



LIGHTS AND BUSHEL



LIGHTS AND BUSHELS



Exploring the theme

It seems like only yesterday that we were setting out on our journey, One Journey, Many Roads, and what a journey it was, in so many ways, on so many different paths for each of us. Yet here we are at the beginning of our new three-year strategy, Look Forward in Faith.

Looking forward in faith is something which comes naturally to us as Guild members and Christians.

Our new three-year strategy begins in 2021 and we look forward to starting our session stronger than ever and with confidence and trust in the one who brings us safely through all our difficult times.

The words of the well-known chorus sum up how we go forward, placing our trust in the one who guides us and protects us, Whose we are, and Whom we serve.

*I know who holds the future, and he'll guide me with his hand;
with God things don't just happen, everything by him is planned.
So as I face the future with its problems large and small, I'll trust
the God of miracles, give to him my all.*

From 2021 – 2024 our Strategy will be Look Forward in Faith.

The themes for the three years are:

- **Lights and Bushels**
- **Wee seeds, big trees**
- **New wine, new wine skins**

Lights and Bushels (2021 – 2022)

As Christians we are called to walk in the light and to be a light for others. Our light shines from the inside out when we live following the example of Jesus. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, light is used as a positive symbol. In the psalms we have the verse which, for me, describes our way forward as children of God,

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Ps 119:105) (NIV)

Our theme comes from the instruction that Jesus gave, after the Sermon on the Mount, that we should let our light shine and not hide it. It is found in Matthew's gospel:

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matt 5: 15) (NIV)

A lamp does not serve its purpose if it is hidden. Do people look at us and see our light shining?

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“A lamp does not serve its purpose if it is hidden”

Do we let our light shine or do we stay hidden in the background? Do we use our God given talents? We all have them. Some skills we have had for years. Some we have learned in later life. Perhaps, some we have learned quite recently. Did you think you would have developed the skills to communicate with family and friends online? Some of our skills are learned out of necessity, and some we have perfected over time because we have a particular interest. Whatever skills we have, we have them thanks to God’s good Grace, and He wants us to use them.

... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt 5:16) (NIV)

I hope you will find the material in the theme guide useful in planning your Guild meetings in the coming session, and don’t hide it away in a cupboard. Use it; share it; let it shine.

Helen Eckford

National Vice Convener with responsibility for resources



What does the Bible tell us about 'Lights and bushels'?

In the Old Testament

Isaiah 42: 16

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.

Daniel 2:22

He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.

Psalm 119:105 NIV

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

In the New Testament

Acts 13: 47

I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

1 John 1: 7

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

In the Old Testament

Psalms 36: 5-9

God's unfailing love

Psalm 119: 130-135

A cry for God's help

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Jesus' birth prophesied

Isaiah 60: 1-3

A new day dawns

In the New Testament

Mark 4: 21-25

Let your light shine

Luke 11: 33-36

The lamp of the body

2 Corinthians 4: 1-6

Light shines out of darkness

Ephesians 5: 1-14

Living in the light



Readings from different translations

Genesis 1: 1-5

First this: God created the Heavens and the Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss. God spoke: "Light!" and light appeared. God saw that the light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. it was evening, it was morning—Day One. THE MESSAGE

Isaiah 60: 1-3

Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. REVISED STANDARD VERSION

Matthew 5: 14-16

14-16 "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. THE MESSAGE

Luke 11: 33-36

No one takes a lamp and puts it in a cupboard or under a bucket, but on a lamp-stand, so that those who come in can see the light. The lamp of your body is the eye. When your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light, but when your eye is evil, your whole body is full of darkness. So be very careful that your light never becomes darkness. For if your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in shadow, it will all be radiant –it will be like having a bright lamp to give you light.

JB PHILLIPS TRANSLATION

Why not try www.biblegateway.com for different translations?

John 1: 1-9

Before anything else existed,[a] there was Christ,* with God. He has always been alive and is himself God. He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make. Eternal life is in him, and this life gives light to all mankind. His life is the light that shines through the darkness—and the darkness can never extinguish it. THE LIVING BIBLE

SUGGESTED HYMNS



	CH4	MP	SGP	CH3
O send thy light forth and thy truth	35			7
You are before me, God, you are behind	96			
O God you search me and you know me	97			
Look forward in Faith all time is in God's hand	237		69	
Sent by the Lord Am I, my hands are ready now	250			
As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame	252			
Christ is our light! The bright and morning star	336			
In our lives plant seeds of hope	349			
We have a gospel to proclaim	363	617		
Christ is the world's true light	456			505
Christ be our light	543			
Lord you sometimes speak in wonder	606			
Forth in my name, O Lord I go	529	55		463
Lord, speak to me that I may speak	542	148		485
May the mind of Christ my Saviour	536	157		432
Lord of creation, to You be all praise	500	479		428
Teach me Thy way, O Lord, teach me Thy way		569		
Kneels at the feet of his friends			60	
Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence			89	
The Spirit Lives to set us free		588	102	
Will you come and follow me	533		118	
Take my life, Lord, let it be	502			462
Today I awake and God is before me	211			
Every new morning God gives us freely	213			
May the God of hope go with us every day	256			
Put all your trust in God	270			
You are called to tell the story	680			
Go to the world! Go unto all the earth	683			
Go tell everyone			34	
There's a spirit in the air			104	
Give me the faith		168		
Here I am		229		
How do we start		847		
I want to serve the purpose of God		859		
I'll go in the strength of the Lord		862		
Speak forth thy word, O Father				468
Go ye, said Jesus, and preach the word				470



Calls to worship

Light your light from His light.
Let His light shine from you
Hour by hour and day by day.
In the living light, let us worship God.

The light of God be in our hearts.
The light of inspiration in our minds,
The light of truth in our eyes,
Bright and unhidden.
Let us join to worship God.

Gracious God, we come before you this day,
grateful for all you do for us each and every day.
Let us be still and know you are God.

Loving God as we draw near to you in faith,
Come fill us with peace and justice for all the world and its people.

Opening prayers

Lord as we look forward in faith help us to be aware of your light, constantly shining, never dimming as you care and guide us.

May we bring light and colour into the lives of those we meet on the way. Where a light is needed to brighten a life may we be there.

Where a hand is needed to ease a load may we be there offering it willingly.

Where an ear is needed to comfort may we be there to stop and listen.

Where a prayer is needed when troubles arise around the world caused by nature or by man's inhumanity may we be ever prayerful and offer our help in any way we can.

May we go forward in faith and in the light of the Lord, Whose we are and Whom we serve

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen

PRAYERS



Lord, we come into your presence in this special time, in this special place away from hubbub, pressures and concerns of our everyday lives. Help us to be still to know your peace.

Almighty God we give thanks for our amazing world, for the beauty that surrounds us, Help us to lead positive lives, ever grateful of the abundance of goodness around, both in nature and in the love and generosity of those we meet.

We give thanks for our speaker for their message to us.

Forgive us Lord, when we wander from the path of goodness when we think only of ourselves.

We know what displeases you Lord and yet we are aware of the many times we have let you down.

We ask your guidance away from life's temptations, from our selfishness and thoughtlessness.

This we ask in the name of Jesus.

Amen

Lord, help us to shut out all the worries of the past and go forward with You. It's not easy to give up everything and go with You like Peter and Andrew, James and John did when they left their nets and all their daily routines. Help us to be like them; to put our usual chores and responsibilities into perspective and follow You completely. Only in doing so will we let Your light shine out to others. May we never shrink from showing that light in all we do. In the name of Jesus, the light of the world.

Amen

Heavenly Father, when we come to you, it is like walking out of darkness in to light.

Heavenly Father, we come to you today/tonight, with thanksgiving in our hearts.

We come to you as members of the Guild, gathered together to praise your Holy name.

We come seeking your truth. We come to allow the light of your love to drive out any darkness in our lives.

Let our love for you shine out to others, so that they too may know the light of your love.

We ask all these things in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Gracious Father, we come before you tonight in thanks and gratitude for all that you have given to us and done for us. Thank you for our Guild, meeting here tonight and for the fellowship, support and inspiration which we can give to one another. Bless each one of us, our homes, families and friends. We ask your blessing, too, on those who cannot be with us - wherever they are and whatever they may be doing - may they know your presence with them.

Father, each of us has a set of gifts and abilities - given by you. We ask tonight that as we sing your praise, listen to our speaker and share food and fellowship, you open our hearts and minds to ways in which we can serve you and your church, as a group and as your children.

This we ask through he who is our strength and redeemer, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Offering prayers

Heavenly Father we have so much while others have so little.

We ask Lord that you bless our offerings and use them to help those who are in need. For food, clothing, clean water or schooling for children, but also things to make their lives better such as solar lights enabling them to study in an evening.

We give thanks for all we are able to do through our Guild Projects and may your love be shown to those we try to help.

Amen

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the many talents you have given us. Help us to use them wisely in the work of your kingdom. In grateful thanks, we bring our offerings to you so that we may share with others the gifts which you have given to us. Amen

Father as we bring our gifts to you, we ask you to use them for the work of your kingdom here and around the world. And as we bring our gifts we say thank you, that you have given us so much: our homes, our families, our friends, our church families, the world with all its wonders, and the greatest gift of all, your Son.

Amen

PRAYERS



Intercessory prayers

Dear Father, thank you for the Guild. May we go from strength to strength, as we begin our new strategy, Look Forward in Faith.

Please look after all Guild members and their families. We ask you to look after the Queen and the members of the Royal family. Bless all who work for the NHS whatever job they do: doctors, nurses, technicians, porters and carers in nursing homes. This we ask in the name of Jesus.

Amen

Loving Heavenly Father, help us show concern for our neighbours, offer support to the elderly and infirm, give time and a listening ear to the lonely, and kind, but not intrusive, advice to young mothers who are without family support.

Hear our prayers for those who live in situations hard for us to envisage. Those in fear of violence in their own homes that they may be led to safety. For the many thousands of people living in war zones and overcrowded refugee camps. May world leaders strive for peace enabling light to shine in these dark places.

Lord we give thanks for the Guild for fun, fellowship and the opportunity we have through our prayers and financial support to promote the Guild projects. We have learned a great deal over the years about the lives and situations of others in need and it has been our privilege for a time to share in their journeys.

Father God we seek now your continuing guidance as we 'Look forward in Faith'
These prayers we offer in Jesus name 'Whose we are and Whom we seek to serve'.

Amen





Loving and almighty God, we would ask your help for our global family. Comfort those who have lost friends and family to this Covid 19 pandemic.

We give thanks to all our services who have got us to where we are now: our carers, posties, medical staff, refuse collectors, bus drivers, staff at grocery stores, farmers, taxi drivers, armed forces, police and fire brigade.

We ask you to take care of all in Women's Aid, Samaritans, homeless and refugee charities, nursing homes and Christian Aid.

We ask you to keep all our politicians and world leaders safe and grant them the vision and wisdom to help us go forward. We ask for your blessing on our royal family.

Help us to remember every day that we are yours.

May your love never leave us. Continue your work among us and help us to appreciate this wonderful world you have created for us.

We ask all this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. One God forever.

Amen

We ask your blessings on all our Guild and individual members both near and far. May they enjoy all the Guild offers, in worshipping together, in fellowship, learning, fund raising, service and fun throughout the year.

We give thanks for all our projects and in supporting them we may play a part in growing Your Kingdom here on earth.

Bless those who hold committee positions nationally and in our Guild branches. Make us all ever mindful that service to you can start right at home in our Guilds by sharing duties and not depending on the few to carry all the responsibilities.

Support our members who are not able to be with us today/tonight. Keep them safe.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus, whose we are and Whom we serve.

Amen



Closing prayers

Dear Lord,

As we come to the close of our meeting today thank you for this time we have had with each other. We are asked not to hide our light under a bushel but to use our talents to help others in whatever way needed.

We ask you to guide us in the days ahead leading us forward in faith.

Thank you, Lord,

Amen.

Lord Jesus, we started our meeting with you and we close it with you. Thank you for the fellowship we have shared and the decisions we have taken. We know you have been with us, guiding us in all we have done and said. May we put in to practice all we have discussed and decided. As we go our separate ways, help us to make a difference to our world. Help us to bring glory to your name and forgive us when we do not. This we ask in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

Amen

Father, you have called us to serve others. Help us to share the love you have given us. Help us to handle difficult people we meet as we go through the next week. Put the right words in our mouths, so that we will not offend others. We know you will never shame us, so forgive us, if we shame you.

Be with our families and friends and keep us safe until we meet again. Be our guide in everything we do. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Benedictions

Open my eyes to people around me; and help me to be aware of their burdens and worries. Encourage me to display my light with humility, and prevent me from hiding it under a basket. This I ask in Jesus' name.

As we leave this place of fellowship let our light shine by doing good works so that others may see your goodness through them. Help us to use the gifts given to us to the benefit of others – not to be concealed or neglected. Be our direction when we feel becalmed in life and draw us closer to you and keep us strong in your heavenly love.

Go in peace to serve the Lord -

The God who called us here is now sending us out, to turn words into action, worship into service, vision into reality.

Together we have celebrated the faith, now let us share it!



Prayers for projects

We know you are with us as we start a new session with new Project Partners. We ask your help that we will learn more about them, wherever they are. Bless them all as they go about their work. Thank you, in Jesus' name.

Amen

God our father, we give you thanks for the links we have through our projects with our brothers and sisters here in Scotland and in every corner of the world. We thank you for the fellowship we are able to enjoy, even at a distance; for what we are able to learn from one another; and for the pleasure and satisfaction we gain as we raise funds for our chosen projects. We are grateful too for the generosity of those around us who contribute in so many ways to our fundraising activities.

Father, we pray for each of our current projects. Grant wisdom and courage to those in positions of leadership and decision-making, that they may steer a safe and successful course under your guidance. Support and encourage all those involved in the projects, that they may come to know you better, and grow in the knowledge, skills and confidence they need so that they may enjoy the abundant life you promise.

(At this point a petition may be included for the project(s) supported by your Branch this year)

We pray too for ourselves. Help us to be open to new learning and deeper understanding. Inspire us with ideas and enthusiasm as we seek to raise funds for the projects. Keep us constant in prayer for our project partners and their aims.

In the name of Jesus, Whose we are and Whom we serve,

Amen

Prayer for the sick

Dear Lord, Whose we are and Whom we serve, we pray for all who are suffering illness, frailty or infirmity, physical or mental. Draw near and stretch out your healing hand to calm any fears and uncertainties and to strengthen them in spirit, that they may find the courage to face each day whatever it may bring. Be with them through the presence of friends and the care of medical staff for whom we pray for understanding, tolerance, compassion and loving hearts.

Lord, we pray for hope where there is despair, comfort where there is pain, peace where there is anxiety and the depth of love which only you can bring.

Amen



Prayer for creation

Generous and Sovereign God. Heaven and earth are full of your glory, inspiring and directing our worship to you our Maker, our Father and our Friend.

Great Father of Glory pure Father of light, dwelling in realms unknown and beyond our sight, you choose to reveal yourself through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful and glad that you forgive and accept all who come into the light of Christ.

Eternal and Loving God, we marvel in the universe you created. The light you created was good. While the moon and stars shine at night as we sleep, you are giving our minds and bodies rest and refreshment, providing strength for each new day of responsibility.

We thank you for earth and sky and sea and all the living creatures they contain. We thank you for the pattern and rhythm of our lives and for our well-being. Above all we are grateful for the light embodied in your Son Jesus Christ, the Light of the one who has lit the lamp of faith in our hearts.

Lord God, we pray you will be a light to all our members, wherever they are, guiding them and revealing to them more of yourself in ways that excite and challenge. Through that light may our faith grow from a spark to a flame. This we pray in Jesus' Name,

Amen

Prayer for the Church of Scotland

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are always in and with our church, the Church of Scotland; that you are our constant companion. We ask your blessing on our Moderator, and his chaplains as they lead us forward in faith. Be with the Faith Nurture Forum and the Faith Impact Forum, as well as all councils and committees as they direct the church through a period of change.

Guide and support our Presbyteries, remembering especially the newly formed Presbyteries as they adapt to a different way of working. Bless the work of our Congregations from ministers to members. Lead them forward prayerfully, and lead them out of their comfort zones in to their communities, so that more people may learn what it means to be a child of God and walk in the light.

All this we ask in the name of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose we are and Whom we serve.

Amen



Prayer for the wider world

Creator God, we pray for your world, this wonderful creation and for all of us creatures who share its space. We rejoice in the good things that this wonderful world provides and give thanks, acknowledging the richness of our blessings.

We reflect on the troubles and inequalities in our world caused by greed, selfishness, wars and corrupt or incompetent leaders and we pray for all those who live in poverty, in fear or without hope as a result. Our prayer for them is for a stable government, fair employers and a more caring and sharing attitude of those who have plenty.

We pray for all caught up in natural disasters such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, typhoons, fire or pandemics. Help those with a generous and caring heart understand what they can do to give help.

Lord, keep us mindful that we share your world with so many other peoples and creatures and guide our actions so that we may keep our footprint small.

Amen





Prayer for young people

Lord Jesus, we come to you with prayers for young people We give you thanks for their enthusiasm; help us to listen keenly to their ideas in this fast-moving world of technology and learning. We thank you that your word tells us that, at age 12, you were to be found in the temple thirsty to learn more about Godly life so we seek to nurture and find ways of growing our young people into a mighty army prepared to lead in this new changing church.

We look forward in Faith to seeing the new fruits ripen into disciples for you, so we simply ask that you shine your light of blessing on young people in all our churches in the powerful name of Jesus we pray.

Amen



SAMPLE WORSHIP 1



Hymn

CH4 252 As a fire is meant for burning

Reading

Matthew 5: 4-16 (suggest from The Message)

Meditation

We are all familiar with this short passage. We have all sat in a congregation and heard sermons on it. The “you” in the passage had a nice comfortable plural nuance about it. It was what “we” should be doing. All very well and good and I am certain we all took this to heart. As a Guild we have shone in some very dark places.

Then came COVID-19 and “lock-down”. All of us found that we were very much on our own. What kept coming to mind was a favourite Sunday School hymn which goes -

Jesus bids us shine, with a pure clear light,

Like a little candle burning in the night.

In this world is darkness; so, let us shine,

You in your small corner, and I in mine.

So, the “you” has now become singular and very personal. The things that each of us do on our own matter to God as much as our group efforts. Every one of us has the power to make this world just a wee bit better, to shine in the dark corners that only we can see.

The passage reminds us that God is not a secret to be kept. If God is in our lives it is definitely okay to tell others in words as well as by our actions. But then we are the Guild and that would be pretty much what we would do anyway, wouldn't it?

Prayer

Lord, we thank You for the lights that have shone in our lives, for those who have helped us when we were ill, when we were struggling with difficult issues and when we just needed a bit of friendly help. Help us to be lights willing to shine for others in their dark times and ready to give help and friendship where it is needed.

Amen

Hymn

CH4 502 Take my life, Lord, let it be

SAMPLE WORSHIP 2



Hymn

MP 631 Tell out my soul.

Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together tonight as members of the ----- Church Guild. Bless each one of us here and those who are unable to be with us, for whatever reason. Thank you for bringing us together to share this time of friendship with each other. May the worship, the speaker and the fellowship serve to strengthen our faith and show us ways in which we may serve you.

In Jesus name,

Amen

Reading

2 Kings 5: 1-15

Reflection

This is a story which we have all heard but perhaps haven't looked at closely. Can you imagine it? A young girl, perhaps only in her teens, trafficked from Israel to a slave market in Syria and sold to Naaman, an army commander in one of the powerful states of the country. She has a very strong faith, never doubting for a moment that God is with her in that place. She becomes the servant of Naaman's wife and obviously settles well into her new life and new role - to the extent that she has a very happy, friendly relationship with her mistress. How different that would have been had she been sullen, unwilling to work and angry about what had happened to her. The story does not tell us but she had obviously been sharing her faith with Naaman's wife. When her mistress shares her anxiety about Naaman's skin problems, the girl tells about Elisha, a prophet in her home area and says that, without doubt, he could cure Naaman. Naaman's wife obviously has a great deal of respect for what her slave has been telling her - if not she would have dismissed the suggestion instead of telling her husband.

As a result of this girl shining her light of faith instead of keeping it hidden, all those involved in the story, Naaman, his wife, the servants who accompanied him, the king - all felt the impact of the young girl who belonged to God - who shared her love and belief in him and who brought others to him. She did not feel she was too young or too unimportant to speak of her faith and through this she brought others to God.

We are never too young or too old either to be used by God to let our light of faith shine in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.



Prayer

Living Lord, we thank you for the example of this young slave girl, whose name we do not know but whose faith enabled her to shine out to others. We pray that we might make the most of the opportunities to shine through our daily lives; to tell others of you and your love and power. Through your Holy Spirit, help us not to be shy or insecure or feel that we are not good enough. Help us, too, as a Guild, that through our work in using the many gifts each of us has, we may shine the light of your wonderful love into many different places.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen

Hymn

CH4 532 Lord, you have come to the seashore.

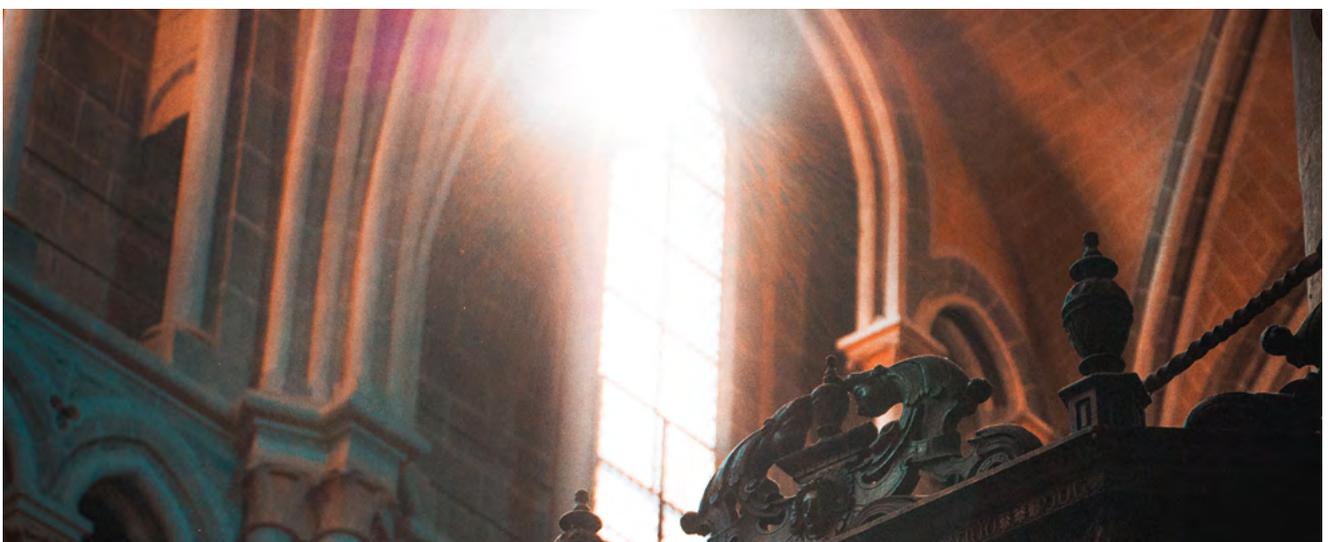
Prayer

Our loving Father God, we thank you that in your grace you shower us with so many gifts; food and strength for each day and rest each night. As you provide all we need for daily living, in response may we offer you these gifts to enable your work to be carried out in this world. We pray for all our Guild projects, for the people working to serve you through them and for all those who will be helped by their work in your name.

Lord you have given us so many talents; each one has something; speaking, listening, sewing, baking, befriending. But Lord you have also given us the gifts of giving and sharing; help us to be happy always to do this to the best of our ability and to rejoice that we can do this in your name.

We ask this through Jesus, our risen Lord and Saviour,

Amen



SAMPLE WORSHIP 3



Hymn

Lord for the years

Reading

Hebrews 11

Reflection

What is faith and how do we define it?

Are we born with faith or is it learned through our life?

How does it affect us?

Faith comes in different forms – having complete trust in someone or something/having a strong belief in God and his promises and trusting his faithfulness. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see and from hearing the message through the word of Christ.

When we are born our parents nurture and care for us and we automatically put our faith in them to guide and teach us the vagaries of life. As we continue our journey through life we face many challenges and how we deal with them can have the greatest impact on our wellbeing. Faith teaches us how to live in the present, not to focus too much on life after death and how we should act towards our fellow human beings with honesty, consideration and concern. In adversity, God hears our cries, invites our doubts and questions, is always faithful and we rejoice in this.

St Thomas Aquinas said that “to one who has faith, no explanation is necessary and to one without faith, no explanation is possible”. It is hard to imagine life without faith because we take things on faith all the time. For example, we would never get on an aeroplane if we did not have faith that it was properly maintained and piloted! This can be said for many aspects in life and to know that our Father is always beside us keeping it all together is very reassuring.

Prayer

Loving Lord Jesus, we put our trust in you. We know you are always with us in the good times and the bad; through the highs and the lows. Sometimes you lead and we follow; sometimes you take us by the hand and we walk beside you and sometimes we are weary and you carry us through our troubles. Whatever the road ahead may be, we know we are safe with you to guide us. Father, we thank you that we can walk in your light always.

Amen

Hymn

CH4 237 Look Forward in Faith

This is a very inspiring hymn and sets out just how encompassing God’s love and guidance enriches our lives and is a wonderful mantra to be shared far and wide.

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 1



Resources

Words of hymn CH4 542 Lord speak to me

A large Torch and a Plastic Bucket.

Some leaflets or information about our brave Christian sisters and brothers who are persecuted
The non-profit group Open Doors can supply information. (<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/>)

Our reflections today take as our “springboard” part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is directing his followers how to live. Our first reading urges His followers not to hide their faith, for he compares this to hiding a lamp under a wooden tub (bushel,) which was commonly used to store dry ingredients, like peas.

Leader

Matthew 5: 13-17.

Hymn

CH4 542 Lord speak to me

Sing or read aloud verses 1 and 2

Leader

Our natural source of light is the sun. Other sources are from candles, oil lamps, and fossil fuel or from the power generated by wind or solar panels.

The purposes of light include illumination and exposure (e.g. dust on furniture, cracks in plaster)

These are two examples from the Bible of people who had something to hide. Once the truth they each had tried to contain was brought into the light, their faith revealed them to be pivotal to the course of the Christian church.

Firstly Peter who hid his allegiance to Jesus.

Then Jochebed who hid her identity as the natural mother of Moses.

Sing or read aloud verses 3 and 4

Bible reading

Matthew 26: 69-75 (Peter’s denial).

Leader - Reflection

Reflection on Peter: Consider among yourselves for a few minutes these questions

How surprised are you by Peter’s actions?

How do you think you would have acted?

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 1



What would you have done with your light of faith? – shine it for Jesus or hide it in any available bucket?

Show your choice by switching on the torch and either placing it on the upturned bucket OR hiding the torch under the upturned bucket.

Sing or read aloud verses 5 and 6 of hymn

Prayer

Lord give us the courage to speak out for you and let our light shine. Help us not to hide it in any “bucket” of fear or embarrassment. May your kingdom grow. Amen.

Reading

Exodus 2: 1-3, 9

Leader Reflection

Did Jochebed more contain her light than conceal it? Discuss for a few minutes:

How sympathetic are you to Jochebed’s actions?

How do you think you would have acted in the knowledge that to be found out would go badly for you?

Can her actions be seen as a dimming of the lamp of faith?

Show your choice by switching on the torch and placing it either on the upturned bucket OR by hiding the torch under the upturned bucket.

Hymn

CH4 448 Lord the light of your Love is shining

Prayer

Lord we pray for those who feel their light barely flickers as they quietly worship and serve you in places of great hostility where Christ and his Church are hated. We thank you for their courage and ask your blessing upon them while facing pressures we know nothing about: danger, torture and even death. We pray that you will make them strong and wise, keeping them safe and filling them with your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 2



Aim

To illustrate the contrast between a life illuminated by Christ's light and one still unenlightened.

Resources

Magazines, photographs or copies of paintings from the internet, or from members' collections. Display these on a table or tables.

Hymn

Songs of God's People 102 The Spirit lives to set us free
Sing or read aloud verses 1 - 3

Leader

Reading Matthew 5: 13 - 17 (read from The Message}

Prayer

Read out loud the words of CH4 543 verse 1 and chorus:
Longing for light...

Leader Reflection

The subject of light is peppered throughout the whole Bible from beginning to end. You will see from the pack that there are many references to light and the essence of light is embodied in Jesus who said "I AM the Light of the world" (found in Matthew chapter 5 verse 13 onwards). This statement is taken from The Sermon on the Mount and comes right at the end of the Beatitudes.

The Message translation of Matthew 5: 13-17 above, clearly defines what our function is as Christians who live in a world which doesn't know Christ. We are to be the God-flavours, bringing out the God-colours to the world.

Hymn

Songs of God's People 102 The Spirit lives to set us free
Sing or read aloud v 4-6

Leader

Exercise 1 Talk among yourselves for a few minutes about any of your hobbies where having a powerful light is essential.

Prayer

Read out loud the words of CH4 543 verses 2, 3 & chorus: Christ be our Light ...

Leader

Ask the members to look at the pictures or paintings and note:

- the colours
- the highlights
- the dark areas
- their impact on the overall work

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 2



Leader - Reflection

If you look at any of the paintings or pictures, there are always contrasts of light and shade which give depth, perspective and dimension to the painting. The great artists like Turner and Rembrandt used this with masterful effect creating atmosphere. In fact, Turner (whose image is on our £20 note February 2020) said, "Light is colour." This means lightening or darkening a colour gives tone and depth to a picture. It can also direct us to the focus and meaning of the painting, as light reflects off things.

Consider the importance of the focus of a picture. When we are called to be God-flavours, we show:

- **How this light and shade reflects our faith in every day circumstances.**
- **How well do you think your faith brings out the God colours in your life?**
- **Does our light help others to focus on the "Light of the world - Jesus"?**

Now think through one or some of the following and discuss: personal problems, national crisis, and world events. Ask yourselves "How easy is it for us to show God-colours in these situations?"

Prayer

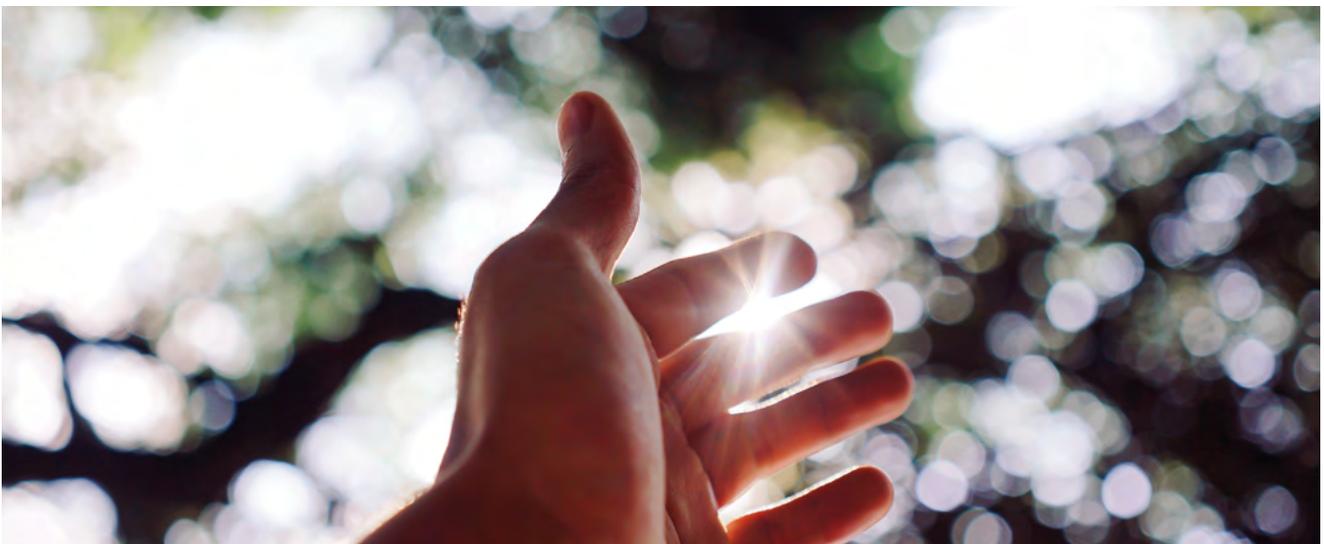
Read out loud the words of CH4 543 verses 4, 5 and chorus: Christ be our Light

Leader

In a moment of quiet ask for God's light to shine on an issue you are presently facing. We emerge from the silence by saying together the Lord's Prayer...

Blessing

May God, our eternal Light, guard and keep us ever more. Amen.



REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 3



Hymn

We are marching in the light of God

Reading

Isaiah 2: 5

Reflection from Margaret Silf (Daily Readings)

I closed my book and turned out the light. It was then that I noticed the night sky bright with starlight. As long as the light in my own room was burning, all I could see was my own room and its messy contents. But when I refocused my gaze to what lay outside and beyond me, my vision was drawn out to a reality far beyond myself and infinitely greater.

Leader

Q1 Do you think much about daylight and darkness?

Say aloud together

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Leader

Q2 Are you switched on to God's revealing power?

Say aloud together

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Leader

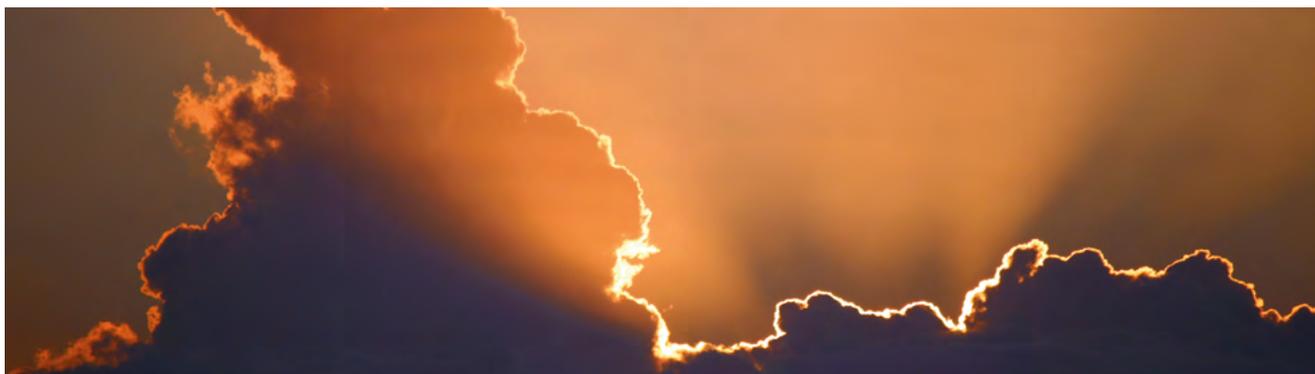
Q3 Have you sensed God pouring more light into your heart?

Say aloud together

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Hymn

Longing for light, we wait in darkness



OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY



Light and Darkness

One of the great themes of Isaiah is spiritual light and darkness. The early chapters of Isaiah include a call to walk in the light of the Lord, and make three strong statements about light and darkness, including a prophecy about Jesus.

Reading

Isaiah 2:5, Isaiah 5:20, Isaiah 8:20, Isaiah 9: 1-2

(Any of these verses could form the basis of a bible study).

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus tells us: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Keep this instruction in mind as you read Isaiah 58: 7-10.

This is a section of Isaiah that scholars believe was written for those rebuilding Jerusalem (late fifth century B.C.). The exiles had returned from Babylon. The hype and excitement of the homecoming had worn off. Now the hard work and drudgery of city renewal laid heavy on the people---it was "Back til auld claes an parritch", and a weariness had crept in.

Popular pious practices became a chance for community-wide self-pity.

In the midst of a criticism against cultural fasting, Isaiah asked a simple question. What was the true spirit of fasting?

To give up food and goods for the needy. [58:7].

In the concern for neighbour, the faithful would shine. Then, God would be present to his people, hear their prayer, and heal the wounds of the broken city. [58:8-9a] Stop the "poor me" attitude, the finger pointing, and back-biting. [58:9b]. Then the gloom and darkness of depression will seem like the noon! [58:10]

Isaiah pointed to positive attitude and charitable action as the ways to shine. Should we not do the same?

Questions for discussion

How can you let your light shine? Or, how can you let God shine through you?



Mat. 5 v 14-15 & Mark 4 v 21-23.

NIV & Message

Jesus 2nd parable Matthew Ch5 v 14-15 says a "City on a hill cannot be hidden". In Jesus time cities were situated on a hill for protection from attack. Jesus is not referring to this but to its visibility because of its elevated position. In the same way a lampstand elevates a lamp for greater illumination. In the same way lampstand is not referring to this but to its visibility because of its elevated position.

Question 1

People do not light a lamp to hide its light under a bowl, rather light a lamp to shed light to everyone in the house. Look at the wording in the Message where it says, Now I have put you on a hilltop on a lampstand. SHINE. Mth.5 16. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven. Is our purpose in witnessing for Jesus (letting our light shine) so that he or we may be honoured?

Question 2

Should we think that the way we live our lives is sufficient a testimony of our Faith or should we be ready to speak out when the occasion arises. Should our witness consist of BOTH deeds and words. Examples?

Question 3

Does the Church today stand out as a light to all people? Surely this is the function of the Church to dispel darkness and lead the World into Light. The Church is not a "building" it consists of ordinary people like you and me.

Mark 4 21-23

Is a lamp brought to be put under a bushel or a bed? Jesus says the Church i.e. God's people are the Light of the World. Our light is to shine before Men. Our lamp will not shine before men if we keep ourselves isolated. Christianity is something which must be seen. Can you think of circumstances when you have shone like a light in darkness, or times when you have blended in with the darkness of the world round about you? I think there are times when we have all done this. When it is easier to say nothing than stand up against the prevailing or popular opinion. As the "Light of the world" we are reflecting Christ's light.

Question 4

A young boy was once asked the definition of a Saint. After seeing so many stained glass windows depicting Saints, he replied. "A Saint is a man a light shines through". Does God's light shine through us? In what way can our light shine? Prayer, financial help for missionaries, personal sharing of the Gospel. Please discuss and add to the list. When we reflect the light of Christ, we pray that people will see our Father's light through us. We are called to be Light in a world that is in darkness, so that all people may join us in the praise and worship of God. You are the Light of the World. Go forth and shine.

DRAMA 1



You will need 3 people to take on the various parts

Shine a Light

Convener

Secretary

Committee member

Convener

Committee member

Secretary

Committee member

Final Syllabus Planning Meeting

You will all have the skeleton of our syllabus in front of you with 90% of the dates filled. Just 4 dates to fill.

Supplying speakers for approximately 20 meetings is onerous so we thought 3 or 4 "in house" days would solve our problem.

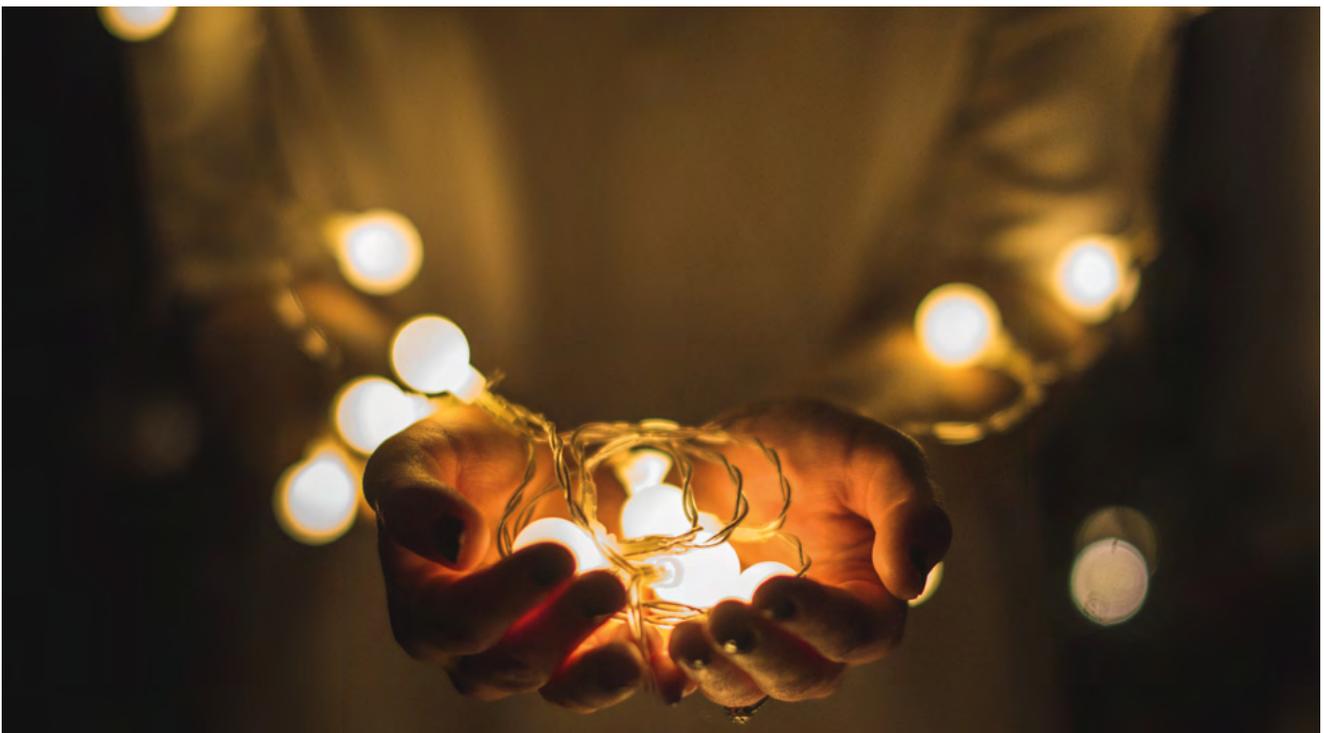
Could we maybe have a Topsy Turvy Day?

What Do you mean?

Well we would change "jobs" for the day so enabling us to learn what the other persons job entails.

Would changing bring a fear of not doing well enough and being a failure?

I don't think so, most probably the opposite, I think it would be great. Maybe even fun and give everyone a good laugh! Let's just have faith in God's leading. He will shine his light and release his power. He gives all we need in every situation. Can I be Secretary?





Light Under a Bushel

Set around 3 sides of a table at a Guild Committee Meeting with notebooks, bible, etc.

Convener	Dorothy (quite pompous)
Secretary	Betty
Treasurer	Gladys
Project Partner	Jessie
Committee member	Mary (quiet one)

Dorothy	We have had the minutes and reports so now we can arrange the next Guild meeting when our Speaker will be our own minister on our Theme for this year. I will lead devotions as always and Betty will you give the intimations. Gladys I will give you the Bible reading nearer the time if you would do that as usual.
Gladys	Sorry Dorothy I won't be there as I am away on a cruise.
Dorothy	(Sigh) Oh dear who is going to take your place? (pause)
Mary	I could do that.
Dorothy	Thank you Mary. We are desperate! Jessie will you do the Vote of Thanks
Jessie	Sorry I can't as Mabel our Tea Convener is going into hospital for a small op. So, I'm in charge of the teas.
Dorothy	(tuts) We really are struggling.
Mary	I could perhaps manage to do that too!
Dorothy	Oh good. Now I will give our pianist the hymns I have chosen in advance.
Mary	She is playing for a concert that evening so won't be there.
Dorothy	I feel let down. (pause)
Mary	If you really are stuck I can play for the hymns.
Dorothy	Well you have kept your 'light under a bushel'. Why have you not volunteered before now?
Mary	You have never needed me or asked me!! (Dorothy just shakes her head)

OTHER IDEAS FOR MEETINGS



Remember that your members are gathering for an evening of fellowship and socialising. You may have to lay out a little to buy resources, but it will be less than the expenses of a speaker. Enjoy your sessions.

A games night

Get a collection of games and place tables around with a different game on each table. Folk rotate around the room so they get a shot of as many games as you can fit into your time.

Our favourite hymns

Ask members to pick a hymn related to the theme and ask them to talk about it or even bring in a recording or maybe sing it.

Create a playlist

Sally Magnussen told us about her charity which helps those with dementia reconnect with their loved ones via shared music and songs.

Ask members to choose a playlist of at least four songs and choose one as having a story. Play that song, if you can, at the meeting and ask the member to tell the story behind their choice.

Favourite holiday destinations

Instead of asking folk to do a whole evening using their holiday photographs, get people to talk about what they like about a destination they have travelled to. Pre-warned, in case anyone wants to bring a photograph, but limit to only one or two.

Childhood Christmases

How do you remember Christmas when you were a child, or as a young person? How does it differ from nowadays? What was the best present you ever received?

Comparisons will be interesting. Give people a time limit, so you can get through everyone.

Recipe session

Ask people to bring along an item of baking and the recipe. This gives an enjoyable tasting and ask for donations to the Projects, for a copy of the recipe.

Photos of places in the area

If you have a willing photographer in your Guild or congregation, ask them to go around the area taking photographs from unusual angles. Folk then have to guess where they were taken. You will, of course have to print out the photos, or show them on a screen using a laptop.

Theme tunes

You can obtain quizzes online of TV Theme tunes or there are CDs, you can buy or even record some yourself. This is fun and wracks the brain!

OTHER IDEAS FOR MEETINGS



Poems from across your life

Ask members to select a poem or Bible reading that has been meaningful to them and some point in their lives. In small groups ask them to share and say why they chose it.

Guess the advert

Cut out an advert from a paper or magazine, but remove the name. Place them on the wall or pass them around, numbered and you have to guess what they are advertising.

Guess the first line

Play the first line of a hymn or Christmas carol and ask folk to name, or write the first line. If you have time you can also tell them something interesting about the hymn or it's author.

Poems from across your life

Ask members to select a poem or Bible reading that has been particularly meaningful to them and some point in their lives. In small groups ask them to share the poem or reading and say something about why they chose it.

A craft night

There are many crafts you could try but this one fits in well with the theme.

Simple painted pebbles

Materials needed:

- Smallish flat pebble
- Paints - Any household emulsion colours and children's paints
- Small head paintbrush, felt-tip pens, clear nail polish

In groups, discuss the talents/good qualities of the group members (we know how reticent Scots are about stating their own!).

Then two could work together to produce a pebble for each other. Such a satisfying way to recognise everyone's talents. For the back why not use the Bible verse that the theme centres around.

Sponsored silence

Each person should have a sponsor sheet and, on the night, show a film approximately 1 hour. Amazing to see how many will struggle to stay quiet!

OTHER RESOURCES



Music

Beth Nielsen Chapman
There's a Light (from Deeper Still 2002)

Van Morrison
Whenever God shines His light (from Avalon Sunset 1989)

George Harrison
The Light that has Lighted the World (from Living in the World 1977)

Poem

The Light that shines in the Darkness
Justin Farley (from Along the Barren Road 2015)

Hymns on YouTube

Take our bread, we ask you,
Light a little candle
Many are the light beams from one light

Videos on YouTube

Hiding your Light under a Bushel
from Reading Between the Lines 195 and speaklife.org.uk

Hymns online

You can now access a range of hymns on the Church of Scotland website <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship> where you can register and then access a wide selection of hymns from CH4 with music





The Courage to Change

“Change is inevitable, change is constant.” (Benjamin Disraeli)

Background

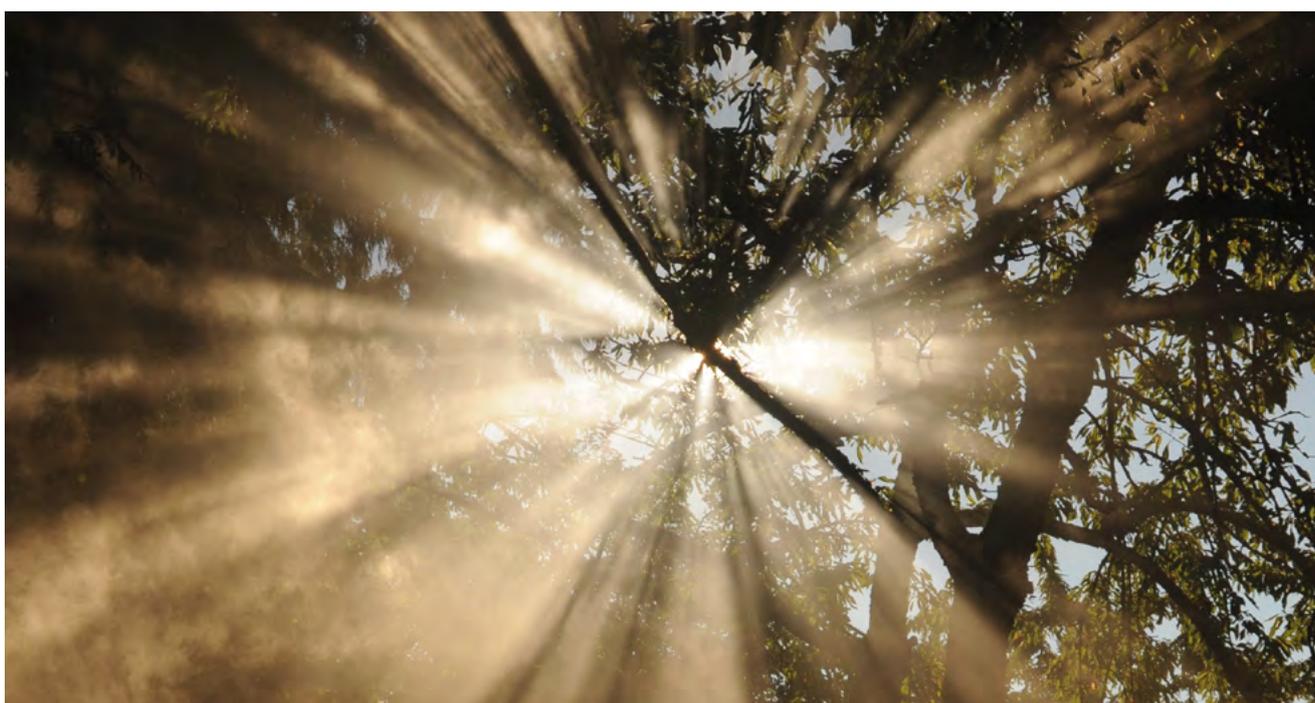
The material in this section is designed to help you towards discussion. It is not meant to be a Bible study. We are at the beginning of our new three-year strategy, “Look forward in Faith” and looking forward implies moving on, making progress and with this undoubtedly comes change.

We have known change would happen in the church and the Guild for some time, but now it is staring us in the face. Change is a natural, if not always easy, part of life. Solomon said there is a time for everything under the sun and everything he mentions has to do with change.

Everything that happens in this world happens at the time God chooses.

(Ecclesiastes 3: 1)

Change can be upsetting when we think our whole life will be turned upside down but probably only part of our lives will be different. We might think change will not be good because we are thinking about only the immediate differences and not the long-term effects, “the big picture”. Changes in life are inevitable and constant, and most work out in the long run. If we want to leave a Guild for future generations then we need to prepare and plan ahead always guided by the Lord, Jesus, whose we are and Whom we serve.





Using our talents in a time of change

Suggested Hymns

CH4: 502 Take my life, Lord, let it be

CH4: 251 I, the Lord of sea and sky

CH4: 505 All that I am

CH4: 544 When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there.

CH4: 237 Look forward in faith

Suggested Bible readings

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-15

1 Peter 4: 10-11,

Romans 12: 3-8,

Matthew 5: 14-16,

1 Timothy 6: 17- 9,

James 2: 14-26

Leader

Share these quotes

Your talent is God's gift to you, what you do with it is your gift back to God. Leo Buscagelia

God gave you talents to benefit others not yourself and God gave other people talents that benefit you. Ken Boa

Time is your most precious gift, because you only have a set amount of it. Use it wisely.

Rick Warren

God has given each one of us unique abilities, talents and gifts. The question is, how do we put them to work/use? Do we hide them and keep them to ourselves or share them with others?

We all have something to give or share, and God gave us these abilities for the purpose of serving Him and serving other people. Most of us are not proficient in every skill or area of Church / Guild work, but we all have something to share no matter how insignificant it may seem.

Paul wrote: There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to all for their particular service. (1Corinthians 12:4-7)

It is said that a spiritual gift is not the same as a natural talent however if God gave you a wonderful voice why not sing out, if you are artistic use that gift perhaps with youth work or flower arranging. If your skill is listening, the pastoral care team may be glad of your services, the list is endless but you need to be prepared to step forward.

Does it matter whether we have been given just a few gifts, talents, skills or many? What matters to God is whether we make good use and share what we have been given.



Hopefully as you are sharing together this discussion topic, things are more or less back to 'normal' or a 'new normal'

Covid 19 is/was one of the biggest challenges to society in living memory, and the reaction to it shines a light on how we live and work today. Did we leave a legacy we can be proud of?

In groups:

- Q. How did you react to the changes you had to make during the lockdown and exiting the lockdown period e.g. did you miss the birth of a grandchild, that cuddle – a special anniversary or holiday – a funeral of a loved one? What memories do you have?
Share your story with others in your group, the happy or sad times.
- Q. What did you find the most difficult challenge/s during this time? How did you use your 'spare' time?
- Q. Were you surprised at finding skills or talents that you renewed or never thought you had?
E.g. getting that old sewing machine out of the loft, virtual communicating, what on earth is Zooming! Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity, to accept the things I cannot change ...

Courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.

Trusting that He will make all things right, if I surrender to His will.

That I may be reasonably happy in this life,

and supremely happy with Him forever in the next.

Reinhold Niebuhr

DISCUSSION TOPIC



Gifts or talents, may lie undiscovered for years, and then emerge when a certain situation brings them to light

Write a list of what YOU think your talents/skills/gifts are.

Now ask the person next to you or the group to write down what THEY think your talents/skills/gifts are. Are there some surprising differences?

It maybe that others will see a gift in you before you do!

Use the chart below to list YOUR gifts/talents and how YOU can use them in the different settings. Then if you find you are not putting these to use, step forward and offer these for the Lord's ministry. Don't hide your light under a bushel!

GIFTS	GUILD	CHURCH	COMMUNITY



Changes are taking place both within society and within the National Church, over the period of the Coronavirus we certainly changed as a society. Most of us would agree we became a caring community but is that still existing today? In the 'Lockdown' how were you 'The Church'?

Sing or read together the 1st verse and chorus of CH4: 204 I am the church, we are the church

What does the Bible say about serving others? Every member of the body of Christ (the Church) is called to serve. Here are some Bible passages to share:

Matthew 5: 16

In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven.

Matthew 25: 40

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

John 13: 34-35

"I give you a new command; love one another, just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Discuss in groups and feed back to other groups

- Q. What changes if any, did you see in the way society in general cared for others during the pandemic?
- Q. Churches should have a 'whole life' rather than a 'church' life concern. Do you agree?
- Q. William Barclay said "A Christianity whose effects stop at the church door is not much use to anyone" What changes if any, did you or your Church /Guild make to support or be more visible during the pandemic? Are these changes still ongoing or have we returned to our previous 'comfort zone'? There are so many ways, places and times we can use our talents in the Guild. What could we do to help? What is needed? If we are happy to talk perhaps we could help lead the meeting or we could meet and greet the speaker. If we are good at organising maybe we could do the tea rota. A very important job which someone needs to do.

There will be something that each of us can do. So let that light shine! Don't be afraid to offer in case you are rejected. Your offer to help will be welcomed. If someone has been doing a job for a long time, they would welcome help or even maybe go in to retirement.

Closing prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time together to share experiences and think of the way ahead for the Guild. Be with us as we make our plans to take us forward and bring us safely through the coming week till we meet again. Amen

