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## Seeking God's Way Together

Discerning about the  
Prayers of Love and  
Faith

**PARTNERSHIP FOR  
MISSIONAL CHURCH**

CHURCH  
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## Seeking God's Way Together

Seeking God's Way Together is one of the six spiritual practices used in Partnership for Missional Church (PMC). The practices help equip churches to listen to God, to each other and to their communities so that they can notice what God is up to and join in.

### Why use this practice

The way in which we make decisions as a church says a lot about what we believe.

We are a Christian community. As such, we seek to make decisions by listening attentively to God and each other, discerning the way forwards together. This is a consciously different approach from lobbying for our particular view or voting to find the most popular solution.

Seeking God's Way Together provides a framework for this sort of Christian decision making. It is a practice, not just another tool to fix things or manage our way out of a situation. It is based on a bold determination to put God at the centre of our decision-making.

The practice is used when we have a question, for which we would like to discern an answer, and we want to reflect together in order to find a way forwards.

### Using this practice to discern whether to opt in to use the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF)

Churches have the option to choose to use the Prayers of Love and Faith. As Bishop Michael outlined in his December 2023 letter, "Good discernment is needed by everyone as to whether and when it is the right time to have a discussion about the prayers and again if it is the right time to come to a decision about their use... For many there is considerable anxiety and concern about what the future holds. At such a time, I believe it to be imperative that we draw on the strength of God and each other to navigate this time."

- The prayers of love and faith have been developed out of the living in love and faith process; a six year study of Christian teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage that was based in an extensive examination of scripture, reason, tradition, science and history.
- Even after so much careful study and prayer, the church remains divided on many of the issues that living in love and faith examined and particularly on whether the prayers of love and faith should be used in churches or not.
- Finding a way forward is a question of discernment and conscience for each Christian community, encouraging all members to participate, so that the incumbent and PCC can then jointly agree a course of action.
- There is no requirement to make a decision. Parishes can take the time they need.
- You are strongly recommended to read the [Prayers of Love and Faith](#) before beginning to reflect together.

Normally in the Seeking God's Way Together process, the first step would be to discern the question but for this topic we suggest using:

**Question** What would opting in, or not opting in, to using the Prayers of Love and Faith mean for us as a Christian community?

## The underlying values of Seeking God's Way Together

Seeking God's Way Together is founded on some underlying beliefs and values, and knowing what they are helps maintain the integrity of the practice. They can seem obvious but being able to name them can be helpful and encouraging.

God is present and at work:

- **within each of us** because God created us and loves us. That is what gives us the confidence to listen to God, notice God and speak about our experience of God.
- **in the world** because God created the world and continues to be present and active in the world. This means that we commit to looking for signs of God not just in our church and congregation but in the wider community and world.

God speaks to us through the Word:

- Scripture is a key way in which God speaks to us. We are not all Biblical scholars, but we can all listen to God through scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to show us what it is important for us to hear.

## The parameters for Seeking God's Way Together

Like any framework, Seeking God's Way Together helps us by offering some clear parameters within which to work.

- We have a question to which we don't know the answer and are willing to seek the answer together, guided by God's Holy Spirit.
- We commit to listening attentively, openly and non-judgementally to God, to each other and to the wider world.
- We believe that everyone's voice matters and so create a space where it is safe for everyone to contribute their thoughts, understanding and experiences without apology or domination. In the pursuit of the unity to which Jesus commanded us, we commit to hearing views different from our own.
- We allow the unexpected to be named so that we are open to moving forwards together in new ways.
- We encourage imaginative and intuitive engagement, as well as rational thought, so that we are using the whole of our brains.

## The role of the facilitator

The process requires good facilitation to work well. The facilitator

- creates a safe space in which people can listen well to God and each other: encouraging people to share with boldness, whilst also listening with an open heart to one another and the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- creates enough space to allow the conversation to flow and ideas to emerge, rather than simply rushing to a solution.
- keeps the shape of the process so that parts are not overlooked and that it stays on time.
- encourages those participating to stay true to the values of the process.

It is important that the facilitator is not trying to participate, lead, or influence, as well as facilitating. Facilitators are available, as is guidance for them - please contact [Allie White](#).

## Running a Seeking God's Way Together session

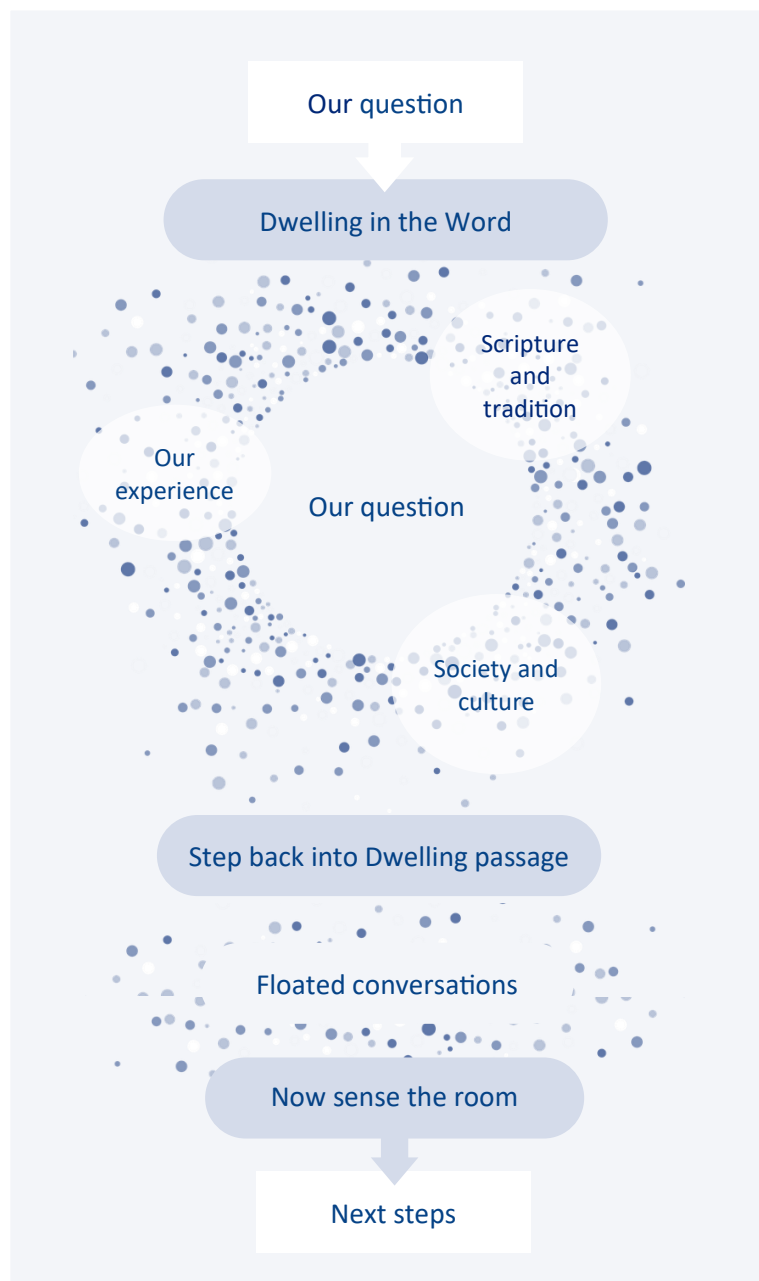
### The timing

A Seeking God's Way Together session usually lasts no less than 90 minutes and no more than 120. It follows a distinct pattern, and the timing needs to be managed carefully to ensure that all aspects are covered and are given due attention. This is the facilitator's responsibility.

### Prior to the event

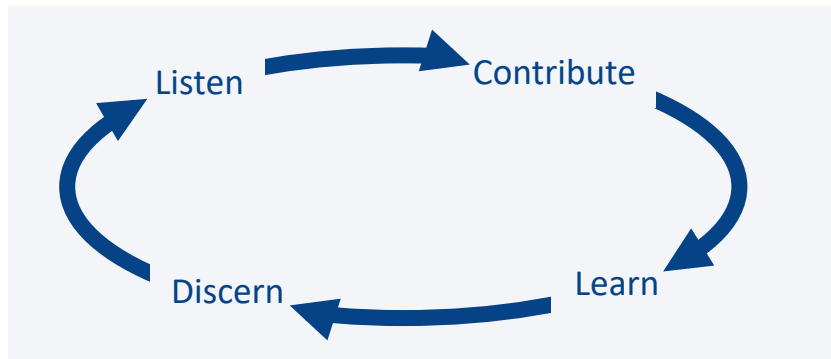
Circulate the question and any information that will be useful when you come together to consider the question.

The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) materials, including the book, articles and podcasts, can be accessed from the [Resources section of the Church of England website](#). These resources reflect all perspectives and are based on both prayerful reflection and scholarship.



## The 90 or 120 minute process includes the following steps:

1. Introduction and welcome
2. Dwelling in the Word, using Philippians 1:27, 2:5-11
3. Naming of the chosen question to be explored together  
Why is that our question? Why does it matter?
4. Outlining the process, including the values and parameters (see page 3)



5. Pooling our thoughts



At this point we consider our question from three different perspectives. What does each perspective have to contribute to our response to the question?

It is really important at this stage of the process, to remember that we are just pooling thoughts rather than discussing or critiquing them.

Some record (e.g. on flip chart/large paper) should be captured so everyone can see that all contributions have been acknowledged.

### Scripture and Christian tradition

Drawing on our understanding of God, how we experience God, and what we learn from the Bible and from 2,000 years of Christianity, what might help us with this question?

### Our experience

What is our personal and communal experience in relation to this question? What do we know, or are noticing, that might help us with this question?

### Society and culture

What do we know from our wider community or world that might inform how we could respond to this question?

6. Re-reading the Dwelling in the Word passage  
This gives space to recentre on God before our conversation.
  
7. Reflecting on what we've heard – the floated conversation  
God acted in Jesus as we read in Philippians – so what is God up to here?  
There may not be an immediate answer to this so don't be afraid to embrace some silence.  
Some record should be captured so everyone can see that all contributions have been acknowledged.
  
8. Is there is a growing 'sense of consensus' emerging in the room?  
Consensus doesn't always emerge; sometimes what we learn through this process of collective discernment is that there isn't a consensus and so there are no simple next steps but rather a call to continue to live well with our differences and different perspectives.
  
9. What are our next steps in the light of what we have heard and shared today?  
Deciding how, if at all, to move forward into action.
  
10. Close with prayer

## Scripture and prayer for use during Seeking God's Way Together

### Philippians 1:27, 2:5-11

1:27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

2:5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

### Prayer before Dwelling in the Word

Loving God,  
Though our destination is not yet clear,  
May we trust in Your graceful promises;  
Though we are uncertain of ourselves,  
May we be rooted in Your loving regard;  
Though our attention is inclined to wander,  
May we hear the things You are saying;  
Though we often neglect Your influence,  
May we be convicted of Your power to change,  
In Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

## Session timings for 90 minute session

Point	Time	Content
1.	5 mins	Welcome, introduction to Dwelling in the Word
2.	15 mins	Dwelling in the Word, Philippians 1:27, 2:5-11
3.	5 mins	Introduction of the focus question for the day: What would opting in, or not opting in, to using the Prayers of Love and Faith mean for us as a Christian community?
4.	5 mins	Introduction of the Seeking God's Way Together process (including values and parameters)
5.	15 mins	Pooling our thoughts: Spend 5 minutes on each so everybody gets to think through all aspects or have groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripture and Christian tradition</li> <li>• Our experience</li> <li>• Society and culture</li> </ul>
6.	5 mins	Re-read Philippians 1:27, 2:5-11 passage
7.	20 mins	Open or floated conversation
8.	8 mins	Summarising and reflecting together on what we heard
9.	8 mins	Next steps
10.	4 mins	Closing prayer

## Support available

- If you would like to use this Seeking God's Way Together approach, but would like some support in doing so (including requesting an external facilitator), then please contact [Allie White](mailto:allie.white@bathwells.anglican.org) by e-mail (allie.white@bathwells.anglican.org) or on 01749 588904
- The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) materials, including the book, articles and podcasts, can be accessed from the [Resources section of the Church of England website](#). These resources reflect all perspectives and are based on prayerful reflection and scholarship
- For the latest news and resources relating to LLF in Bath and Wells, go to [bathandwells.org.uk/LLF](http://bathandwells.org.uk/LLF), where you can also access a copy of the Prayers of Love and Faith