



WEE SEEDS, BIG TREES





WEE SEEDS, BIG TREES



Exploring the theme

The Guild has got talent! During last year, with our first year's theme of Lights and Bushels, we used our talents and the Guild is now shining in more places, with a light seen by more people. Now we are ready to move to the next stage and continue to grow the Guild even more.

Our theme for year two of our Look Forward in Faith strategy is, Wee seeds, big trees. As I write this, it is autumn 2021 and the farmers and gardeners are thinking of beginning to plant for next year's harvest. What we plant now will bear fruit in the future. In the same way we need to plant seeds which will grow the Guild. We need to plant to provide for future generations.

Unlike previous themes which have their origin in a particular Bible verse or passage of scripture, Wee seeds, big trees explores the idea of growth, physical growth and spiritual growth. We are where we are because of the people who nurtured us both physically and spiritually to make us the person we have become.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are references to the planting and growing of seeds. The beginning of something which with God's care will flourish.

In Genesis, God promises Abram that he will be the seed of a great nation. Abram looked forward in faith and obeyed God; or the prophet Ezekiel who was instructed by the Lord to plant a shoot from a tall cedar tree which not only grew but produced branches which then grew to provide shelter for birds of every kind.

In the New Testament, the parable of the mustard seed is perhaps the most appropriate of all the passages to illustrate our theme.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of all garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches. (Matt 13: 31 – 32)

The mustard seed represents the kingdom of God. It is the smallest of all seeds, but in time becomes the largest of trees. The parable reminds us that although the kingdom of God started small, with only Jesus and the disciples, it has spread worldwide and now has countless followers.

This is how we need to grow the Guild, a movement which provides a welcoming place and a place of fellowship and shelter for our members.

Contents

Wee seed, Big trees	2
Bible readings	4
Suggested Hymns	6
Prayers	7
Sample worship	15
Reflective worship	20
Bible study	28
Drama	31
Ideas for meetings	33
Other resources	35
Discussion topic	37

WEE SEEDS, BIG TREES



I hope you will find the material in the Theme Guide a useful resource for Guild meetings. Perhaps some of the material will act as a seed, which can be taken as a starting point and grown into something bigger, for example, an idea from one verse of scripture may grow with God's help into an opening worship or a Bible Study.

Just remember, as Paul said about himself and Apollos,

***I planted the seed, Apollos watered it,
but God has been making it grow.***

(1 Corinthians 3:6)

It is the same with our seeds, they will only grow with God's help and guidance.

Helen Eckford

National Vice Convener with responsibility for resources



BIBLE READINGS



What does the Bible tell us about 'Wee seeds, big trees'?

In the Old Testament

Ezekiel 17:22

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain.

Job 8:7

Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be

Job 17:9

The righteous keep moving forward, and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger.

Genesis 17:1

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, Walk before me faithfully and be blameless.

In the New Testament

Matthew 17: 20

He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

2 Corinthians 9:10

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

1 Peter 2:2-3

Like new-born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Colossians 1:10

So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

In the Old Testament

Genesis 5: 21 – 24

Enoch walks with God

Genesis 6: 9 – 22

Noah and the flood

Daniel 6: 1 – 28

Daniel in the lion's den

Psalms 1: 1 – 3

Trusting in the Lord

In the New Testament

John 21: 1 - 14

Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish

Luke 8: 11 - 15

The parable of the sower

Matthew 13: 31 - 32

The parable of the mustard seed

John 6: 1 - 15

Jesus feeds the five thousand



Readings from different translations

Hosea 10: 12 Good News Bible

Plough new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness, and reap the blessings that devotion to me will produce. It is time for you to turn to me, your Lord, and I will come and pour out blessings upon you.

Hosea 14: 9 The Message

God's paths get you where you want to go. Right-living people walk them easily;

Psalms 1: 1 - 3 New English Bible

Happy is the man who does not take the wicked for his guide, nor walk the road that sinners tread nor take his seat among the scornful; the law of the Lord is his delight, the law his mediation night and day. He is like a tree planted beside a watercourse which yields its fruit in season and its leaf never withers: in all that he does he prospers.

Mark 4: 30 - 32 The Living Bible translation

Jesus asked, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story can I use to illustrate it? It is like a tiny mustard seed! Though this is one of the smallest seeds, yet it grows to become one of the largest of plants, with long branches where birds can build their nests and be sheltered. "

2 Timothy 1: 5 - 7 The Message

That precious memory triggers another: your honest faith – and what a rich faith it is, handed down from your grandmother Lois to your mother Eunice, and now to you! And the special gift of ministry you received when I laid hands on you and prayed – keep that ablaze! God does not want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible.

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

SUGGESTED HYMNS



	CH4	CH3	MP	OTHER
Oh God you search me and you know me	97			
All things bright and beautiful	137	154	23	
Lord your hands have formed this world	140			
Oh, the life of the world is a joy and a treasure	141			
Great is thy faithfulness O God my Father	153		200	
Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder	154		506	
Sing to God new songs of worship	173		600	
God of great and small	174			
For the beauty of the earth	181	367	152	
Art thou afraid his power shall fail	190	194		
Let us build a house where love can dwell	198			
The Spring has come	224			
God who made the earth	228	151		
We plough the fields and scatter	229	620	732	
When your father made the world	239			
It's a world of sunshine, a world of rain	245			
As a fire is meant for burning	252			
The reign of God, like farmer's field	343			
In our lives plant seeds of hope	349			
Tree of life and awesome mystery	401			
Now the green blade riseth	417	278		
Will you come and follow me?	533			
O holy dove of God descending	591			
Holy wisdom, lamp of learning	604			
The bright wind is blowing	607			
We cannot own the sunlit sky				2
God's will for creation				44
Touch the earth lightly				134
Colours of day			1039	22
Lord of life				73



Calls to worship

Heavenly Father, you are wonderful in everything you do. You give us the gifts of seeds and guide us as workers in your garden to carefully nurture them, so that they may flourish and multiply and produce plentiful crops through your glory. May your Spirit strengthen and support us, as you are Lord of All.

O Gracious Lord, we ask that you will watch over us and allow the seeds of grace that You give us to grow and flower and fruit in the full Christian life that You intend for us and help us to embrace the dawn of each new day in the knowledge that we belong to your family.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.
(John 15: 4 - 5a)

So then, just as you received Jesus Christ as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
(Colossians 2: 6 -7)

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27: 1)

Opening prayers

Loving Father, we come before you with thanks and grateful hearts. You are the light of the world. Help us to let our light shine for you. Forgive us when we fail you; when we are more concerned with material things than spiritual things. In this troubled world help us to use our talents and skills to share fellowship and love with others. Help us to grow our faith as we work to grow your kingdom here on earth. As we follow the example of Jesus your son, we pray that everyone we have contact with will feel peace and joy in their hearts. Amen

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all your goodness to us and for our Guild meeting here today. Help us to know your presence and to leave with you all our anxieties and worries of this busy world.

We confess that we are not always the people you want us to be or the people that we ourselves long to be. Forgive us and bring us new peace and wholeness in you.

Lord, help us to sow seeds of our faith so that by our service and actions we can help others to know your goodness.

We ask this in Jesus name. Amen

Thank you, God, for the gifts you have given us. Help us to use them and not to hide them away.

PRAYERS



Help us to grow our faith and share our faith with others, so that they too will come to faith. May our smiles and words of welcome, our care and compassion shine from us and be a beacon of your love, shining out in to the darkness. This we ask in the name of Jesus, whose we are and whom we serve. Amen

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are a gracious and compassionate God, abounding in love. We enter your gates with thanksgiving and your courts with praise. May you dwell in our hearts through faith so that we are grounded in love and strength to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge. We thank you that you hear and answer our prayers and that your presence calms the troubled world and speaks peace to our souls. Clear our minds and hearts and be with all who need your guiding hand today/tonight and always. Hear our prayer for we ask it in your name. Amen





Offering prayers

Heavenly Father,

We thank you that we are able to gather together, for the privilege of learning through the Guild Projects of the lives and situations of those we support and the opportunity this affords us to serve you.

Lord we are often amazed at the innovative ways Guild groups raise funds, showing that from Wee Seeds can come Big Trees.

Generous God the giver of every good gift, we ask you to accept these offerings that they may benefit others and be to your glory. Amen.

We give you but your own oh Lord as everything we have has come from your bounteous hand. We are sorry that often we take your many gifts to us for granted and often we use them for our own selfish purposes instead of using them for the benefit of others. Forgive us for our lack of understanding and compassion for others. Help us to open our hearts and minds to the needs of others and through your Holy Spirit make us clean and new again. Amen

Loving God, we bring these gifts of money, and our time and talents, asking that they be used as wee seeds to grow, with your blessing, into the big trees of love and caring that will make your world a better place. Amen





PRAYERS



Intercessory prayers

We pray for the Guild.

The last few years have been difficult for everyone.

We are in the second year of our Strategy – Look Forward in Faith, a title which couldn't be more apt.

Starting back last year for some Guilds could have been very difficult – do we start back at all, do we change from meeting at night to an afternoon,

Are some of our members, due to ill health or frailty, unable to return to the Guild.

We pray for your guidance that we can grow back from wee seeds to big trees again.

In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.

Dear Lord, we ask your blessings on all the services that help to make our lives better, NHS, police, fire service, to name but a few.

Be with all those in troubled situations, through drought, flooding or war and comfort them.

Thank you for your love and guidance throughout our lives. Help us to support the projects chosen by the Guild. Guide all the members, office bearers and leaders of this great movement.

Bless our Royal family, government and world leaders. Keep them safe and guide them to lead us forward.

We ask this in Jesus name. Whose we are and whom we serve.

Amen.





Loving, caring God, we ask you to care for those whose lives have been spent working for you. Guide and bless all ministers in our church in Scotland and in churches throughout the world. Be with all missionaries as they do your work in places and in circumstances which are sometimes not safe for them because of violence or disease. Help leaders in our own Guild to listen to you and follow the right path to lead us forward in faith. We pray too for the staff at Guild office who work constantly to keep the Guild moving forward. This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen

Living and almighty God, we ask you to hear our heartfelt prayers for courage to live in these strange times. We remember everyone in the Guild, from our National Convener to members living all over the country either on the islands and highlands to the cities, towns and villages.

Father you have called us to serve others, the young and the elderly. Help us to get back to meeting our friends at Guild meetings face to face, sharing the love that comes from you as we journey along the road of life. Help those who are not as fortunate as we are here in Scotland. Bless them while they face dangers and protect everyone now living a better life. Keep them safe, provide them and ourselves with our daily needs.

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



PRAYERS



Closing prayers

Loving Father, we thank you for the fellowship we have enjoyed at this meeting. We thank you for your presence with us and your guidance in all we have done. Be with us now in the silence which follows our meeting. Speak to us as we reflect on what we have seen and heard. Keep us safe in the knowledge that your love for us is constant. Remain with us this night and always. Amen

Gracious God, we worship you for the ways in which you see our possibilities: leading, guiding and nudging us forward, despite our occasional reluctance. Sometimes the seeds of hope are buried within hearts which are cold, lacking in courage or lacking in faith. We ask that your Holy Spirit will give us the necessary boldness to speak for you and the devotion of heart to live for you. Small though these gifts are of our hearts and wills, we offer them to you, in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

As we come to the end of our meeting we thank you for your presence with us. We thank you for the time we have shared together, for the fellowship we have enjoyed and for what we have learned from our speaker, Stay with us as we return to our homes and families and keep us safe until we meet again. This we ask in the name of your son, Jesus, Whose we are and Whom we serve. Amen

Benedictions

As our meeting closes may we look forward in faith with awareness of God's hand in our lives and His care in all we do, and of the life that He enriches with his love that keeps our faithfulness alive in us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit Amen

Lord may the gift of Your Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit help the seeds sown in our hearts today grow and bear good fruit, as we go from this place to further Your Kingdom here on earth Amen

May God bless us as we leave this place and be with us as we journey. Give us the strength, through the Spirit, to be kind and caring disciples of the living Lord Amen

May the God of love and hope be with you and remain with you in the spirit of the Guild, to guide, unite, invite, listen and deliver.

Lord, help us to rely on You as we travel forward growing big trees from wee seeds.
Through Christ Jesus, Amen

As we look forward in faith together with enthusiasm, may God bless us with the gifts to grow stronger allowing us to flourish in faith, hope and love.

May the peace of God, whose we are and whom we serve, be with you now and always. Amen



Prayers for projects

Heavenly Father who cares for everyone, we would ask your blessing on our project partners.

Keep safe the Chocolate Heaven team making a difference in SE Asia.

Help the Vine Trust Kazunzu village project as they provide a loving home for orphans in Tanzania.

In Brazil bless the Unida team as they encourage and equip young women for your service and leadership.

Strengthen the Starchild team as it strives to help and educate disabled children and their communities in Uganda.

BEAT informs, advises and supports those with eating disorders, grant them wisdom.

Inspire folk to consider fostering a child through Home for Good. Amen

Heavenly Father, who cares for each and every one of us wherever we are in the world, we would ask your blessing on our project partners as they strive to do your work, often in dangerous or difficult situations. Help them rise to the challenge whether it is to house orphans in Tanzania, change lives with chocolate in SE Asia, support and equip young women for leadership in your service in Brazil. Here in Scotland inspire folk to consider fostering vulnerable children and gain insight into the plight of those with eating disorders. The Guild can be a radical voice for change – equip us to be your voice. Amen

Prayer for Scotland

Lord be with us as we pray for Scotland.

Open our eyes to see not only nature's beauty but also the inventions and structures you have made possible. May we use them to your glory.

As a nation we are inquisitive and many have left our shores to settle elsewhere. In return nationalities with different cultures have come to live with us creating the Scotland of today.

Lord your word came to us via the small island of Iona.

Lord we are your living islands, help us to plant your wee seeds of grace across our nation. Amen

PRAYERS



Prayer for the wider world

Lord, Jesus, we pray for your world, lovingly and wonderfully created. We thank you for the beauty which we see all around us. We ask you to help us to be good stewards and to look after our planet. Remind us to use resources wisely because we have plenty while in other lands people are struggling to survive. We look at the suffering in the world and we ask you to inspire us to help in some small way. Help us to challenge those who are aware but do nothing. This we ask in your name. Amen

Prayer for those who are sick

Loving Lord Jesus, who healed the sick, be with all who are suffering whether from illness in body or mind. Give those who are sick the strength to recover in the knowledge that you are ever close to them. Be with those who care for the sick whether at home or in hospital. Guide them as they bring relief. Be with those whose illness cannot be cured. Be with them and comfort them in their suffering. Grant them your healing and peace. Amen

Prayer for young people

Father God, we pray for children and young people, for our children, grandchildren and others around us; for those in our congregation, community and nation; for the youth of the world.

Keep them from harm, and help them grow strong and healthy in body, mind and spirit. As they learn about the world around them, may they also learn of your love and come to accept your son as their saviour and lord.

Guide and sustain all parents, carers, teachers and others charged with protecting and nurturing the young, and help each of us to play our part.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

SAMPLE WORSHIP 1



Hymn

CH4 229 We plough the fields and scatter

Reading

1 Corinthians 3: 4-9

Reflection

Everything we do in our daily lives God is in charge. Dr Charteris sowed the original seed when he started the Woman's Guild (now The Guild). The seed grew, put down roots, a strong tree grew and formed branches with dedicated committee members. The Branches carried out God's work and became an important part of the Church of Scotland.

We have celebrated nearly 135 years of fellowship with God's love and guidance. Over the years we have been involved helping others both practically and financially and in more recent times through our Projects. The fellowship we have in the Guild is very special as we share our faith, our prayers, our talents and our dedication to God's work.

Although Dr Charteris sowed the seed of the Guild and we have watered it and fed it but God has made it grow.

Prayer

Loving God, we give thanks for Dr Charteris who had the idea to plant the seed, and for all the members over so many years who have given of their time and talents to the Guild. We think of all the people in this country and the wider world who have benefitted from the Guild and hope your love has been shown to them through our endeavours. As we look to the future we pray that the branches will continue to flourish and perhaps more seeds may be planted.

Whose we are and Whom we Serve, Amen

Hymn

CH4 182 Now thank we all our God



SAMPLE WORSHIP 2



Hymn

CH4 153 Great is thy faithfulness

Reading

Daniel 6: 1 – 28 Daniel in the Den of the Lions

Reflection

Daniel has been placed in a position of great power by Darius the king, almost the equivalent of what we would understand as the prime minister. Daniel is by this time in his life quite an old man. This shows us that age is not a barrier in the service of the Lord. This will strike a chord with many of us, as Guild members, who are not known for being of a young age. Daniel was faithful into his old age; he practiced his faith consistently, praying several times a day. Daniel teaches us the importance of a lifetime of faith and obedience to God and the importance of not being prevented from following God's Word and his ways, regardless of our circumstances.

Prayer

Father we thank you for our faith which is our rock in times of trouble. We have seen our faith grow over time from a tiny seed planted in childhood or in later life. It does not matter when the seed was planted but that with your continued presence in our lives, it has grown from something small to something significant. We thank you for those who planted that seed. We thank you for their faith which they did not hide away but shared with us and with others to grow your kingdom here on earth. We ask that like Daniel we will put our trust in you in times of trouble. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Hymn

The Lord's my shepherd (And I will trust in you alone) Stuart Townend version

SAMPLE WORSHIP - STARCHILD



Hymn

CH4 268 O God of Bethel By whose hand thy people still are fed

Prayer

Gracious Lord, our God,

When we come together in your name to share time with one another in the presence of your spirit, we hope to have our hearts open, our minds clear and our understanding receptive to what it is you might want to gift us this day/evening.

For that, it helps us first to set down our burdens of the day, as much as that is even possible, for many a time, they seem very heavy indeed.

We appreciate that you help us with them, although we certainly do not always feel this, and we give thanks for that help, without which we could feel truly lost.

We thank you also for the many different ways in which help comes to us from others, who act, like your guardian angels, as your helpers and our friends; our loved ones, too.

Help us now to focus on the issues that are in front of us during this time, in the knowledge that you do, indeed, love each one of us as though there were only one to love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord: Amen

Readings

Psalm 52:8,9, Psalm 104:16, Proverbs 15:4a, Job 14:7-9, Ecclesiastes 11:1,2^a, Mark 4:30-32

Reflection

When you have a heading like “Wee Seeds, Big Trees”, the parable of the mustard seed must be one of the first scripture references to spring to mind.

There will be others, such as the parable of the sower, whose seeds fell among various kinds of places with matching consequences.

But, when you look for instances where trees are mentioned in the Bible, you very quickly come across all sorts, as well.

In both cases, the symbolism is clear, even if the imagery is used in different ways.

Seeds and plants of all sizes have been with us forever, and we understand them almost instinctively. At least, we do, unless we live in some of the multimillion inner cities where children rarely see either, except perhaps on television.

Of course, we know that the mustard seed is by no means the smallest seed there is. But it is producing such big plants in proportion. At any rate, we get the picture!

What is becoming more and more clear, thanks to modern science, is how incredibly complex trees are. The more we discover about their workings, both above and below ground, the more they strike us as the astonishing and pretty much miraculous organisms of life they are.

SAMPLE WORSHIP - STARCHILD



You could think similarly about seeds; any seeds really, for they all share this incredible power that is the determination to be born; to come to life by the presence of water, light and warmth.

It takes the most amazing burst of energy, after which there is a short period of rest, until the process of sustained growth must be secured for the plant to grow.

Someone once asked: "What is the purpose of human life on earth?" And the answer was: "To develop and grow, and to help others to do the same".

Now, clearly, this is going to mean different things to different people in all sorts of contexts, and it can never be the same for even just two individuals, let alone thousands or more. But that does not invalidate a) that it is what we are here to be and do, and b) that we are most definitely charged with helping others.

When you live in a global world, and the difficulties of humanity are so very clear in front of you, ranging from the largest to the smallest of scales, it can become very disheartening to think anything could be done to change any of it.

But, not so we are reminded.

Every one of us can make a difference.

Of course, we are presently hearing quite a bit about this in connection with extremely pressing environmental issues, but it applies to many other aspects of life, as well.

Generally, life will present us with opportunities to make a difference to others, one way or another.

Then, it is simply a case of allowing engagement to happen; of saying: yes, I will give help here, because I can, and I want to.

Yes, I will help with the necessary elements that I can bring as the equivalent of lifegiving water, light or warmth, because I can, and I want to.

That is all it takes, in essence.

We may not see the tree fully grown, or even half grown, but if we don't plant the seed, there will never be any growth at all.

Anyway, all harvests do not belong to this world, or even our understanding - there are other spheres which are no less important or valid, just because we cannot grasp them, so we do well to be mindful of that, too.

If anyone offers us to plant a seed of help, let us plant it with faith, hope and love, so that it may burst into life and grow, faithfully supported, into a healthy, strong sign of life.

Then perhaps we can say, with the psalmist: "I am like a spreading olive tree in God's house, for I trust in God's faithful love for ever and ever. I shall praise you forever for what you have done, and glorify your name among your loyal servants, for that is good." Ps 52:8,9

With this, we cannot go wrong: Amen

Prayer

Lord God, we give thanks that you never tire in your love and care for us, and especially not when times are hard and painful.

Help us to reflect some of that love in the ways of which we are able.

Grant us your guidance, and discernment to know where best to engage, and protect us from

SAMPLE WORSHIP - STARCHILD



impostors who would mislead and abuse the generosity of others.

If we can enrich even one life, we will have been glad to share some of what we have and are, with joy and thanksgiving for the presence of your Spirit with us, for that is good, as the psalmist says.

Then receive from us now these and all the unspoken prayers of our hearts and souls at this time, and unite us in your love forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord: Amen

Hymn

CH4 497: Almighty Father of all things that be, our life, our work we consecrate to thee.

Also, possible:

CH4 229: We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land





REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 1



Setting the scene

For Reflective worship online or in person, consider the layout of the meeting room, the lighting and for this worship have a flowering plant or fresh flowers in a prominent position.

Opening reflective praise

The Lord's my Shepherd (Stuart Townend version).

Play, sing, say or show youtube video of the first verse and refrain.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may we be ever mindful Lord, of your Holy Spirit working within us, helping us to grow in you. From wee seeds of faith, big trees can grow. In Jesus name, Amen.

Second verse and refrain of opening reflective praise.

Leader Reflection

In our reflective praise we are drawn to the image of Jesus as our Shepherd the one who fulfils all our needs, the one who guides and leads us and the one in whom we can put our trust.

In Matthew's Gospel we are told that with just a little faith we can move mountains. As we put our trust in God, like seeds we too will grow, develop, and emerge.

We must do whatever we can to ensure that faith grows. We must nurture faith and that may mean having to prune, root or cut down just as we do with a tree.

May we, nourished by God, grow stronger in our faith, and have the confidence to speak of our Lord in a meaningful way and so fulfil our calling as a people of God.

From small beginnings, big things can grow.

Reading

Matthew 13:31-32

Reflection

From small beginnings, big things can grow.

- Consider what we need to grow in our faith.
- How does faith grow and develop?

Reading

1 Corinthians 3:6-9

Hymn

CH4 463 Fairest Lord Jesus

Closing prayer

Lord as we put our trust in you for everything, may we, led by your Spirit, plant those wee seeds of faith. As we go out into your world, may we be the vehicles that nurture and help those seeds become big trees. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 2



Resources

Words of hymn 349 (CH4) 'In our lives plant seeds of hope'; fir cone and its seeds

Leader

Our reflection centres on the fact that ideas, thoughts and actions, however small, can inspire, encourage and grow into meaningful and often great things.

Sing

Chorus, verse 1, chorus of hymn 349. Alternatively read aloud as follows -

All – chorus

Leader - V1

All – chorus

Reading

Mark 4: 30 - 32

Reading

Matthew 17:20

Leader

A seed carries within itself new life. Paradoxically the seed has to be buried before it can bring forth that new life; as a result, seeds and those who sow them are often used metaphorically in the Bible to convey ideas. The mustard seed is mentioned several times as a symbol of faith - a symbol of faith in Christianity but it is also known to signify good luck in the secular community. Mustard symbolises warmth, creativity, optimism and diversity - qualities you would find in every Guild!

Taking our theme 'Wee seeds, big trees' literally, think about the giant sequoia tree, the size of the cone then the size of the seed and try to imagine the size of the tree and some of these facts - Giant sequoias are protected and never stop growing until the day they die. They are among the oldest (2100 years) widest (35ft across) and tallest (around 260ft) trees in the world - ALL from a tiny seed. Take a few minutes to reflect on this - germination, growth, nurture, resilience, fortitude; the shelter, sustenance and protection it can give during its lifetime and can you make the analogy with a life of faith?

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP 2



Sing

Remaining verses and chorus of CH4 349 delivered as before

Reading

Luke 8:4–15 the parable of the sower and the seeds

Leader

Take a few minutes to think about and discuss the seeds of an idea, seeds of a thought, a small action in your own or in the lives of others and where these have led.

For example

- The single action of Rosa Parks in Alabama, and its contribution to the Civil Rights Movement.
- Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow's idea for Mary's Meals
- Greta Thunberg and the now global action against climate change.
- The Rev. Archibald Charteris and his idea for the formation of the Woman's Guild

Prayer

Lord, give us the courage to hold true to your teachings and the strength to hold fast to our faith so that, in our own small way, we can make a positive contribution to your wonderful creation. Amen

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP - PIONEERS



Resources you will need

A sheet of paper and a pen for each person; a small plant pot, a bag of compost for each table and some seeds (of your choice).

Introduction

'Wee Seeds – Big Trees' is a really apt title for Chocolate Heaven, since the project depends so much on a good harvest of cacao beans to make the delicious chocolate they produce possible. And even more importantly, God promises that the wee seeds of the Gospel that Paul and Sarah and their team plant day by day will grow into big trees one day in the lives of those that receive it gladly.

Over the course of this year in the Guild, I'm sure we will look often at the parable of the sower and the seed, found in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels. This parable talks about the sowing of the seed of the Gospel and the potential harvest of faith and lives given to Jesus that could be reaped in due course.

But let's reflect today about big trees. Because wee seeds need to grow in order for them to fulfil their purpose and become big trees. Have you ever planted seeds that didn't grow? What went wrong? Did you forget to water them? Was the soil not great? Or did they just not grow? How does a wee seed become a big tree? The Bible has something to say about that in Psalm 1 – let's read the first few verses of that now:

Reading

Psalm 1: 1-4

Leader

For us to grow into big trees for God, we need to be planted by streams of living water – putting down good roots into God's Word, the Bible, and spreading out the branches of our lives to dwell in His light and in the air of His Holy Spirit.

Activity

As a reminder of our need to grow from a wee seed into a big tree, we're going to plant a seed today to take home and nurture into a plant. Take your plant pot, fill it two thirds full with compost and push a seed down into the middle of it, then give it some water when you get home and look after it until it grows into what it is meant to become. As it grows on your windowsill use it as a reminder for you to be planted by God's streams of water – His Word and His Presence.

Leader

Do you notice the downward progression in the psalm that takes us to the point where we wither in our faith? Walking in the counsel of the wicked... standing in the way of sinners... sitting in the seat of scoffers? In other words, getting more and more sucked into unhealthy situations rather than walking past and away from sin at the first hint of its pull. How do we react when we hear a juicy piece of gossip, for example? Or when we have the opportunity to get ahead of others by being somewhat unethical in our choices? Do we slow down our step and stop in our tracks to hear more, to engage further? Or do we refuse to walk in the counsel of the wicked, far less stand or sit in the sinful situation we are being offered?

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP - PIONEERS



Activity

Take your piece of paper and draw a big tree on it, complete with roots, filling the page with the tree. Something like this... (or you could copy this on to paper and give one to everyone with the tree already there.

- On or near the leaves/fruit write down some of the things that God has helped you to do over the years that have been fruitful for Him
- Draw some leaves on the ground and write beside them some of the things that have caused you to struggle in your faith or where you have followed that downward progression Psalm 1 talks about.
- Write by the roots some of the things you have done – or could do – that will help you to grow stronger and bigger in your faith and relationship with Him.
- Take some time to pray on your own, thanking God for the growth and the fruit He has given you, asking His forgiveness for the things you have done that have caused the leaves to fall to the ground, asking for His help to continue to stretch your roots down deep into Him, through reading the Bible and spending time talking to Him in prayer, and worshipping Him alone or with others.



Song

Read your Bible, pray everyday

Leader

We need to focus on stretching our roots down deep into Jesus and ask Him to help us to stand tall and straight for Him in every situation. Spending time with Him each day is the best way to do that. He is our firm foundation in shifting sands. He is our strength and hope and when the storms rage, He is strong to save.

Hymn

Forever Jesus (this can be found in a search or YouTube) or Christ is made the sure foundation
CH4

Prayer

Father God, we thank you for the seeds of salvation that have been planted in many of us here and all across the world. We ask that you would help us to water those seeds in our own lives and to put our roots down deep into Your Word, the Bible. Help us always to stand tall for You, like trees planted by streams of water, and help us to bear fruit that pleases you and to share that fruit with others around us, so that the seeds we plant from that fruit will grow in our friends and neighbours. So, may we together with them become a forest of tall trees for Jesus in our community.

We pray too for Paul and Sarah and the team at Chocolate Heaven, that they too will first of all remain rooted in You and bear much fruit, and then that the seeds they plant in their employees, friends and neighbours will fall on good soil. May they see many people giving their lives to You and have the privilege of reaping a wonderful harvest of new followers of Jesus.

We ask all these things in the name of our precious Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP - THE VINE TRUST



Aim

Through aspects of Nehemiah's story consider how God uses wee seeds to plant trees with large branches; and how He connects people to change lives.

Resources

Items that could be projected on screen could include the flag of Tanzania; pictures of our ships Jubilee Hope and Forth Hope, individual family homes built in association with the Tanzania Women's Research Foundation (TAWREF), and the Kazunzu Village of Hope. Other resources could include the latest news letter from the Vine Trust. All of these are available from the website at www.vinetrust.org.uk.

Hymn

CH4 694 Brother, sister let me serve you

Prayer

Eternal Father, maker of heaven and earth,
we bless you and give you glory.
Bless us in our work and sowing of your love and witness
here in our parish and beyond.

Take the seed of our service and make It fruitful.
Look upon our work this season / year
and grant that the seeds we plant
will produce plentiful crops,
providing blessing, encouragement, fellowship and nourishment for many.

All praise and glory are yours, almighty Father,
through your Son Jesus Christ,
In the unity of the Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading

Nehemiah 1:1-5; 2:1-5

Reflection

While a great historical narrative, the Book of Nehemiah is not just about an inspirational leader who oversaw the rebuilding of Jerusalem's broken-down walls, it is about God's faithfulness, His call to action, people responding and the huge team effort which saw not only the rebuilding of stone walls, but the rebuilding of a community.

Vine Trust volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Many, people of faith – some not. Each having a concern for people, each feeling called to act to help strangers in need, perhaps acting on a sense of injustice when looking at the difficult situation fellow human beings are experiencing day by day.



REFLECTIVE WORSHIP - THE VINE TRUST

While King Artaxerxes heard the plan from Nehemiah's lips, the initiative and motivation behind this vision was God's. This story is a testament to God's faithfulness and an excellent example of people's faithful response to Him. Some people would have joined the work to bring glory and honour to God through the restoration of the Holy City, others would have helped because it was a worthy cause and others would have assisted because they saw that the job just needed done in a practical sense.

'From wee seeds to big trees.' The Vine Trust is an international, but still very rooted, charity based here in Scotland. Now operating medical ships and services on two continents; building family homes, children's centres and even a new mini village with all amenities; providing volunteer opportunities to churches, schools and others; partnering with governments, local authorities, churches and Christian charities abroad, the Vine Trust started with very local roots. All of the current work stems from a small fundraising card shop in Bo'ness operated by the local church.

God responds to the needs of people through the Vine Trust today by recruiting and mobilizing Christians, working alongside other concerned people, to change lives in Tanzania and Peru - and indeed here in the UK, as being part of Vine Trust work parties has changed the lives of so many volunteers.

Reading

Nehemiah 12:27-31

Reflection

In Nehemiah 11 and 12 Jerusalem's walls have been rebuilt. Now the people and their community are being rebuilt spiritually. In this our final passage we see Nehemiah gathering the people together in praise and thanksgiving to God. A job well done despite the scale of the task and the difficulties encountered. Nehemiah's vision has come to pass by the grace of God and through the people working together for a purpose.

As we finish, however, we should return to the beginning and look at who Nehemiah was in the lead-up to all that he, in God, achieved. He was not a spiritual leader or prophet, nor was he even in the building industry! He was a slave in the service of a foreign king. Not the start you'd expect from one who achieved so much. But Nehemiah had faith in God and he prayed passionately. These prayers brought about great change. Moreover, Nehemiah got his own hands dirty, working, supervising and motivating to bring about his goal, the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Volunteers with the Vine Trust do amazing things with us and often work well beyond their comfort zone. They may help to build houses but they are school pupils, housewives, plumbers, teachers, office workers, unemployed, farmers ...in fact from any aspect of life. Vine Trust medical trips, of course, attract people with more specific skills and qualifications. God can and does use ordinary people to achieve extraordinary outcomes and it is He who deserves our praise ... He, Whose we are and Whom we serve.

REFLECTIVE WORSHIP - THE VINE TRUST



Prayer

(Read aloud the words of Mission Praise 792)

You are the Vine,
we are the branches,
keep us abiding in You.
You are the Vine,
we are the branches,
keep us abiding in You.

Then we'll grow in Your love,
then we'll go in Your name,
that the world will surely know
that You have power to heal and to save.

You are the Vine,
we are the branches,
keep us abiding in You.

Amen

Hymn

Facing a task unfinished MP 126



OLD TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY



With the revolving planets and a new day dawning every 24 hours; from the extremes of the southern hemisphere, to the west coast of America in the northern hemisphere, new seeds are planted every minute of every day. From little acorns grow mighty oaks!

Take a moment or two to think about when you have planted for regeneration, either literal seeds or seeds for the Lord.

Read and discuss Genesis 12: 1 – 20.

God makes promises to Abraham that he will be the seed of a great nation. Mind blowing! God promised to bless Abraham and make him great, but he had to do what God wanted - to be obedient. The new way of working in the church and the Guild during the last year have called us to change; to sow seeds in a new way.

Have you been challenged to take up a new place of service for God?

Has God called you out of a comfortable place to serve him in a new way?

The passage tells us that Abraham had to change his plans because of famine. This led to mighty provision by God.

When you look back:

Who first planted the God seed in your life?

How did you tell your family and others about your faith in God?

Was it easy and part of your everyday life?

Did your family always say Grace at mealtimes?

Did you say prayers with your children at bedtime?

Closing prayer

We ask God to bless all seeds that have been planted in his name and pray for the next generation, born and unborn. Help us to listen to your still, small voice and be obedient to the instructions, however difficult it may be. Bless those who turn us into seeds for the growth of God's kingdom.

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY



Matthew 13: 31 - 32

"He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

"Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

If you can have some seeds as an example, some small paper cups with a little compost available so each person can plant one or more, depending on the type of seed. A sunflower is a good choice planted in the spring, so folk can take it home. You can then ask them to bring them back or a photograph of the plan later in the year. Maybe a wee prize for the tallest. Or you could plant bulbs in a bowl for Christmas.

Read the passage and have copies available so folk can refer to it.

Ask whether anyone has a garden and is a keen gardener.

Has anyone taken up gardening as a new hobby.

Break into groups for the discussion.

What are the main problems of gardening?

What are the benefits of flowers?

Does anyone grow their own vegetables or tomatoes and salad?

How much work is involved after you have planted them?

How patient do you need to be?

Have a short time when you can get feedback from each group.

New questions:

Why did Jesus use this as an example for a parable?

What did he hope they would take away?

How can we today put this parable into practise?

Are we spreading seed to help the Kingdom of God to grow?

How can we in the Guild help to spread the Word?

Feedback from the groups

Prayer

Dear Father God, help us to plant small seeds among our friends, so that we can spread Thy Word and enlarge your kingdom. May the work of the Guild at our meetings and through the Projects, show your love of all, those with faith and those without. May our deeds be a light and show that the very smallest seed can grow into the largest tree which can shelter all.

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY FROM BEAT



Introduction

There are many examples of healing in the New Testament, many carried out by Jesus Himself or those performed by His followers. In the days before pharmaceuticals and the modern medical care we take for granted, these events took even greater significance and gained enormous attention and huge crowds. We all seek to be healed and whole. However, our human frailty means that sickness is unavoidable this side of heaven. Let's look at a well-known passage in which a high-ranking man seeks healing, not for himself, but for his desperately ill son.

Reading

John 4:46 – 54

Questions

- How does suffering yourself differ from watching someone you love suffer? Can you think of examples in your own life? Can you relate to the royal official's urgency?
- What does Jesus mean when he says "unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe?". What kind of tone do you think Jesus might have used? Exasperation, or something else?
- This passage is often used to demonstrate the power of faith, in that it took great faith for the man to take Jesus at His word and not insist He visit the son. The official had presumably tried to get help elsewhere for his son. Do you take your problems and fears to Jesus FIRST, or as a last resort?





Scene:

food bank in a church hall

Mary

Aren't people generous donating all this food to people they don't know.

Margaret:

Yes, I often wonder what kind of people get this food. There seem to be more and more people using the food bank. I know Ann says everybody has to be referred by someone like a social worker but....

Mary:

Aye, you wonder why they have to ask for food. It's a perfect disgrace in this day and age that we need food banks but I wouldn't like to think of anybody going hungry. It must be especially hard if you have bairns.

A young man enters

YM:

Hello, is this the food bank?

Margaret:

Yes. Can I help?

YM:

Yes, I'd like to donate.

Margaret:

That's kind of you. How did you hear about us?

YM:

Three months ago, I got food from here. I had lost my job and got to the end of the little money I had. I had to wait until my Universal Credit came through and I was worried that I would lose my flat too. I've always worked hard and I've never been unemployed before so it was a bit of a shock to find that I couldn't pay my rent and had no food. The social worker told me about you. It felt like begging but I had no other option. It was like going to the supermarket but without paying. I couldn't believe that ordinary people could be so kind to people who are struggling.

Margaret:

That's how we act out our faith, helping others less fortunate.

YM:

The food I got gave me strength to keep going and I applied for every job I could. Within a week I'd been offered a job. I've been working again for two months and I'm back on my feet so I'd like to give something back to say thank you.

Margaret (taking the envelope):

Thank you for this and for sharing your story.

YM:

Thank you again and goodbye.

YM leaves.

Margaret opens the envelope.

Margaret:

Have you seen how much money's here?

Mary:

Goodness, think how many more folk we can help with this.



DRAMA 2



Wee seeds, Big trees

Location: a room anywhere, where 3 or 4 people are meeting

- Person 1** Hello everyone. Hope you are all well and had a lovely holiday break. Isn't it wonderful that we are able to meet as normal, and the Guild can meet once again?
- Person 2** It has been a trying two years. So, let us concentrate on our new theme. Any ideas anyone?
- Person 3** Well, it is certainly an unusual topic that requires some thought.
- Person 4** What are they expecting us to do? Plant trees like the whole country is doing for the Queen's Platinum Celebrations!
- Person 2** That is a thought, we could get all the Guilds throughout Scotland to plant a tree celebrating their Guild. We could get the Guild office onto this idea!
- Person 1** I actually think we need to think of other things. Though that is a good idea about the trees.
- But we need to 'plant' a seed in our brains to get something to grow that will help the Guild.
- Person 4** We could plant up bulbs for our older Guild members that are no longer able to come to meetings. They can plant flowers according to the season.
- Person 2** How about an evening where members are given the challenge to name as many British trees as they can, you would need a book on British trees. Maybe or a word search, or in anagram form.
- Person 3** That would be fun and a light-hearted meeting.
- Person 1** We could also ask members to tell us stories about any tree adventure.
- I have one but I will leave it for the meeting.
- Thank you all for coming.

OTHER IDEAS FOR MEETINGS



Ice breaker / intergenerational

An urban myth

It is often said that the older generation do all the talking and the younger generation don't listen. Let's prove them wrong. A young person teams up with an older person (preferably someone they don't know). Introduce yourself to each other. The young person tells the older person something interesting they have done, (gone to a new school or college) or seen (I went on holiday to...) The older person listens and feeds back the information. If there is time you can do this the other way as well.

Family tree

Why not invite someone along to your Guild who has researched their family tree and who would be willing to tell you about it. Or a speaker from a local historical society who would be able to tell members how to go about researching their own family tree.

Alternatively ask members to sit in small groups of two or three and share something of their own family story encouraging them to go back as many generations as they are able and to say how their family has grown and developed. Have they moved from somewhere else or have they always stayed in the same place, have jobs in a family gone from generation to generation, were you the first person in your family to study after school. These are just a few suggestions. We are sure the conversations will grow from these little seeds.

Intergenerational Meeting

Leader to invite two or three teenagers to meeting from local secondary school or Church Youth Group.

Each one to talk briefly about an environmental issue that they are particularly passionate about challenging.

One could talk about why little seedlings should be planted to satisfy the theme "wee seeds, big trees" and how the environment benefits.

The other one/s could discuss discontinuing the use of plastics as this is a favourite with the young.

Each could also discuss how they deal with the major problems for the environment.

They should be prepared to answer questions, bring along examples and helpful ideas to the meeting to share with the Guild members.

At end of the meeting the leader could read "The Green Thing".

For some fun and to comfort the members that "in their youth" they actually did behave in an environmentally friendly way.

Tree photos

Encourage members to bring in photos of trees, flowers or plants that they have taken or someone in their family has taken. They can then share when it was taken and something about the photo. of course have to print out the photos, or show them on a screen using a laptop.



OTHER IDEAS FOR MEETINGS



Bulb competition

At the start of the session give each member a bulb and encourage members to plant it and then by the end of the session (or at an appropriate time) encourage them to either bring their plant in and award a prize to the best plant.

Seed planting

Have a supply of small plant pots and some compost enough to give one to each of your members. As people come in, give them a packet of seeds (or a seed). Alternatively, you could have big planters that people could plant together and could go outside the church. Or you could plant particular bulbs to give to another person.

Leader (or whoever is taking the meeting): A seed is full of potential and hope.

Leader: Hold your seed(s) and ponder. What might God be saying to you? What hope does God have for you and your future?

Ask people to think or write down or draw their thoughts.

Leader: What prevents the seed from sprouting - what stops us from hearing God's call?

Discuss

Seeds need the right conditions to grow.

Where do seeds of hope need planting in our lives?

Discuss

Where do seeds of hope need planting in our community?

Discuss

Where do seeds of hope need planting in our country?

Discuss

How can these seeds of hope be nourished in our lives; in our community; in our country?

Discuss

Pray for these places and situations...

Silence

Take these seeds and plant them as a reminder of God's constant love and our hopes.

Tree quizzes

A selection of quizzes can be found on the Guild website.

OTHER RESOURCES



Book and poems

Books which might help to develop our own faith further and give us the confidence to help others to grow.

- “Small Beginnings: A Journey to the Impossible” by Sara Thurman who pens her inspiring true story of becoming an artist by pursuing God’s calling.
- “You’re an Angel – Being Yourself and Sharing Your Faith” by Peter Neilson and David Currie.
- “Embracing your Second Calling” by Dale Hanson Bourke.
- “Finding Sanctuary” by Abbot Christopher Jamison.
- The tale of three trees on Bible.org
- Family tree by Ron Tanner

Music

Music is an amazing thing. The songs you listen to can change the way you see the world. The right inspiring lyrics or motivational songs can provide a quick pick me up to motivate you to accomplish your goals; or just a reminder about appreciating the beauty of the world that we live in and provides that little lift that we occasionally need. The difficulty will be finding music that everyone will enjoy! It does not need to be limited to traditional or even modern Christian hymns. The development of a symphony through all the movements may be a joy to some, but not to others.

- “Symphony No 41: Jupiter” Amadeus Mozart
- “The Planets” - Gustav Holst
- “Symphony No. 9: New World Symphony” Antonin Dvorak

Or even a single piece of music such as “The Lark Ascending” by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Songs or music from extravaganzas like “Riverdance” or “Starlight Express” might lift your heart. Pop songs can sometimes include inspirational life words or may just have an upbeat rhythm that has you tapping your feet.

- “Happy” - Pharrell Williams. “Because I’m happy”
- “Walking on Sunshine – Katrina and the Waves. This is just a great feel-good song.
- “Where is the Love?” – Black Eyed Peas. Focus on your objective, don’t waste your energy on the things you can’t control.
- “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” – Monty Python. Focus on the positives.

Ask members if there is a particular song or piece of music which brings them pleasure because it is only when we are feeling positive ourselves that we will feel strong enough to take on our Christian challenges.

OTHER RESOURCES



Websites

For some simple inspiration it is worth checking
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) (<https://ctbi.org.uk/>)

It is also worth looking at some existing ecumenical initiatives such as
“Fresh Expressions” (<https://freshexpressions.org.uk/>)

Poems

The Little Plant (Anon)

In the heart of a seed,
Buried deep, so deep,
A tiny plant lay fast asleep.
“Wake,” said the sunshine,
“And creep to the light.”
“Wake,” said the voice
Of the raindrops bright.
The little plant heard
And it rose to see,
What the wonderful,
Outside world might be.

The Seed (Anon)

You take a little seed and put it in the ground
Spread a little bit of love and cheer all around
Plant a little kindness from above
and you’ll have a garden made of love

Tend it patiently in prayer
Root out the weeds of doubt and care
Trust God’s Spirit from above
To feed and nourish the seed of love

Tend the garden through and through
As Jesus Christ directs you to
Pour forgiveness all around
And you will have a fruitful ground



Faith and Change

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3: 5 – 6)

Introduction

The material in this section is designed to help you towards discussion. It is not meant to be a Bible study. As we begin the second theme, Wee seeds, big trees, in our strategy of Look forward in Faith, we continue to think about how we grow the Guild as a movement. How we recognise that it is our responsibility to leave a movement for future generations.

In the discussion topic we will think about how our own faith has grown and perhaps changed through the years. We think about how our faith has helped us to deal with so with many situations in our lives. Our faith has helped us deal with changes, sometimes changes which we would not have coped with without God's help.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus told his disciples to, "Go and make disciples!" To go and do God's work! 2,000 years later, we should be ready to go and work for Jesus, Whose we are and Whom we serve. To move forward in faith. To make changes, not for the sake of change, but to prosper the Guild. "Go!" is an action word. Our aim as a movement includes the word "action" accompanied by worship, prayer and fellowship.



DISCUSSION TOPIC



Topic 1

How did your faith grow? Is your faith still growing?

Suggested Hymns

CH4 231 For the fruits of all creation

CH4 530 One more step along the world I go

Bible reading

Mark CH 4: 1-9 Parable of the Sower

Faith for many is very personal. We need to be sensitive to people's feelings and to realise that some are more willing to discuss sometimes personal or sensitive issues than others. It is good to have an icebreaker to introduce the topic and involve everyone.

Ice breaker

Ask members to bring along to the meeting a picture of when they were a baby/child.

In groups, place photos on table and guess who the photo belongs to.

How can a Christian grow in faith? Simply put, to grow in faith means to grow spiritually. It is to mature in both knowledge of God and to live your life in a Godly way. Just as a person grows physically from a baby to an adult, a Christian requires to grow spiritually.

We are called to be sowers of the seeds of faith, we may never see the harvest of what we've sown, but if we don't plant the seed there won't be a harvest. Below are some points to discuss in your group about who planted the seeds in your Christian journey and how have you grown? Some may have been planted when you were a child, some in your later years and some are only just beginning to grow. Use this discussion time to share with others, **how you grew and are you still growing.**





Quotes

Faithful to All, God encourages us to grow proud and tall, and to show our Faith in our words, and in our actions. (Dr D Jeremiah)

Like a muscle needs exercise to make it stronger, you need to use your Faith to make it grow stronger. (J. Wellman)

Discussion in groups

If time permits share some of your thoughts with other group(s) are there similarities? No one should feel under pressure to talk. We know our own members and should avoid putting anyone on the spot. Allow people to choose which group they belong to, this should help them feel more at ease.

- Did you come to faith as a youngster or later in life?
- Who/What first planted the seed in your faith journey? (parent, teacher, scripture camp, Guild, etc.)
- When did that seed of faith become more productive & why?
- Along that faith journey, who/what made a difference?
- How much have you grown as a Christian or has your growth been stunted?
- Share ideas that can benefit ways to keep your faith growing.
- Have you an example to share of how you planted a seed in others that produced a good harvest?

Sometimes in the process of change our relationship with God grows stronger because we put our trust in Him.

Closing prayer

Dear God, thank you for helping us make it through this difficult year. Thank you for carrying us through uncertainty and worry and sorrow and pain. Thank you too for the times when we have been able to share joy and fellowship with others. Help us to stay focussed on you and forgive us for giving too much time to other things and coming to other people for advice before coming to you. Thank you for your constant presence in our lives. We feel safe in your hands and we look forward to all you have planned for us. This we ask in your name. Amen



DISCUSSION TOPIC



Topic 2

Coping with change

Suggested Hymns

MP 133: Father, I place in to your hands
or CH4 237: Look forward in faith

Suggested Bible readings

Ecclesiastes 3: 1 – 15
Hebrews 11

Here are some quotes about change from well-known people. Do you agree or disagree with what they say?

When you are finished changing, you are finished. (Benjamin Franklin)

Those who cannot change their minds, cannot change anything. (George Bernard Shaw)

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present, are sure to miss the future. (John F Kennedy)

Discussion

1. How do you feel about change?
2. Do you welcome change?
3. Do you find change stressful or do you embrace change as a way of moving forward?
4. Think of a change which has happened in your life. How did you cope with it?

There are about 15,000 Guild members across the UK. Unfortunately, numbers are falling. We can be negative about this or we can be positive and ask how we stop the decline. If we want to stop the drop, we need to change along with the rest of the church. That means some things cannot be as they have always been. How do we begin to change? The Managing Change document (Mission and Discipleship Council now part of the Faith Nurture Forum) suggests we should:

1. Give people space and time to talk. Be prepared to listen and help people work through their feelings. It is not easy to change.
2. Give everyone the chance to speak. The voices which are heard most often, may not be the majority.
3. Communicate. People may complain they do not know what is happening, so we should make sure everyone knows what is happening and is involved in the decision making

(See the Church of Scotland website: Resources: Managing Change ... for more information)



Further discussion

Either in groups or in one large group talk about how we would begin to make changes.

1. Talk about what might happen if we don't change. We should be honest and develop trust with one another.
2. Talk about what we want the future to look like. What is the big picture?
3. Begin by taking small steps in the right direction. After the first step, the next steps will become clearer.
4. When will we feel that we are going in the right direction?

Many Guilds have already made changes which have brought positive results. Which changes have been successful?

- What did you do?
- Why did you do it?
- How did you do it?
- Will you share your success?

We have a responsibility to leave a Guild which is fit for purpose; a Guild for generations to come. How many generations does the Guild go back in your family? Do you hope your children and grandchildren will be Guild members?

Closing prayer

God of love you are with us in every stage of life. Through every transition and change you are there to guide us. We are aware of your constant compassion, presence and love. We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have blessed us. Our faith will grow, as we put our trust in you. In the name of Jesus, Whose we are and Whom we serve, we ask you to lead us forward in faith. Amen



