

Come and See

Small Group Leader's Guide

**COME
AND
SEE**

About Come and See

Life is very difficult in this time of pandemic. Many people are asking deep questions of faith. They're wondering about their purpose, the meaning of life... asking questions of eternity and suffering and hope.

How can we get through the months ahead? What will the world be like after COVID? Where can we find the inspiration and strength to rebuild? What will help our children and families to stay together? Where can we find truth and a foundation for living and a future? How can we break down the isolation in our communities, so they are places of friendship not fear?

Through the lockdown, many people have begun to look at Christian faith and to look to the church. It's said that up to 1 in 5 of our online congregations were not regular worshippers before COVID. They need to be offered an opportunity to explore the faith.

At the very beginning of John's gospel, there's a story about two people who see Jesus in the distance and start to walk behind him. They're hesitant and they don't push themselves forward. But Jesus turns around and says to them:

"What are you looking for?"

They say to him: "Teacher, where are you staying?"

Jesus says, "Come and see".

There was nothing coercive about the way he engaged with them - only a gentle,

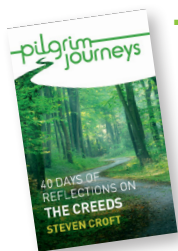
gracious invitation to come and see, to hang out and find out more.

"What are you looking for?"
They say to him:
"Teacher, where are you staying?"
Jesus says, "Come and see".

And it's a warm, open invitation. If you were to meet Jesus today, he might ask you the same question: "What are you looking for?" What are your deepest needs, your deepest questions? And then he might say 'come and see, just take the next step, why not look a bit closer?... walk with me and let's start a new adventure together in faith and trust.'

As a Christian leader you know that our Christian faith is for everyone. So Come and See is for anyone and everyone who wants to explore what a journey of faith might look like for them.

About this guide



This guide is designed for church leaders and Come and See course organisers. The following pages provide a five-session framework that can be used in a small group setting. It is designed to be used alongside the new *Pilgrim Journeys: the Creeds* materials available from Church House Publishing.

The 40 reflections from the book are emailed to those who've signed up for Come and See, together with an audio recording (see below). Your church may find it helpful to bulk order some copies for your congregation and enquirers.

Order bulk copies of *Pilgrim Journeys: the Creeds* online from

chpublishing.co.uk/features/pilgrim-journeys

Remember to invite your regular congregation to take part in Come and See too! Come and See can be used in support of people who are:

- Finding out more about Christian faith
- Questioning faith
- Exploring their faith afresh.

Three core resources for the church and those participating

Come and See takes place during Lent. In the weeks leading up to Lent participants will have received the Come and See testimony films and weekly emails.

Each of the materials below are available to participating churches two weeks in advance. Look out for the weekly email for organisers with the details.

Daily Pilgrim Journeys email

Starting on Ash Wednesday, participants will receive a daily email with the reflection and audio recording from *Pilgrim Journeys: the Creeds*. You could also provide them with a copy of the booklet – ordering details above.

Weekly video from Bishop Steven

Starting on Sunday 21 February, participants will receive a short film (also available as a podcast and online audio) via an email telling the great story of our faith.

Contemplative Toolkit sheets

Come and See integrates five complimentary practices from our new Contemplative Toolkit (published this Spring). The sheets, which you can find in the following pages, are suitable for enquirers and also those with an established faith. They can be used by individuals or when you meet as a small group.

We recommend that churches offering a Come and See small group gather online for up to an hour each week to share in discussion about these resources.

Five sessions

Session 1: I Believe in God, Father Almighty

Session 2: I Believe in Jesus Christ

Session 3: He was crucified, died and rose again ...

Session 4: I Believe in the Holy Spirit

Session 5: The Church and the forgiveness of sins

There isn't an exact match between the focus of the daily reflections material and the five group sessions described here, but overall the sessions and the daily reflections should work well together. Remember too that some people in your group may not be using the daily reflections or have time to read them all.

The basic format of each session follows the same pattern each week.



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week (5 mins)



Question – Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further ?



Reflect – Using the Contemplative Toolkit (10 minutes)

Leader preparation

Leading a small group online works well by using 'flipped learning'. Encourage the group (send them a reminder) to watch the film and/or read the written outline before they join you online. Encourage them to make a note of questions they want to explore further, when they watch the film.

The questions shown in [square brackets] can be used if there are people in your small group who already have a faith.

Read through each of the five contemplative practices of the toolkit so that you feel comfortable leading it for others. You'll find each sheet in the pages that follow. When you lead the exercise, you'll need to allow plenty of time for pauses, silence and reflection.

The Contemplative Toolkit



Session 1: I Believe in God, Father Almighty
The stilling practice: lovability and the goodness of creation

Session 2: I Believe in Jesus Christ
The dwelling practice: the life-changing life of Jesus in Scripture

Session 3: He was Crucified, Died and rose again
The mending practice: acknowledging pain and realising hope

Session 4: I Believe in the Holy Spirit
The noticing practice: God's voice in our lives

Session 5: The Church and the Forgiveness of Sins
The blessing practice: Blessings received and offered

Faith companion (optional)

The role of Faith Companion is a good way to accompany anyone who would like a personal contact point*. We recommend that the faith companion(s) also attend small group sessions.

Why have a faith companion?

- To offer a personal contact with someone who can provide encouragement and informal discussion
- To help someone to explore where they are in the faith journey
- To walk alongside someone who is exploring faith

What is their role?

To accompany people on the journey to faith, offering:

- Welcome
- Encouragement
- To listen and explore questions or point to the person who can help (you are not expected to have all the answers)
- To pray for the person they are supporting
- If the church is providing a small group/lent course the companion may also join these meetings.

Who can be a faith companion?

The parish vicar will oversee, supervise and connect who can be a 'companion'

They may be one of the lay leaders or a small group leader or pastoral visitor. If the church has people who are trained as Personal Discipleship Plan 'Encouragers/mentors', they may also be invited to be a faith companion.

A trusted member of the church community who has completed **basic awareness** and **foundation** level safeguarding. Please ask people to indicate if they are under 18, so that you can ensure additional safeguarding is in place.*

***Safeguarding** If a Faith Companion is supporting anyone under the age of 18 then they will require an Enhanced DBS check for a Children's Workforce. If the Faith Companion is supporting an under 18-year-old and 'meeting' 4 times or more in a 30-day period, then they should additionally have an Enhanced DBS check with Barring information, for a Children's Workforce.

Session 1:

I Believe in God, Father Almighty



Check everyone has watched the film or listened to the podcast



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week? (5 mins)



Question -Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further?

“We explored this week the wonder of being made and called by God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. Can you share the story of your own spiritual journey [with God]? [Have you always believed? How does your faith help you to live well in these times?]”



Reflect using the stilling practice overleaf (10 minutes)

Stilling

Stilling is a powerful practice. In our busy world we often forget the ancient wisdom that we are human beings not human doings.

For this practice you sit still, notice your breathing and gently call to mind good things received, difficult burdens carried or things you long for. This helps you become more grateful, humbler and more purposeful. It is also a beautiful and profound way to pray, and Christians have been doing it for most of their history.

1. Place

Find a comfortable chair, and maybe a cushion, in a place where you will be undisturbed for 10 minutes. Bring a rug or blanket if you like.

2. Posture

Sit back in the chair, upright and alert but at ease. You could support your back with the cushion and wrap the rug around you. Put your feet flat on the floor if possible. Check your neck and shoulders – are they relaxed?

7. Pray

Psalm 46 says: 'Be still and know that I am God'. As you finish, say these words to yourself a couple of times as you slowly breathe in and out.

6. Palms up – please

Imagine someone is placing something good into your hands. What do you long for deep inside? It might be for yourself or for others. Ask God for this: 'Please God...'



3. Presence

Breathe in slowly, counting to three:

1... 2... 3.

Visualise or feel what you hope to receive from this time.

Then breathe out slowly counting to three:

1... 2... 3.

Let go of anything that feels heavy or difficult about today. It's often helpful to close your eyes.

5. Palms down – sorry/sorrow

Imagine you are dropping or letting go of something; it might feel heavy, sad, tiring, burdensome or shameful.

It might be something you've done, or something that was done to you.

You might want to say sorry, or say sorry to God: 'God, I feel sorry/sad about _____ help me to let go.'

4. Palms up – thank you

Turn the palms of your hands upwards. Call to mind good things from the past day, weekend, week, the good things placed into your hands. Christians believe that God creates all good things in our world. You can thank God for those good things: 'Thank you God for...'

Session 2:

I Believe in Jesus Christ



Check everyone has watched the film or listened to the podcast



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week? (5 mins)



Question -Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further?



Reflect Using the dwelling practice overleaf (10 minutes)

Before this session email the group the passage on the back page of the Dwelling sheet, or another passage of your choice.

“At the centre of the Christian faith is the extraordinary claim that God became a person in Jesus Christ. [What do you find in the gospels which helps you to see that Jesus is the Son of God?] What does this wonderful truth tell you about what it means to be human?”

Dwelling

Christians believe that God uses the Bible to communicate with us. This practice is about the way the Bible can 'come alive' as you read it.

It's a way of reading a passage which goes back to St Benedict in the sixth century. It isn't about looking for the right answer to a question or increasing your knowledge. It's about finding individual words or phrases which resonate with you or challenge you, and then wondering why. You pay attention to the words that feel good or catch your attention, and the way you respond to them.

1. Place

Find a comfortable seat, in a place where you won't be disturbed for 10 minutes. You will also need a short passage from the Bible. You could use the one on the back of this sheet. Bring a pencil and something to lean on.

2. Grace

Take some slow deep breaths as you count to three, and then breathe out slowly, also counting to three. The word 'grace' is another word for a gift. What gift do you want or need from this time? Express it clearly to yourself and, if you want, to God.

3. Space

Read the passage very slowly to yourself a few times, out loud or in your head. St Benedict, who pioneered this exercise, asks us to imagine that we are a cow chewing the cud. What words or phrases 'taste' good or draw your attention? You could imagine that you are 'in the passage' as one of the characters.

6. Finish

As you think about today's practice, what are you grateful for? God loves to hear even the shortest prayer saying 'thank you' for the good things that he gives us.



4. Face to face

Imagine you are having a conversation, face to face, with Jesus or someone you deeply respect about what you found in the passage. Explain why it felt important to you. Imagine what they would say back to you.

5. Trace

It can be helpful to trace your responses to the Bible over time. Often certain ideas or themes return or develop. Jot your ideas in a journal with the date. Christians believe that God communicates with us through these gentle nudges and prompts as the Holy Spirit speaks to us.

John's disciples follow Jesus

Circle or underline any words or phrases that feel important for you. You could write why they feel important round the edge of the page.

The two disciples of John followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?'

They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means teacher), 'where are you staying?'

He said to them, 'Come and see.'

They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

John 1: 37-39

This text is from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.

*copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of
the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United
States of America.*

Session 3:

He was Crucified, Died and Rose again ...



Check everyone has watched the film or listened to the podcast



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week? (5 mins)



Question -Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further?



Reflect Using the mending practice overleaf (10 minutes)

Before this session email the group to ask people to bring a large pebble/stone to hold during the contemplative toolkit practice.

“The cross is a universal symbol of the Christian faith but also an instrument of execution. Consider what does the cross mean to you? How would you explain what the death and resurrection of Jesus means?”

Mending

As we move through these practices, we touch on some of the more difficult aspects of life. We address the hurt within ourselves. You can decide whether you choose something small or something big to offer to God for mending and healing.

For this practice you ideally need a stone or pebble which fits in your hand, but you could use something else which feels heavy. The practice focuses on forgiveness: forgiving others, forgiving ourselves, and receiving forgiveness from God to live more freely. It is at the heart of Christianity, and it is something that all humans need to do to live well and flourish.

1. Pick up

Find a comfortable, quiet place. Start with your pebble on the ground. Pick it up and think about something which has hurt you. It might be a small thing or a bigger thing. It might be a situation close to you, or more distant.

5. Go

You can leave the pebble on the ground or you can leave it with God. You could find, draw or make a simple cross, and place the stone there. Jesus had many 'stones' thrown at him, but he refused to throw them back and instead forgave.

Perhaps you also feel the need to be forgiven?

2. Hold

Hold your pebble tightly in your non-dominant hand (the hand you don't use to write). Picture the time you were hurt by this situation or person and allow yourself to feel the pain you still carry. It is a bit like being hit by a stone that has been thrown at you. Observe which emotions are involved. Notice what you feel in your body. Notice your thoughts too.



3. Throw?

Move the stone to your dominant hand (the one you use to throw). The stone could be used as a weapon; it was thrown at you and you could throw it back. Would that make anything better? How might it make things worse?

4. Let go

Feel the burden of the hurt inside. Ask, 'Who is suffering? Have I carried this weight for long enough? Am I willing to forgive?' If the answer is no, that's OK. If you are ready to let the burden go, silently say: 'Breathing in, I acknowledge the pain. Breathing out, I am forgiving _____. Repeat these words for as long as feels helpful.

Session 4:

I Believe in the Holy Spirit



Check everyone has watched the film or listened to the podcast



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week? (5 mins)



Question -Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further?

“Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, to all who follow him. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us to strengthen us for the Christian life. [What is your own experience of receiving the Holy Spirit and the gifts the Spirit brings?]”



Reflect Using the noticing practice overleaf (10 minutes)

Noticing

This practice is based on a simple spiritual tool developed by St Ignatius of Loyola. It is about noticing apparently small and insignificant details of life and realising that they are signs pointing to personal, spiritual and community truth.

You are invited to notice times of consolation, when you feel energised, alive and full of life and possibility, as well as times of desolation, when you feel empty, drained, hopeless and lacking in energy and vitality. Open your hand. Start by touching your thumb, and then touch each finger in turn.

2. Where is God?

This is the index or pointing finger. It asks the question 'Where?' Withdraw a little from the busyness of the day. Take time to step into the stillness. Where did you find goodness? Christians believe God is the source of everything good.

3. What has stood out?

The tallest finger stands out. What has stood out in your day? Rewind the day, calling to mind the people you have met, the situations you encountered. If you were to write the newspaper headline for today, what would it be?

4. Where have you been at your weakest?

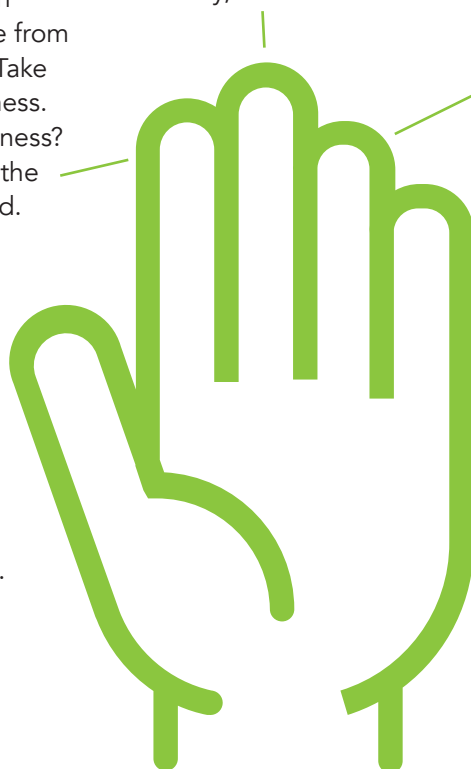
The fourth finger is the weakest finger. What might you have done differently today? Where have you not lived up to your commitments to yourself, to others, the world, or God? Where might you have hurt others and failed to notice at the time? Say or pray 'sorry'. You can ask for God's help.

1. What has been good?

A thumbs-up denotes what is good. What do you have to be grateful for? Think about where you have been blessed. You can thank God for those moments.

5. What little change can you make?

The little finger provides balance when writing, typing, or holding a cup. Is there anything in your life which is out of balance and needs adjusting? What small change could you make to rebalance your life and the world around you?



Session 5:

The Church and the Forgiveness of Sins



Check everyone has watched the film or listened to the podcast



Share – How are you? (5 mins)



Notice – Where have you seen kindness/love/goodness or God this week? (5 mins)



Question -Based on the film and Creeds reflections this week (30 minutes)

- What have you heard that energised you?
- What challenged you or left you with a question?
- What would be good to explore further?



Reflect Using the blessing sheet overleaf (10 minutes)

“What are the blessings and benefits of being a Christian? What are the costs and challenges? [What are the next steps along the journey of faith for you? What is God’s call upon your life?]”

Blessing

How can you flourish like a beautiful tree? The Bible starts and ends with the tree of life. In this practice we use the tree of life as a symbol to think about how we can be blessed, and how we might bless others.

You might like to imagine parts of the body as different parts of the tree.

1. Foundation (heart)

Hold your hands to your heart. It's at your core, like the trunk of the tree. Think about yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, but most of all your inner goodness, which comes from God. Say 'God bless me and keep me safe as your beloved child.' Be still for a minute.

6. Finish

Say these words: 'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace' (the Prayer of St Francis). Make a note of the blessing that you are going to offer.

5. Fruitfulness

Think about the fruit on the tree of life. The joy of Christianity can be experienced in being a blessing to others in simple everyday ways. Think of a person you would like to bless this week. You could bless them with a phonecall or a text, or a simple act of kindness.

2. Family and friends (legs)

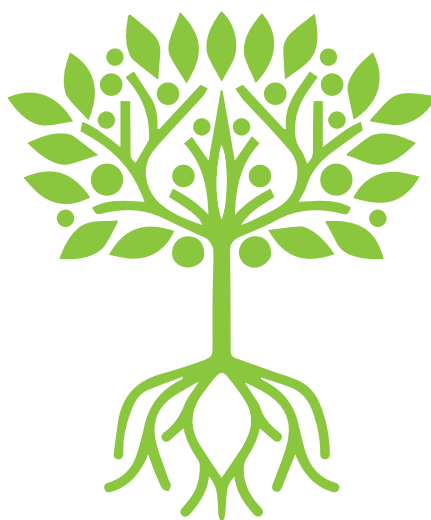
Think of the roots of the tree. Roots give us strength and security. Hold those you love in your mind, their strengths and weaknesses, but most of all their inner goodness. You can say: 'God bless each member of my family and my friends, and keep them as your beloved children.' Be still for a minute.

3. Neighbours (arms)

The branches stand for people we don't know so well, including perhaps people we don't even like. You can say: 'God bless each of my neighbours, near and far, and keep them as your beloved children.' Be still for a minute.

4. Flourish (fingers)

Leaves flourish on the tree of life. Hold creation in your mind in all its beauty and goodness. You can say: 'God bless all creation, and keep it safe and sacred.' Be still for a minute.



Locked down, open-hearted

Living life in all its fullness



COME
AND
SEE

Look out for your weekly email for a complete list of resources you can use

oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see