to be less relaxed than before, and some people are becoming a bit withdrawn.....
- B.** At work, you have been having trouble getting on with another worker in your department. He/she seems to be enjoying trying to pick holes in every idea you have, and has been sarcastic and negative in their direct interactions with you. You don't detect any problems in their relationships with other members of staff....
- C.** A favourite niece has just announced that she is moving in with her boyfriend. You have met this young man on several occasions and from the outset, you had feelings of uncomfortable dislike about him. You realise you are going to have to see a lot more of him, as he clearly expects to be treated as one of the family.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do these types of situations resonate with you?
2. What might be the core cause of your dislike?
3. Is it simply that the person's behaviour is actually unacceptable?
4. Might there be resentment or even jealousy within you that somehow your role in relationships is being invaded?
5. Might your dislike be based on different values or outlooks on life?
6. Using your thoughts on these scenarios as a starting point, can you think of key points which might be helpful in considering how to deal with personal dislike.....?

Follow up discussion:

- A.** Are you being honest about yourself and how much your dislike is to do with your own negative feelings and fears?
- B.** Can you identify a Christian friend or colleague who is someone you can trust who can help you think through the situation?
- C.** Is it possible to get some idea of where that person is coming from in terms of past experiences, and might that create an opportunity for dialogue?
- D.** Remember that we do not have to like what the person is doing or what they stand for. It is the individual as one of God's children that is the main focus...

Activity

Hand out sheets of paper to all present

Each sheet should have the heading on the paper:

What do you love or dislike about the Guild?

Then have two columns as illustrated:

Love	Dislike

Ask members to consider the questions and then put down their thoughts and suggestions for changes (this can be anonymous if people wish).

These answers could be useful to committees for planning next session!

DISCUSSION: Tackling Hard to Love Situations

(Adapted from an online article by Anna Collins, Newspring Church)

The ability to forgive anything and love anyone is a uniquely Christian characteristic but not one that always comes easily. So how do we get better at it in our day to day lives? The bible offers us very practical lessons.

1. **PRAY OFTEN** (Thessalonians 5:16 - 28)

Ask God to help us see others through his eyes.

Pray for an individual every day – it is practically impossible to hate someone if you are constantly asking God to move in that person's life.

2. **HUMBLE YOURSELF** (Romans 12:3)

We too may be hard to love too on occasions!

We may not always be able to occupy the moral high ground!

3. **LEARN THEIR STORY** (Colossians 3:12 - 13)

Understanding can lead to healing and forgiveness

4. **FORGIVE OFTEN** (Ephesians 4 v:32)

Bearing a grudge and resentment takes up a lot of energy and leads to a debilitating bitterness and sense of wrong.

5. **SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES** (Proverbs 13:20)

Do not feel you have to draw close to someone as a best friend.

Kindness, meeting needs, and showing respect for the person and not their actions is a mark of Christian love.

Poem

“Love one another as I have loved you”
May seem a task impossible to do,
But if you try to trust and believe,
Great are the joys that you will receive.
For love makes us patient, understanding, and kind,
And we judge with our heart and not with our mind.
For as soon as love enters the heart’s opened door,
The faults we once saw are not there anymore,
And the things that seemed wrong begin to look right
When viewed in the softness of love’s gentle light.
Love works in ways that are wondrous and strange,
For there is nothing in life that love cannot change,
And all that God promised will someday come true
When you love one another the way He loved you.

Helen Steiner Rice

Quotations

(which may also stimulate discussion)

“The loneliest place in the world is the human heart when love is absent.”
E.C. McKenzie

“You will find, as you look back upon your life, that the moments when you really lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of Love”
Henry Drummond

“Life without Love is no life as all.”
Leonardo da Vinci

“Like electricity, love must flow between two points; you and someone else. Love is not a feeling, it is a chosen expression.” (In his words, Bethany House)

“When you can tell the story and it doesn’t bring up any pain, you know it is healed.”
Iyanla Vanzant

“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.”
Oscar Wilde

Worship for your discussion meeting

Opening prayer

Merciful God,

You call us to love our neighbours as ourselves, but when it comes to practice we let you down so miserably.

There have been times Lord when we have not loved as we should have, shown dislike and made unkind comments to others, the pardon we failed to offer.

Forgive us Lord for the lost opportunities of reconciliation, restore us through your love, that we may learn to love others with the love you have so faithfully shown to us.

In the name of Christ

Amen

(adapted from Prayers for all seasons, Nick Fawcett)

Reading; Luke 10:25-37

Reflection

Most or all of us have heard the story of The Good Samaritan.

Have you ever thought what it means to us personally?

We are all human and have our likes and dislikes, but just because you may not like someone doesn't mean you cannot show them love and compassion, like Jesus. The Jews despised the Samaritans (for whatever reason), but when the Samaritan saw that the Jew was injured he had compassion for him and made sure he was looked after and his wounds healed.

We all have to be like the Samaritan and treat all human beings the same, regardless of their faith creed or color.

We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and should treat each other as Jesus would.

Hymn MP 94 Come let us sing of a wonderful love

Closing Prayer – Guild Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us right where we are.

Help us to know your love deep in our hearts and enable that love to flow from us to those with whom we are in contact. Amen

(adapted from Prayers for all seasons, Nick Fawcett:)



GOT a good idea for a programme? Share it!

Please don't keep your good idea to yourself - share it with the Guild Office so we can pass it on to others! Let us know by emailing guild@churchofscotland.org.uk or calling 0131 240 2217. Alternatively, feel free to post the idea to the Guild Facebook page (www.facebook.com/cofsguild).

Have you used this guide? Please tell us what you think!

If you or your Guild have used this Guide, whether in whole or in part, please consider giving feedback. All feedback is logged and used by future committees to ensure the resources produced to support people like you are the most helpful they can be.

Please fill in the feedback form which you will receive in the January 2018 mailing, or request a form by emailing guild@churchofscotland.org.uk, or calling 0131 240 2217.

You can also fill in our survey online. Visit www.cos-guild.org.uk to find the survey.