COMPANIONS ON THE ROAD
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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 that will help encourage and enthuse your members.

These resources are for you and your Guild, so please feel free to photocopy them as required. You might also want to share them with your Minister or Kirk Session so that they can also make use of them.

Maybe you could think about:

• our projects! We have 6 new fantastic Guild projects who have each contributed to this resource. Each project also has other great resources and speakers that are available to your Guild. Remember to use your Guilds Together Project Co-ordinator.
• an aspect of the Church’s wider work on which you have perhaps not looked at before for example peace and reconciliation in South Sudan, how you might work with your MP/MSP or working with people of other faiths. These are just a few ideas of the issues about which the various Councils of the Church can provide resources or speakers for your Guild.
• holding a joint meeting with the Boys’ Brigade, Girls’ Brigade or other youth organisation.
• encouraging friends from other denominations locally to join you.
• inviting members of the Kirk Session and other congregational groups to an open meeting.
• asking your Guilds Together Convener or National Committee representative who may welcome an invitation to visit.
• inviting someone from the leadership team of your Guilds Together committee - the Resource Co-ordinator or Ecumenical Rep may have news to share.
• speakers involved with organisations whose business is appropriate to the theme.

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. Last year we recruited over 600 members.
• include your Guilds Together 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.

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

As we enter the second year of our strategy with the theme ‘Companions on the Road’ it strikes me that journeys made on our own can be very lonely. Our friends and those we meet along life’s journey influence us and can lead to turning points in our lives. We are made for companionship. The bible is full of stories of journeys and those who travelled together; the twists and turns on their route and in their relationships.

My favourites are the account of Ruth and Naomi’s journey and the Road to Emmaus. Of course, the companion of all companions is our Lord. We do hope that this theme guide and discussion topic will help us all to walk with Jesus and to follow Him in a new and deeper way.

‘Our friends and those we meet along life’s journey influence us and can lead to turning points in our lives. We are made for companionship.’

There was a different approach this year to the preparation of the pack. As a way of better using our resources at National Council level there are no longer ‘groups’. This pack has received contributions from all members of Council, making use of more of the gifts each of us has and hopefully using the limited time we have more productively. Thanks to everyone who faithfully sent in their ‘homework’ in a timely manner over June/July. Putting the pack together and editing and proof reading is a huge task. I am most grateful to all our hardworking Guild staff and especially to Karen Gillon our Associate Secretary who has the task of formatting and preparing the pack for the printers.

Remember that the pack or any part of it may be photocopied and shared. It is a great tool for helping those new to leadership roles to explore and use at meetings.

We pray that this new session whether you meet over the winter, over the summer or all year round you will have a wonderful time of worship, prayer, action and fellowship as you travel on your journey together.

Helen Kerr, Resource Convener
Exploring the theme
Companions on the road...

This Theme Guide is the second in the Guild’s 2018-2021 strategy, “One Journey, Many Roads”.

Having set out in 2018 by looking ahead and “Seeking the Way”, we now continue our journey together... “Companions on the Road.”

The 2018-19 Guide explored its theme through thinking about journeys in terms of what people discovered along the way, how they adapted to different, often unexpected, challenges and obstacles. They didn’t set off on a voyage or a trip knowing exactly how it would unfold.

While there is a clear theme of discovery in many of the biblical journeys...the Israelites on their Exodus; Paul travelling with Barnabas, Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem, Jesus travelling around Galilee with his Disciples, even the journey to Calvary with Simon of Cyrene...all of these journeys share another element, that of companionship.

By companionship, we are talking about much more than just fellow travellers. It’s not about thinking of who else might be on the SAME journey.

Rather it is about who is SHARING the journey.

A companion is defined as: associate, partner, escort, consort, colleague, workmate, co-worker, compatriot, confederate, ally.

In other words, it is about support and encouragement; empathy and co-operation. Marriage ceremonies speak of “richer and poorer”, “better and worse”, “sickness and health”.

In these phrases, we see the difference between companionship and acquaintanceship or fellowship. There is something there about sharing joy and pain and the ups and downs of journeys, be they real or metaphorical.

As we work through this year’s theme, let’s celebrate the companionship that the Guild offers and share the next part of our journey on these many roads.
How does the Bible guide us when looking for ‘Companions on the road’?

Walking with others on our journey of faith is both rewarding and enriching. It enables us to learn and share more of what God wants for us as individuals and as an organisation. The Bible provides us with many examples of people who joined each other on that journey of faith.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham and Lot</td>
<td>Genesis 14:14-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moses and Aaron</td>
<td>Exodus 4:14-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>David and Jonathan</td>
<td>1 Samuel 18:1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah and Elisha</td>
<td>2 Kings 2:1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary and Joseph</td>
<td>Luke 2:4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul and Barnabas</td>
<td>Acts 13:1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul and Silas</td>
<td>Acts 16:25</td>
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In the Bible we hear more about the companionship of God with his people, the ‘Covenant’.

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Genesis 6:17-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Genesis 17:18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Exodus 19:5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Psalm 105:10</td>
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And also about our companionship with God:

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 2:18-20</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 7:9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joshua 1:5</td>
<td>Psalm 25:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 41:10</td>
<td>Lamentations 3:22-23</td>
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<tr>
<td>John 14:16</td>
<td>1 John 1:3</td>
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“Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship is conversation.” Oscar Wilde
Particular passages take us on real journeys of faith and discovery.

**Old Testament**

Genesis 2:21-23  
God gives Adam a companion

Genesis 46:1-7  
Jacob goes to Egypt with God’s blessing

Exodus 12:37-42  
The Israelites leave Egypt

Exodus 33:12-14  
The Lord promises to be with his people

Ruth 1  
Ruth is a faithful companion

Ezra 8:31-32  
Ezra’s return to Jerusalem

Nehemiah 4:12-20  
Rebuilding of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 42:2-12  
The ‘remnant’ turn to Jeremiah for God’s help

**New Testament**

Matthew 2:13-15  
The Escape to Egypt

Matthew 2:19-23  
The Return from Egypt

Mark 6:6-13  
Jesus Sends out the Twelve Disciples

Mark 11:1-11  
The Triumphant Entry to Jerusalem

Luke 2:1-7  
Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem

The road to Emmaus

Acts 16:1-5  
Timothy goes with Paul and Silas

Acts 18  
Paul’s journey to Corinth

Acts 22:6-16  
Paul’s conversion

Philemon 1:4-11  
Paul asks Philemon to accept Onesimus.

Acts 15:36-39  
Mark is rejected but later accepted

2 Timothy 4:11  
Mark is rejected but later accepted
Why not try reading from a different translation of the Bible? www.biblegateway.com

Luke 10: 1-11 (Good News Translation)

After this the Lord chose another seventy-two men and sent them out two by two, to go ahead of him to every town and place where he himself was about to go. He said to them, “There is a large harvest, but few workers to gather it in. Pray to the owner of the harvest that he will send out workers to gather in his harvest. Go! I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Don’t take a purse or a beggar’s bag or shoes; don’t stop to greet anyone on the road. Whenever you go into a house, first say, ‘Peace be with this house.’ If someone who is peace-loving lives there, let your greeting of peace remain on that person; if not, take back your greeting of peace. Stay in that same house, eating and drinking whatever they offer you, for workers should be given their pay. Don’t move around from one house to another. Whenever you go into a town and are made welcome, eat what is set before you, heal the sick in that town, and say to the people there, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near you.’ But whenever you go into a town and are not welcomed, go out in the streets and say, ‘Even the dust from your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. But remember that the Kingdom of God has come near you!’”

Psalm 119 : 57-64 (The Message)

Because you have satisfied me, God, I promise to do everything you say.

I beg you from the bottom of my heart: smile, be gracious to me just as you promised. When I took a long, careful look at your ways, I got my feet back on the trail you blazed. I was up at once, didn’t drag my feet, was quick to follow your orders.

The wicked hemmed me in—there was no way out—but not for a minute did I forget your plan for me.

I get up in the middle of the night to thank you; your decisions are so right, so true — I can’t wait till morning!

I’m a friend and companion of all who fear you, of those committed to living by your rules.

Your love, God, fills the earth
Train me to live by your counsel.
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<tr>
<th>HYMNS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CH4</td>
<td>CH3</td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand</td>
<td>705</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brother, sister, let me serve you</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Forth in the peace of Christ we go</td>
<td>646</td>
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<td>In Christ there is no East or West</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>329</td>
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<td>The Church is wherever God’s people are praising</td>
<td>522</td>
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<td>We are marching in the light of God</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>954</td>
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<td>Courage brother, do not stumble</td>
<td>513</td>
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<td>Jesus calls us here to meet him</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a fire is meant for burning</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praise God for the harvest</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>102</td>
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<td>Let us build a house</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>We lay our broken world</td>
<td>721</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glory to God Above</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>Glory be to God the Father</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>God whose almighty word</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>I waited for the Lord my God</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>Safe in the shadow of the Lord</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lord’s my shepherd</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>387</td>
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<tr>
<td>O God you search me and you know me</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make way, make way</td>
<td>279</td>
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<tr>
<td>When Jesus saw the fishermen</td>
<td>340</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often we like Thomas</td>
<td>432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus lover of my soul</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>Make me a channel</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord you have come to the seashore</td>
<td>532</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord speak to me</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>485</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What a friend we have in Jesus</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Come and find the quiet centre</td>
<td>716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus calls us here to meet Him</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I need Thee every hour</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>O for a closer walk with God</td>
<td>552</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Give thanks</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>O Master let me walk with you</td>
<td>436</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One more step along the world I go</td>
<td>530</td>
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</table>
You may wish to use these prayers as they are or add them to your own prayers

Call to worship

God is all around us  
Jesus walks beside us  
And the Holy Spirit guides us  
Today and always.  
Let us now join in worship.

In the storms of life, we hear the roaring wind and streaming rain. We see the tossing waves and swirling leaves but in our hearts we know the still small voice of God, always with us on our road. Sure in that knowledge, let us now worship God.

God, the way, the truth, the life, You journey with us in all we do. In joy and sorrow, smooth and rough, we walk with You beside us as our guide. Be with us now as we join in worship.

Opening Prayers

Heavenly Father, we have come here from different places and different people, but whatever our situation, we know that we are in your presence for you are our constant companion. Wherever we go, you are with us; whatever we do or say, you are with us. When the road is long or difficult we know you will take us by the hand and lead us; when we come to a fork in the road we know you will help us to choose the right path. We ask you to be with our friends who cannot be with us and we pray that they know they are not alone; that they know you are their constant companion too. This we ask in your name,

Amen.

Dear Lord, as we gather here in your presence,
We thank you for the fellowship of our guild members.
We ask that you guide us on our journey  
With love and grace.
This we ask in your name,
Amen.

Loving God, thank you for bringing us safely together today.  
Be with those who are unable to be here with us today due to illness or other commitments. Guide us through the meeting and help us to be patient and listen to one another. Be with our speaker, and be in all they do in your name. This we ask in Jesus name,

Amen.
Offering prayers
Father, we bring you these gifts of money which are a small repayment for all that you have given us. As we walk on our journey of faith together, we want to use the many talents you have given us. We pray that we will be ready to show your love to everyone we walk with each day; that what we say and do for others will be pleasing to you and a support to those with whom we are in contact. We want to show others ‘whose we are and whom we serve’.
In Jesus’ name we ask this
Amen

Loving Father, your son, Jesus Christ, commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves. We are so aware that our world’s resources are not shared equally, that some live in situations of squalor, danger and sadness. Gracious God, we cannot physically come alongside many who need our help but we bring you now this money as a token of our love. May it be used to bless and help others, wherever they are and may they, in turn, become aware of your great love and care for them.
All this we ask in the name of him who walks with all of us, our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Intercessory prayers
We thank you Lord for being with us at all times, everywhere we are and in everything we do. You satisfy all our longings and for that we praise you.
We pray for all who help us on our journey in life; for family and friends, health professionals and educators, carers and church leaders.
We ask for your Spirit’s guidance when we need to alter our path, to walk more closely with you and do your work in helping others find your road.
In Jesus’ name.
Amen

Closing prayers
Our Loving Heavenly Father
Thank you for giving us this chance to meet together, and thank you for our shared fellowship, and for our discovery of new things.
We ask for your blessing now upon each one of us as we go our separate ways. Father, we pray that we may take with us an awareness of your Holy Spirit and of your closeness to each of us. May we see your presence in all those we meet, and help us to join with others in making this world a better and more loving place.
We ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen

Loving Heavenly Father,
As we come to the close of our Guild meeting we thank you for this time spent together, for what we have learned and done and for the companionship of our fellow members.
Now as we prepare to go home we ask you to be with us during our happy times and when things are difficult and challenging. Help us to reach out to those around us, to right injustices where we can, to show love to others and to walk in your footsteps.
Lord, be to others, as you are to us, a true Companion on the Road.
Amen
**Benedictions**

God go with us on our one journey with many roads, with our companions on the road. Revive us when we grow weary, direct us when we go astray, inspire us when we lose heart. Keep us travelling ever onwards, looking to Jesus Christ who has run the race before us and who waits to welcome us home.

Amen

Go now in God’s love and show that love to the people you meet, in Jesus’ name. Amen

**Prayer for the start of a session.**

Loving Father - as we look forward to the start of a new Guild session, we thank you for your continued presence alongside each one of us. Help us to be aware of your love and constant care and to place our hope and trust in you. We do not know what lies ahead - but you do and we know that you will be there sharing every moment with us, in good times and in difficult times.

Thank you too, for the love and friendship shared among friends in the Guild. Help us to be ready with a listening ear, a loving heart and a gentle touch as we seek to be companions for one another on this new Guild road.

This we ask through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

**Prayer for a meeting with a Project speaker.**

Gracious and Loving God, we thank you for all your goodness to us, for the gift of life itself, for food and shelter and for family and friends to share our lives. Most of all we thank you for Jesus, who is our friend, support and companion through all of life’s journey.

Father, many in our world have to walk incredibly difficult journeys, facing pain, hardship and loss on such a scale that it is difficult for us to imagine. But we are called to walk alongside our brothers and sisters and to give love and support in whatever way we can.

Bless all those involved in our Guild projects, that, through them, others may feel our love and support and be aware that they are not alone on the road they travel. May they come to know Jesus as their ultimate support and travelling companion.

Bless (name speaker) as he/she shares with us the work (name of project or work)

Open our ears to hear and our hearts to love, support and care, in whatever ways we can.

All this we ask in Jesus’ name.

Amen

“Valued companionships begin with a personal commitment to be an exemplary companion.” Joseph B Wirthlin
Sample Worship

Hymn: CH4 694 Brother, sister, let me serve you
Reading: Acts 14:21-28 (GNB)

Meditation
Everyone can use a little encouragement on a regular basis but as society puts more distractions in our way, encouraging others is becoming a bit of a lost art. Encouraging friends can boost their spirits, especially if they’re going through difficult times. To the apostles in the early church, Barnabas excelled in encouraging others, so much so that he was recognised by the title ‘Son of Encouragement’.

Barnabas was one of the seventy whom Jesus sent out in pairs, ‘as lambs among wolves’, carrying no money or possessions, to preach the Gospel. How easy it would have been to become discouraged! But Barnabas wasn’t afraid to stand by God’s messengers in times of danger; he opened his home to Saul of Tarsus, when all the other disciples regarded Saul as a persecutor and murderer, and did not believe that he had actually been converted.

Barnabas, of course, accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey, and stood by him; he was his ‘right hand man’, his companion. When the other apostles finally recognised Paul’s conversion, and Paul began to take a greater lead, then Barnabas stood back, and fell into a supporting role....the mark of a true companion, encouraging from behind.

Disagreements between Paul and Barnabas are well-documented - this often happens with close companions. But they were never irreconcilable. Paul makes significant mention of the fact that Barnabas, who willingly ‘took a back seat’ in the interests of the church, ‘laboured with his own hands to support himself on his missionary journeys’.

At Antioch, Barnabas ‘encouraged the members to keep on living in the grace of God.’

The basic meaning of ‘encouragement’ is ‘the act of giving hope or promise to others’. Barnabas leaves us such an encouraging example. He was a good man, ‘full of the Holy Spirit and faith’, and his kindness, generosity and forgiving nature helped to console and encourage many.

He encouraged believers in the knowledge that ‘Just as we have a share in Christ’s many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God’s great help’ (2 Corinthians 1:5).

We too can be of great help and comfort to one another if we take the time to be like Barnabas - ‘sons and daughters of encouragement’

Prayer
O God who travels with us, you know who we are. We long for life which is full and free; we long to know the truth; and we want to leave behind us everything which holds us back.

Give us courage and perseverance to see our journey through; may we take inspiration from the apostles who went before us; and grant us the grace to encourage others alongside us. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Courage, brother, do not stumble CH4 513
or Jesus, good above all other CH3 111
or Lord, speak to me CH4 542

Blessing
May we find direction with God’s word in our hearts,
May we find encouragement with Christ as our companion,
May we walk in step with others, guided by the Holy Spirit
Amen.
Sample Worship

Hymn: “For all the saints, who from their labours rest” CH4 740 (verses 1-3 and 5, or own selection)

Reading: Hebrews 12: 1 and 2

Meditation: Let us think for a minute of the people who have been important to us on our journey as Christians. They may be people we have read about in the Bible or in history books. They may be members of our family, our Church family, our local community or the worldwide community. Some will be living, perhaps even very close to us. Others will be part of the eternal community of God’s saints, but they too may feel very close.

In the previous chapter of the letter to the Hebrews the writer reminds his Jewish readers of all the people recorded in their scriptures, our Old Testament, who lived by faith and remained true to God. These are the “cloud of witnesses” who can inspire them in their Christian lives and help them to reach their goal of heaven.

Almost 2,000 years later, we have not only these, but also many more such witnesses: the people who knew Jesus during his lifetime, those who formed the early Church, those who brought the Word of God to our shores, those who endured persecution to keep the faith alive, and everyone we have known personally who has taught us, guided us, encouraged us and supported us on our Christian journey.

As we give thanks for our particular “cloud of witnesses”, let us also remember that we are called to be part of the “cloud of witnesses” for others. By our words, our actions and our example we can inspire our families, friends, neighbours, fellow Christians and all those we meet as we go about our lives. We can be their companions on the way, for a few minutes, a few days, or a lifetime.

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you for the “cloud of witnesses” who accompany us and inspire us on our way through life:

- For the men and women of whom we read in the Old Testament – Abraham and his wife Sarah, Moses and his sister Miriam, King David and Judge Deborah.
- For those who shared Jesus’ life on earth, whose stories are written in the New Testament – Mary and Joseph, Peter, James and John, Mary, Martha and Lazarus.
- For the early Christians who spread the good news of Jesus beyond their own lands in spite of all the difficulties they faced – Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Eunice and her grandson Timothy.
- For those who brought Christianity to Scotland and helped it grow strong and true – Abbot Columba, Queen Margaret, reformer John Knox, and protester Jenny Geddes.
- For leaders and innovators in our own Church – Dr Charteris who founded the Guild, and Lady Grisell Baillie, the first deaconess.
- For those in our own congregation and our own lives who are our companions on the way.

Help us to draw strength from their example, and most especially from the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Help us in our turn to be good companions to those we meet along the way.

In the name of Jesus, Amen

Hymn: “Brother, sister, let me serve you” CH4 694
Sample worship, CrossReach

Hymn: Who would true valour see (CH4 535)

In this passage we see the confusion and disappointment of disciples who thought that they had misplaced their faith and trust in Jesus. They had journeyed with Jesus, seen his miracles, heard his teachings, but didn’t quite understand his message. When our paths change or go somewhere unexpected, our faith in God’s purpose is often tested. We can even doubt his ability to guide us. We can be tempted to take matters into our own hands and get the result we think we want, need and deserve.

God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. His ways are SO much higher than ours can ever be. God has a plan for each of us but he does not always share that plan with us: in fact, I have yet to meet a single person who knows God’s entire plan for their life. I sometimes feel that God reveals to us his plan like stepping stones: bit by bit, stone by stone. As I stand on one stone the next isn’t there yet; I just have to bide my time and wait. Even when I find myself teetering on the one stone and feel like I might fall off, I still must wait, however impatiently, for the next one to appear. Then I can step on it and learn to wait all over again for the next stone. As I begin to realise God’s faithfulness to me and the certainty of the next stone being there, so, slowly, my impatience and my impetuousness fall away.

We can’t explain why some steps of God’s plan for us come quickly or slowly, or why they come at all, but if we put our trust in God and his infinite wisdom, then the waiting part need not feel so hard. Through the waiting, God reveals himself to us bit by bit, and we learn to trust him more and more. And that trust brings with it a certainty of heart, a gladness and a peace which never comes when we seek to go our own way.

Walking alongside Jesus we can achieve far more than we could ever hope to achieve on our own. And not only with our own life, also in the lives of others we meet day by day. People who are lonely and isolated find through us the companionship they so desire.

Prayer: Father, we thank you that just like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, you reveal yourself to us bit by bit, stepping stone by stepping stone. We choose to trust you. Help us believe in the way you have chosen for us even when we are at our most stubborn and wilful.

Lord, help us to see your plan for us in partnering with CrossReach to reach out and enfold all who are lonely and isolated and on the fringes of society. In this special anniversary year for CrossReach, we celebrate the 150 years of continuous loving social care provision by the Church in your name throughout Scotland. Use us now where we are in our own communities to provide true faithful companionship and a gentle guiding hand to those in need of our support.

This we ask in Jesus’ strong name.

Amen

Closing Hymn Choices (All numbers CH4)

Oh Jesus, I have promised 644
We will walk with God, my sisters 803
Sample worship, Malawi Fruits

Hymn: Shine, Jesus, shine (CH4 448)

Reading: Mark 6 : 32-44
Jesus’ disciples were true Companions on the Way, learning and growing together and working together with Jesus in his mission to the world. Jesus was meeting the crowd’s spiritual needs through his teaching, but he wasn’t going to ignore the physical needs of the people – they were hungry, and he fed them. The disciples were completely involved in this miracle, even though the power came from God:

- Jesus said, “You yourselves give them something to eat”. (v.37)
- One disciple found another “Companion” to be part of the miracle – the boy with the packed lunch. (John 6:9)
- The disciples distributed the food. (v.41)
- They even did the tidying up! (v.43)

The disciples worked together with the boy and with Jesus for this amazing miracle to happen. God calls us to be Companions on the way, working together to build his Kingdom. Amazing things can happen when everyone plays their part.

An important point that is easily missed:
You remember that this is called the feeding of the 5,000 because someone got lazy and only counted the men. They didn’t count the women and children (there were probably 12-15,000 people fed that day). Isn’t it amazing that the person that nobody bothered to count is the person Jesus uses to do the miracle.

- The boy who didn’t count got the miracle

They were so busy counting the people that they thought were important, that they missed the one who simply gave what he had to Jesus.

This is so brilliant and a really important Biblical principle. You cannot say you are too young; too old; the wrong gender; too insignificant; not gifted enough – Jesus deliberately chose a boy who didn’t count, to do the miracle.
Cont.

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-28

God chose:

- Moses who couldn’t speak properly to be his spokesman.
- He chose Gideon who was the least important person to be a great leader.
- He chose David who was the youngest to be King of Israel.
- He chose Mary a teenage girl to be the mother of Jesus.
- The 12 disciples were aged between 15 and 22 – Jesus inspired his youth group to do great things.
- And now he chooses this boy to bring about a miracle that is still talked about 2000 years later!

I wish we knew his name. We don’t.

That’s often how God works. Nameless people, unknown actions and great power. He often works that way. He’s done that in some of your lives. He’s worked in your life in ways that nobody will ever know. You might not even know it. But when we get to heaven it’s going to be all laid out. When we get to heaven we can talk to that little boy. He’s probably in charge of the food in Heaven!

Prayer

Father, we thank you that in your grace you use ordinary people like us to do your work here on earth. We thank you for the privilege of serving in the Guild and would ask that you would take our efforts and multiply them – just as you did with the young boy in our Bible reading. Help us to continue to serve you faithfully, knowing that nothing is wasted and you will take our offerings of our time, talents and money and use them to bring glory to Jesus. We ask these things in His name, Amen.

Hymn suggestions:

All to Jesus, I surrender (Mission Praise 25)
Bind us together (Mission Praise 54)
Reflective worship

Based on Beauty for brokenness CH4 259 (to be used as a prayer of intercession).

(Leader give a brief explanation of the format)

Sing together or one person read out the first verse.

Prayer: Lord of love and companion of all who desire you to walk with them, hear us as we pray for our world.
We cannot begin to imagine children in the streets of many countries of the world malnourished, not sure where the next meal will come from or even when. We pray for all whose life work is to help feed the poor and to seek to alleviate hunger. We pray that you, O God, will stir us to give generously to help where we can.

A short silence for personal prayer and reflection.

Sing together or one person read out the second verse and the chorus.

Prayer: Lord of compassion we pray for all homeless in our own country. Those living in the streets of our cities. We thank you for organisations such as the City Mission in.................., who tirelessly daily prepare hundreds of meals for men and women. We thank you for the ordinary men and women who take time as they walk along the street to talk to street people and ask them about their plight and life rather than merely throw a coin into the paper coffee cup. Forgive us as a nation that to our shame so many find themselves abandoned by us all.

A short silence for personal prayer and reflection.

Sing together or one person read out the third and fourth verse.

Prayer: We thank you Lord God that your Son knows the pain of all suffering. We ask, ‘When will all wars end?’ We pray for governments and people in positions of power and influence that they may put peace before power and their people before personal gain. We pray for the children, women and men torn from their homes and making dangerous journeys to seek out a safe place. May they find trustworthy companions on their travels.

A short silence for personal prayer and reflection.

Sing together or one person read out the last verse and chorus.

Prayer: Fill us with Christ’s love that we may each be worthy companions on the way to all our neighbours; those close to us whom we meet day by day and those you call us to walk with from a distance. We pray for each of the Guild projects that we are pledged to support; make us faithful in our prayers for them and generous in our giving that even we each one may play a small part in the coming of your kingdom.

Amen.
Reflective worship

Based on There Is a Redeemer, MP 673 CH4 559

Sing together or say together first verse.

Reflect: Dear Lord, we know we cannot work alone.
We need you with us as we travel life’s journey.
We are sorry that sometimes we ignore you,
or pretend not to hear you.
May we remember to give you time,
a time when we can listen to you.
The road ahead, the choices we make,
all are clearer when we use the Lord as our sat nav.

Sing together or say together second verse.

Reflect: Father, we know that we need to keep on learning by reading your word in the Bible.
Our journey through life can sometimes be troubled and we suffer. If we hand our troubles over to you,
you share the load and help us bear the burden.
We can also help others when they have a burden, by helping in any way we can. The Lord works through us,
to help others as they journey.

Sing together or say together third verse.

Reflect: May the light of the Lord shine through us, so others see our good deeds as the Lord’s work and
turn to him also.

We ask all this in your name. Amen

Sing together or say together first verse again.
Reflective Worship, Free to Live Trust

Based on I, the Lord of Sea and Sky CH4 251

Sing or read first verse and chorus.
Consider the majesty of God:
Thank Him for the wonder of creation.
Thank Him for Jesus.
Thank Him for His Amazing Grace.
Read:
Psalm 8
John 3:16

Sing or read second verse and chorus.
In a moment of silence, pray for those who you know personally, companions of your life, who are in pain be it physical, emotional or spiritual.
Pray for those who suffer the pain of rejection, exploitation, abuse at the hands of others, displacement from their own lands through the terror of war.
Pray for those of no faith and no hope that God will soften their hearts.

Sing or read third verse and chorus.
Jesus healed many people during his earthly ministry but now he is in heaven so how can he help the poor, lame, the exploited?
Read Matthew 25 verse 31-40.
As Christians we are Christ’s representatives on earth. It is up to us, as led by the Holy Spirit, to use the talents we have been given to carry out his work here and now.

There is much to do to advance God’s kingdom and he is looking for workers.
Read Matthew 9:38.

You might like to read these verses from a Franciscan Benediction:

May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and
To turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.
Sing or read first verse and chorus again.

Meditate on the words of the chorus.
‘Here I am Lord...
I will go Lord, if You lead me...
I will hold Your people in my heart.

Think on what changes and contributions you can personally make, depending on your talents and circumstances, to the Lord’s work.

Ask the Lord, our lead Companion along life’s road, to inspire you and help you to achieve the work to which he is calling you.

Remember He never asks you to do anything without giving you the strength to do it.
Philippians 4:13
Psalm 105:4
Reflective worship - Boys’ Brigade, Scotland

Based on The Spirit lives to set us free (Walk in the Light) MP 664 and Acts 2:17-18.

Read Acts 2:17-18

Thanks be to God for the promise fulfilled of the Holy Spirit as Companion on the road for sons and daughters, old and young, men and women. Amen.

Sing together or say together first verse and chorus.

Reflect: on “He binds us all in unity”. Think of crossing barriers of race, religion (and denomination), young and old, male and female and how we can be companions who offer Jesus’ love.

Sing together or say together second verse and chorus.

Reflect: on “The dead were wakened by his call”. Think of the companionship for loved ones we have lost in the “many mansions of Heaven.”

Sing together or say together third verse and chorus.

Reflect: on “To save the lost like you and me”. Think of the care of the father for the prodigal son who was lost and was found. Think how we can be companions to those who are lost and bewildered.

Sing together or say together fourth verse and chorus.

Reflect: on “He gave his Spirit to be our friend”. Think on the wonderful love that God and Jesus have for each one of us that he wants to be our friend.

Sing together or say together fifth verse and chorus.

Reflect: on “By Jesus’ love our wounds are healed”. Think how we have caused ourselves or others pain and wounded them by harsh words or unthinking actions and in accepting the healing of Jesus also find the way to forgive ourselves.

Reflect on v6 “The Spirit lives in you and me”. Accept the challenging presence of the Spirit within and think how the Spirit of Jesus can shine through us.

Sing together or say together sixth verse and chorus.

Prayer: Let us go to walk in the light with the spirit of our friend and companion Jesus Christ ever with us. And may the blessing of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit our friend ever be with us on our way. Amen
This bible study can with be used as a whole study or you can choose to study one of the journeys.

INTRODUCTION
Each of these New Testament encounters involves a journey. In the first Jesus and his disciples are on their way back to Galilee from Judea. There’s a short journey very early in the morning for Mary Magdalene and her companions, and much longer journeys for Philip and Saul. In the final passage both Peter and Cornelius experienced journeys of different kinds which brought them together.

In each study, consider the before/after aspects of each encounter.
Why was each on that particular journey?
What did they learn about themselves as a result of each encounter?
What was the effect of their experience on them as individuals/on their wider relationships?
Why do you think that God chose each of them for this experience?

1. The Samaritan woman – John 4: 4-26 and 30-42
Why did Jesus choose this place to rest?
[The encounter took place very early in his ministry, John the Baptist was still alive, but already the Pharisees were making life difficult for Jesus, so he’d left Judea to return to Galilee. Jacob’s Well was probably a regular stopping place – known to Jews and Samaritans. Jesus knew she’d be there alone because not only were Samaritans regarded as outcasts by Jews, but she was an outcast in her community because of her lifestyle.]
What does the passage tell you about the character of the woman?
[Strong, not afraid to express her opinion even to a stranger and a man! But she also knew of the promise of the Messiah and was waiting for His coming.]
How do you think her circumstances (position in the community) could have changed as a result of her being in the company of Jesus (vv39-42).
What do you think the disciples learn from this encounter as they accompanied Jesus on the rest of this journey?

[These women had been regular companions of Jesus as he travelled through Judea, but on this journey they relied on the companionship of each other.]
What was surprising about the behaviour of these women?
[They must have been very afraid – went early to the tomb to avoid being seen – but the urge to complete the burial rites for their Lord overcame their fear. Contrast with the disciples who were in hiding.]
What would they have discussed on the way?
What did they expect to find at the tomb?
Why do you think Mary Magdalene stayed behind after the others left?
In what ways do you think her meeting with the risen Christ might have altered her relationship with the rest of his followers?
Have you ever felt that you had to make a journey/go out somewhere for no apparent reason? You had other things to do that day, but even as you started on them some inner voice urged you to get ready – go out – to visit a friend, slip out to the shop, go for a walk – no real reason, just a feeling. And have you ever discovered as a result that God had a reason and He was urging you to act? This is what happened to Philip – but in his case God gave him clear directions – through an angel. He wanted Philip to become a companion on the road to Gaza.
Did Philip need an introduction to his companion?
How did their meeting contrast with normal rules of association?
What confirmed for Philip God’s leading in this encounter?
Was this the first time Philip had acted on impulse? (See John 1:44-46 and also Acts 8:5-13)
What was the effect on Philip of this encounter? On the Ethiopian?
Have you ever spoken to a stranger about Jesus?
What response did you receive? How did you deal with that?
Can we ever know what the result of such ‘chance’ encounters might be?
Remember – Jesus wants us all to be ‘Missionaries’ for Him.
[Christianity was officially adopted in Ethiopia in 341 AD.]

The Bible account focuses naturally on what happened to Saul, but he was not alone on this journey. He had several companions with him, probably for protection and also as bearers of the documentation and as the manpower he needed in his plan to take prisoner Christians in Damascus. In the event he had to depend on them to help him, blinded by his vision, to complete the journey.
What was filling Saul’s thoughts on this journey?
What does the reaction of his companions tell you about their relationship with Saul before Jesus spoke to him?
Why do you think, did Jesus choose such a sudden and dramatic means of encountering Saul?
[Saul was stubborn, determined that he was right to pursue Christians, and urgent action was necessary to stop him.]
Why was there no advance preparation? Or was there?
[Saul had witnessed the death of Stephen. Had the image of Stephen’s face as he looked up to heaven and saw Christ waiting there for him imprinted itself deep in Saul’s heart?]
Have you ever been ‘stopped in your tracks’ by God?
(Note: Jesus’ words to Saul were imperious - not gentle, but a strong command. Saul was used to giving orders to others. He recognised authority when it confronted him so dramatically, and made him blind and helpless. His response was dramatic too – after meeting with Ananias and recovering his sight ‘at once he began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God’.)

5. Peter and Cornelius – Acts 10:9-23a and 23b-48
This ‘journey’ involves 2 visions, both of preparation. Before his journey Peter, like Paul, had to abandon views and attitudes which he previously regarded as fixed for ever. Only then was he ready to take the first steps on a new path. He did not go alone – 6 companions went with him.
How did God prepare Cornelius?
How did God prepare Peter? Is there any significance in the repetition of Peter’s vision?
When did he begin to understand its meaning? (See vv 28, 34-35)
What was the result of Peter’s justification of his actions?
Has God ever spoken to you in a dream?
Bible Study, Sailors’ Society

Open with prayer

Read aloud John 15:9-17

Introduction: What does the word ‘companion’ mean to you? Brainstorm different ideas.

You are probably familiar with this passage in which Jesus commands his disciples to love one another. In this study, we are going to dig deeper and focus specifically on the theme of friendship, which runs throughout the passage. Jesus uses the word ‘friends’ three times when referring to his disciples. He does this in three interrelated statements, which explain what it means to be his friends.

1. Firstly, let’s look at the first statement about friendship in verse 13.
   • What do you think Jesus is alluding to when he mentions ‘lay[ing] down one’s life for one’s friends’?
   • Looking at Verses 9-11, what is the context for such a radical act?
   • What implications does this have for us today?

   • Looking at this statement with the opening verses in mind, what do you think of the use of the word ‘if’?
   • What, specifically, do the disciples need to do if they are to be called Jesus’ friends?
   • In what ways is this friendship different from normal human friendship?

3. Finally, let’s look at the third statement about friendship in verse 15.
   • What does Jesus say is the difference between a ‘friend’ and a ‘servant’?
   • What does this say about the kind of relationship that we can have with Jesus?
   • How can this encourage us as believers?

Re-read the passage to yourself. What is the ultimate purpose of this friendship with Jesus? How can we make this relevant for our lives today and help to reach out to seafarers so that we too can be companions on their journey?

Closing prayer

We pray for Sailors’ Society chaplains, who are companions on seafarers’ journeys, working in Scottish ports:
   Invergordon – Drew Anderson
   Leith – Pauline Robertson
   Montrose and Dundee – Peter Donald
BIBLE STUDY

Bible study, World Mission Council

Hymn


1. Have you ever gone recognised or been a stranger? Describe some of the feelings you had?

2. Some events in our lives may leave us trying to answer the question “Why?” Imagine that you were one of the two disciples talking over troubling events or dashed hopes in your life. What would you be talking about today that has thrown you into confusion?

3. You do not walk alone. You never walk alone for you have God as your friend. You do not walk alone because of your oneness with other members of the human race, bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord, similar to the Zambian expression Ubuntu - I am because We are. Do you agree?

4. What does the conversation on the Road to Emmaus teach you about God and his involvement in your daily life? How does it help you view your life in the future?

5. Can you think of a time when Jesus made his presence known to you? How did you respond and react?

6. World Mission, as a priority of Jesus Christ, engages in a process of ‘attentive accompaniment’ with its partners world-wide. This means listening to and walking with our partners on a shared journey of faith, journeying together. In what ways does attentive accompaniment take place in the life and witness of your congregation, in your community or with partners from other parts of the world?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that whatever road we take that is the road you meet us on, drawing near to us and offering companionship. Thank you for your Word that lights up the road for us. Help us to be sensitive to the way you speak to us, sometimes in unfamiliar voices from unfamiliar faces.

Thank you for the conversations that can only take place on the road to Emmaus, the wondering why - in the face of crushed hopes, unrelieved suffering or unanswered questions.

Stay with us Lord when we are disheartened and when life does not make sense. Show yourself to us, even for a moment. Help us to understand something of the depths of your own pain and suffering here on earth, so we can appreciate more fully the depth of your love. Your weakness in the wilderness, your tears for Jerusalem, your agony in Gethsemane and your death on the Cross.

Through this, help us to become more sensitive to the pain, sorrow, hunger, thirst and needs of others. Keep us close to you and close to others who love you, so that together we may witness in our lives that you are with us, alive and present today, as we love and serve others. Amen
**Drama**

**Two women, Meg, her cup ½ empty and Anne optimistic, on a hike with walking poles. Helpful cottage owner.**

Meg: How far have we been walking? How far have we to go?
Anne: Five miles? I don’t think it’s far now. Look here’s a fork in the road. Do we go left or right?
Meg: Let’s take the right fork. It’s a broad well-trodden way. I’m tired and I’m getting blisters.
Anne: Cheer up Meg! We’ll soon be at the cottage I’ve booked for the night. *(They trudge on)*
Anne: See there’s a cottage all on its own. Perhaps that’s it. It said ‘Quiet and peaceful location’ on line.
*(Knock on the door, owner opens)*
Anne: Sorry to trouble you but is this Peace Cottage?
Owner: Oh no girls, you’re on the wrong track. That’s my neighbour, Paul’s cottage. He rents it out.
Meg: (wearily) Does that mean we have to go all that way back to the fork in the road?
Owner: No, no there is a quicker way. Have a seat and I’ll make you a cup of tea. You look tired.
Anne: *(They sit on the garden bench)* Get your boot off Meg and we can put a plaster on your heel.
*(Owner comes out with three mugs of tea.)*
Owner: Anyone take sugar? No? That’s a relief for I don’t have any! *(After a quick drink)*
Just about 100 yards back there’s a wee track – a shortcut that takes you out about three minutes’ walk from Paul’s place.
Meg: Thank goodness. That sounds great.
Owner: I’ll go with you so you don’t miss the wee track.
Anne: That’s kind of you. Isn’t it Meg?
Meg: We don’t want to put you out but I wouldn’t like to miss the road again. *(They all set off)*
Owner: No bother. It’s a pleasure. Look here it is on the right.
Meg: This is it? This wee track? I doubt if we would have seen this.
Anne: Thank you so much for coming this way with us. We’ll be fine now and soon we’ll be in Peace Cottage thanks to you. Good bye. *(Wave her/him off and walk on)*
Meg: Oh, Anne look there’s our cottage. I’m so sorry to have been such a moaner. I thought we’d never get here!
Anne: Never mind we are here, and what are friends for if we can’t encourage each other on the journey. Look how kind our new friend was too. A good end to our trip.
Other ideas for a Guild meeting

Ice breaker
Each member should be given 2 shapes be it 2 bodies or 2 feet. They should either write a passage from the Bible of people who walk together on the road or their names. A stick-on Guild logo can be placed on the head or at the toes. On completion the shapes should be threaded together.

CRAFT ACTIVITIES

Journeying jar
Each person will require:
Clean empty jar
Pieces of maps
Stickers with footprints or people
Battery tea light
Glue

Method
Tear up map; stick the pieces round the jar. Add either footprints or figures to join the map up. Place tea light in the bottom of jar. Use the jar to support your prayers for our companions on our journey.

Photo collage
Photos of the area both old and new
Footprint stickers or cut out footprints
Card
Picture frame/or cardboard mount
Glue

Method
Tear up photos, use them to make a collage by gluing them to the card and add the footprints to show that the community has developed over the years and that it has been a journey with people walking together as companions on the road. When dry either put into a picture frame or add a mount.

QUIZ

These random pairs went on a journey together. Can you fill in the missing partner?

1. Thelma
2. Ruth
3. Lone Ranger
4. Bonnie Prince Charlie
5. Butch Cassidy
6. Captain von Trapp
7. Abraham
8. Charlie Reid
9. Timothy West
10. Toto

Answers

1. Louise
2. Naomi
3. Silver
4. Flora MacDonald
5. Sundance Kid
6. Maria
7. Sarah
8. Craig
9. Prunella Scales
10. Dorothy

“If you want to walk faster, walk alone. If you want to walk further then walk together.” African proverb
Introduction
The material in this section is designed to help you with a slightly different approach to the theme, Companions on the Road.

The Resources which you will find here can be used in any way you wish to use them, a stand alone activity or included as part of a normal Guild meeting. The underlying issues which may emerge may be very personal so please be sensitive to this as you lead your group.

‘It’s been a journey’ appears to have become a common phrase used to describe the change in the life of many around us. The idea of life as a journey goes back many years and is found in many cultures but it seems to speak to us now more loudly than ever. In her book ‘Companions on the Bethlehem Road’ Rachael Boulding speaks about the positive possibilities of things that may be from the past influencing our thoughts on the present and future.

In the Bible, there are many instances where lives were changed by an encounter with God. Jesus continually journeyed throughout the Gospels and was engaging with people all along the way.

In this section of the Theme Guide, the discussion is about ‘Our Journey’ Past, Present and Future and we hope it will open up to discussion on who, what has or what may influence your journey through life / faith. The road of life is never straight, it has ups and downs, twists and turns, everyone experiences difficult days and ‘hard times’. Who, or what has influenced or may influence you, on your personal journey at this time, and how can you /we influence future journeys?

‘A good companion on a journey makes the way seem shorter’ (Trevor Partridge)
‘There are many paths but only one journey’ (Naomi Judd)
‘The Christian experience from start to finish, is a journey of faith’ (Nee)

Suggested Reading: Good Samaritan

Suggested Hymns:
Will your Anchor Hold
Lord for the years
One more step along the road I go
Father hear the prayer we offer
Prayer
Heavenly Father,
We come to worship and praise you,
to share together our Guild’s discussion topic. We ask you to guide our
thoughts and discussion on our past, present and future.
We give thanks for all who have influenced our life’s journey remembering
that your guiding hand has been with us throughout all.
Be with us now as we meet in your name,
Whose we are and whom we serve.
Amen

Blessing
Go now, wherever that journey may take you,
not to serve yourself, but to serve others;
Put your hand in his, the God of past, present and future
And walk with him wherever he may lead you.
Amen

You can choose to use settings from each topic.
Discussion 1

People think my life has been tough but I think it has been a wonderful journey. The older you get, the more you realise it’s not what happens, but how you deal with it.  Tina Turner

Whatever stage we have reached in life, we have already completed many journeys. We have travelled to visit friends and family. We have travelled on holiday, at home or abroad. We have completed journeys along life’s road: our journey through school for example, or our different careers, which many of us have already finished. We have journeyed with family and friends through times of joy and sorrow.

Our life is a journey and on the way we have to make choices and decisions. Do we take the short route or the longer route with its twists and turns? Taking the easy route makes us feel safe, but there is also something to be said for taking the road less travelled even if it is longer, with twists and turns, and more dangerous along the way. Sometimes the harder we work for something, the more we appreciate what we have accomplished when we arrive.

Think about journeys we have completed:
Have we taken the easy route or have we taken the “diversion” and enriched our lives dealing with the obstacles on the way?
Who or what has influenced our decisions?
What events or places have had an impact on our journey?
When we have come to a crossroads in our lives, have we trusted our own decisions or turned to someone for advice?
Can you think of a journey which was more fulfilling because you had to deal with unexpected people and events on the way?

The Bible is full of journeys: Noah, Abraham, Ruth, Moses, Paul ... Jesus made many journeys from birth to death, some physical and some spiritual.

Abraham’s Journey
Genesis ch 11 begins with the journey of Terah, Abraham’s father, Abraham and his wife Sarah and Terah’s grandson Lot. They set out from Ur (in present day Southern Iraq) to Canaan on the Mediterranean coast. The journey lasted 40 years. They could have taken the shorter route through the desert but they took the long way round, following the river Euphrates to Haran.

Abraham and his family lived in Haran for many years until Terah died and then God called Abraham to continue his journey to Canaan. Abraham’s obedience to God on the journey to the promised land brought him many material and spiritual blessings.
**Paul's journeys**

Paul travelled more than 10,000 miles mainly through present day Israel, Syria, Turkey and Greece. Today Turkey and Greece are popular holiday destinations for many of us. How does our fast, comfortable flight of 1600 miles to Greece or 2000 miles to Turkey compare with Paul's long dangerous journeys by sea without the comfort of a cabin; on foot with the constant danger of robbers and never knowing when they would reach shelter and if there would be any food available when they arrived.

In 2 Corinthians ch 11: 25 – 27 Paul describes some of the dangers of travelling.

... three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea .... in toil, in hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fasting, through cold and exposure.

Paul or Saul was born in Tarsus, a Roman province in modern day Turkey. His father was a Roman citizen so Paul was also a Roman. In Tarsus, Paul learned the ways of the Jewish faith. Paul knew the culture and language of the Jews but living in Tarsus, he also knew the culture and language of Greece. He was familiar with these different cultures, so was well qualified to travel and preach after his conversion. The details of Paul's conversion are told three different times in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul, the Pharisee, the persecutor of the followers of Jesus, sees a blinding light and hears the voice of Jesus on his way to Damascus. Did Paul's conversion really happen in a “flash” or did God plan Paul's life journey to faith on a long and winding road which eventually led to Damascus?

Abraham's and Paul's journeys were long. God had plans for them.

When God brings someone to faith has He already planned how He wants to use that person in the service of His kingdom?

Was our journey to faith short or long?

When we thought we had arrived, had our journey ended or did God have plans for a longer journey?

Who or what has influenced us in our journey to faith?

Has our road been straight or has the journey been full of obstacles and diversions?

How have we overcome problems on the way?

Has dealing with the problems deepened our faith?

Have we tried to fight against God's plans for us?

**True friends challenge us and help us to be faithful on our journey.** Pope Benedict XVI

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, our constant companion  
We thank you for journeys we have made knowing that you were with us every step of the way.  
We thank you for the talents and gifts we have shared and the challenges we have faced; for the friendships we have made and the respect and care we have shown to one another; for the hope that has lifted our spirits on days which were difficult and for the love that has kept us going.  
We thank you for our journey to faith and for those who have been our companions on the road. Amen
Discussion 2

God is at work in our daily lives whether we are retired, at work, in the supermarket, or at the school gates with grandchildren. You meet people on your daily journey.

It is said that 98% of Christians spend around 95% of their time in non-church activities (Mark Green 2014)
So just imagine the impact you could have on your workplace, social life or in your neighbourhood making a difference to some of the companions you will meet on the road. ‘You see then, that it is by his actions that a person is put right with God, and not by his faith alone’. (James 2:24)

First, think of 3 individuals or places that have had an influence on your past life.

1. _________________________
2. _________________________
3. _________________________

Why/what did they do to make a difference?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Now on a separate sheet, make a random list of people / places you come in contact with daily/weekly that have some influence on your life. (You may be surprised by the results. Don't forget the Guild!)
Now try and place them in order of priority i.e. who has greatest - least influence

If you feel able, discuss in your group who you have placed at the top and bottom of your list and why. Perhaps share some of your answers with other group(s) to see if there are similarities.
Discussion 3

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is often taken as a tale of doing good to our enemies, but Jesus points out that it is more, it is about what he demands of us, to love all the people around us. He tells us to ‘Go and do likewise’, so, what are we doing in our daily lives that could bring us in contact with those of faith or no faith?

Has anyone ever done something for you that was unexpected?

What impact did that have on you?

What things might you do now or could do in the future that you don’t have to do, but might be a blessing to others? (Think about the Guild and its influence on your journey; how can you encourage others to witness the blessings of being a Guild member?)

What particular challenges do you see ahead on your life’s journey and what are your hopes for the year to come. Write down three things you would like to achieve and place them in a sealed envelope: either keep them yourself or give them to your Guild Convener to file away. Open them in a year and find out if you have achieved what you hoped and prayed for.

Or

Ask each member of the group to allocate a budget of £2 - £3 to be used this/next week to show kindness to someone they would not normally have contact with (e.g. buy someone a coffee or a bunch of flowers or send a card to cheer someone up)

The main thing that you have to remember about this journey is just be loving or considerate to everyone and always smile.

Question for the future: If Jesus arrived at your church or Guild meeting who would you think he would sit beside and why?!

(Quote from a church elder, “Hopefully not me, as he sat with sinners!”)

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”  Maya Angelou