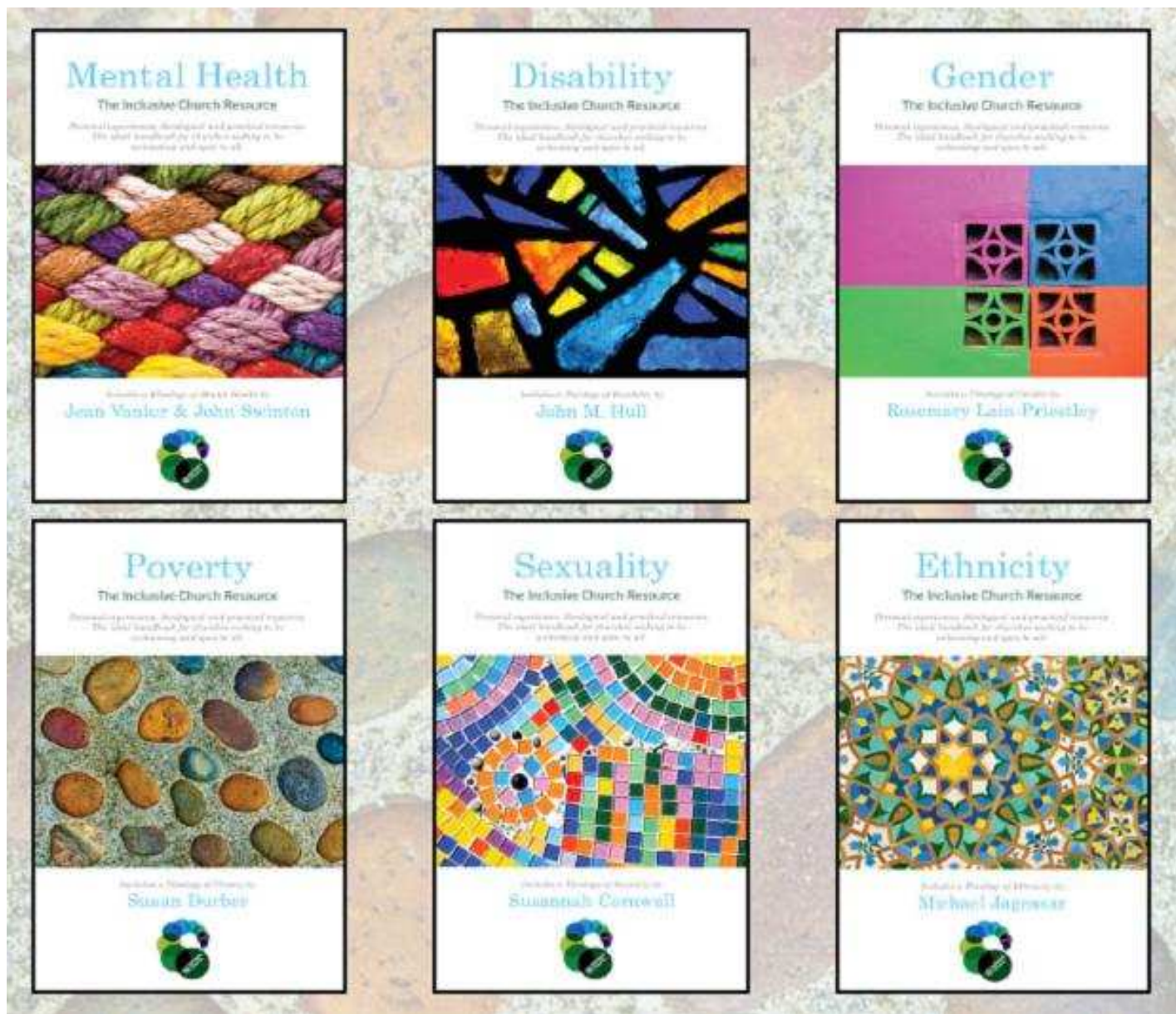




Inclusive Church Small Group Study Resources: Gender



DARTON · LONGMAN + TODD *The Jerusalem Trust*

Small Group Study Resources



Outline & Acknowledgements

Outline

The Inclusive Church Resource series is published by Darton, Longman & Todd. The series comprises 6 titles: Disability, Mental Health, Gender, Poverty, Sexuality and Ethnicity.

Each book contains stories from lived experience, a theological reflection and resources for further information. We recommend that each church/group using these study resources obtains a set of the Resource Books.

These small group study resources provide additional material to supplement the books. They have emerged as a result of churches using the books creatively for small group study. These study resources can be used in any order. Each study guide contains the outline, introduction, protocols, and liturgies, as well as the core study material

Acknowledgments

Inclusive Church is grateful to the generosity of the Jerusalem Trust for a grant that has enabled these materials to be drawn together. This grant was match-funded by Inclusive Church supporters and members.

Inclusive Church would like to express its gratitude to Darton, Longman & Todd for its continued support of the Inclusive Church Resource Series.

The material has been written and compiled by Jeremy Pemberton.

Jeremy has been a priest of the Church of England for thirty-four years. He has worked in parishes in the North and East of England, as a Mission partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in theological education. Latterly, he has been Senior Chaplain and Bereavement Services Manager for a large NHS Trust in Lincolnshire. He now works as a cathedral lay clerk, a civil celebrant and a consultant specialising in spiritual care and equality and diversity relating to sexuality and religion. He is married to Laurence Cunnington, and they live in Southwell.

Small Group Study Resources

Introduction & Protocols



Introduction

These study materials are designed for use by a group of up to twelve or so people. If you have more people who want to use them, we recommend that you split into two groups.

Each session is designed to last for an hour and a half - but you can shorten or extend that as you choose.

The sessions have deliberately been designed to be very simple. They do not require extensive preparation by "leaders"; anyone can lead each session. It can be shared by two people if that helps, with different people leading different sections.

The aim of the material is:

- to provide enough material on each topic to stimulate people's thinking
- to structure the time so that everyone has a chance to speak and express themselves
- to link to Bible material that may be helpful in considering each topic
- to encourage reflection on how the group/church may better include the subject of the study
- to frame the time with prayers that can be led by anyone

To use these materials with a group you will need:

- A place to meet and enough chairs or cushions for everyone to sit comfortably
- A candle which is lit at the beginning of each meeting and extinguished at the end (this is not essential - if you don't have one it doesn't matter)
- Copies of the opening/closing liturgy for people to share in. In addition to being included in the study material, the liturgies have also been included as separate pages at the end of the study material for ease of printing.

- Bibles for everyone (or printed off copies of the Bible resource passages for each session)
- And that is it!

These are the skills that the person/people leading needs:

- Confidence to be able to draw the group together and help people find their way through the material
- An eye to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard
- The ability to discourage those who talk too much and encourage those who are reticent
- The ability to keep an eye on the clock and to work out roughly how to move from section to section so that you finish on time

If someone would like to try leading but has not done so before, why not let them try sharing the leadership that week with someone more experienced.

It should be noted that, as with all group work of this kind, there are no right answers. This is not about finding answers, it is about expanding our thinking, and listening for God's voice. We support one another in a group and hope that we can learn to be better disciples together. When we approach sessions prayerfully and thoughtfully, ready to learn, then we find that we are surprised by the new things that we discover working together.

Please remember too, that not everyone may be very comfortable doing lots of reading silently or aloud. You may need to find some people in your group who would be happy to read some of the materials aloud to the group, so that everyone can participate equally having listened to the material under discussion. Be careful of asking someone in front of the group if they would read aloud. Better to ask for volunteers.

Sessions include links to short YouTube videos. These can really make an impact if you have access to a computer and the internet so that you can play them to the group. If you have the capacity to link up to a TV or a larger screen that is very helpful, but even playing them on a laptop is very helpful. But the sessions work without them; they are not essential.

In particular, we hope these sessions can make us long for God's church to become a place of greater awareness and greater action towards including everyone. If they help us notice where people have been invisible, or where

their gifts have lain unused because they did not fit a particular mould, or where their needs have been ignored, then they will have fulfilled their purpose.

Jeremy Pemberton

Group Protocols

You will need to agree these at the start of the first session. Some people like to write these up and display them so that they are there for future reference. The best way to get a group to agree to protocols is to ask them to devise them themselves. Here are some suggestions of the kinds of things that you might like to consider including:

- Commitment to meeting - groups work best when everyone agrees to come to the sessions
- Commitment to participating - groups also work best when everyone there contributes
- Not interrupting or speaking over people - it helps everyone participate if their contributions are listened to by all
- No side conversations - people agree not to have whispered conversations with their neighbour while others are talking
- Confidentiality - what is said in the group stays in the group. We want people to feel safe. Some people will never have disclosed anything personal in a group before; confidentiality helps them feel safe
- Consideration in speaking - people who are confident about speaking in groups should not hog the time by talking too much
- Respecting people - there may be many different views expressed. It helps our learning if we don't rush to judgement.
- Gentleness in challenge - if someone says something we disagree with, then we agree to find a way of expressing that without aggression. "I don't see it quite that way...", "I look at that differently...", "I wonder if you have thought about..." can all be ways to do this
- Keeping to time - a group that always overruns can be off-putting for people who have to get home, catch a bus, get to something else etc. Good time-keeping is important in maintaining group loyalty
- Praying for each other - a group whose members commit to praying for each other through the week quickly builds a sense of group solidarity and care

Small Group Study Resources



Gender

1. The welcome

Welcome everyone to the venue. If you are offering refreshments, then the beginning of the meeting is a good place to do so. When everyone has settled you can begin. Timings against the different sections are only suggestions.

2. The Opening Liturgy (3 minutes)

Use the opening liturgy to start your meeting. You will have decided whether or not you wish to light a candle, and if so, have that ready.

In addition to being included here, the opening and closing liturgies have been included as separate pages at the end of the study material for ease of printing

[One voice leads the liturgy. The parts in bold are for everyone to say together. Don't be afraid to hold the opening silence for a minute or two.]

A candle is lit.

May the light and peace of Jesus Christ
be with you.

May the divine Presence bless you.

We say together:

**In silence we come to God.
We lay aside the burdens of the day,
the demands of others,
and our own preoccupations;
we ask forgiveness for our sins and omissions;
we long for God, and we listen:-**

We keep silence

Come to us, liberating Love,
forgive us and free us to hear your life-giving voice.

Send your Spirit to lead us into all truth,
for the sake of your wonderful name. **Amen.**

(We say together a version of the Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are
yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the
power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

3. Some definitions. (10 minutes)

Here are four ideas: Sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression - talk about them for few minutes. Can you work out together what they mean?

Here are the definitions of these terms from the American Psychological Association:

Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (i.e., atypical combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female). There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behaviour that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviours that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

Gender identity refers to "one's sense of oneself as male, female, or transgender" (American Psychological Association, 2006). When one's

gender identity and biological sex are not congruent, the individual may identify as transsexual or as another transgender category (cf. Gainor, 2000).

Gender expression refers to the "...way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, in terms of clothing, communication patterns and interests. A person's gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity" (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 28).

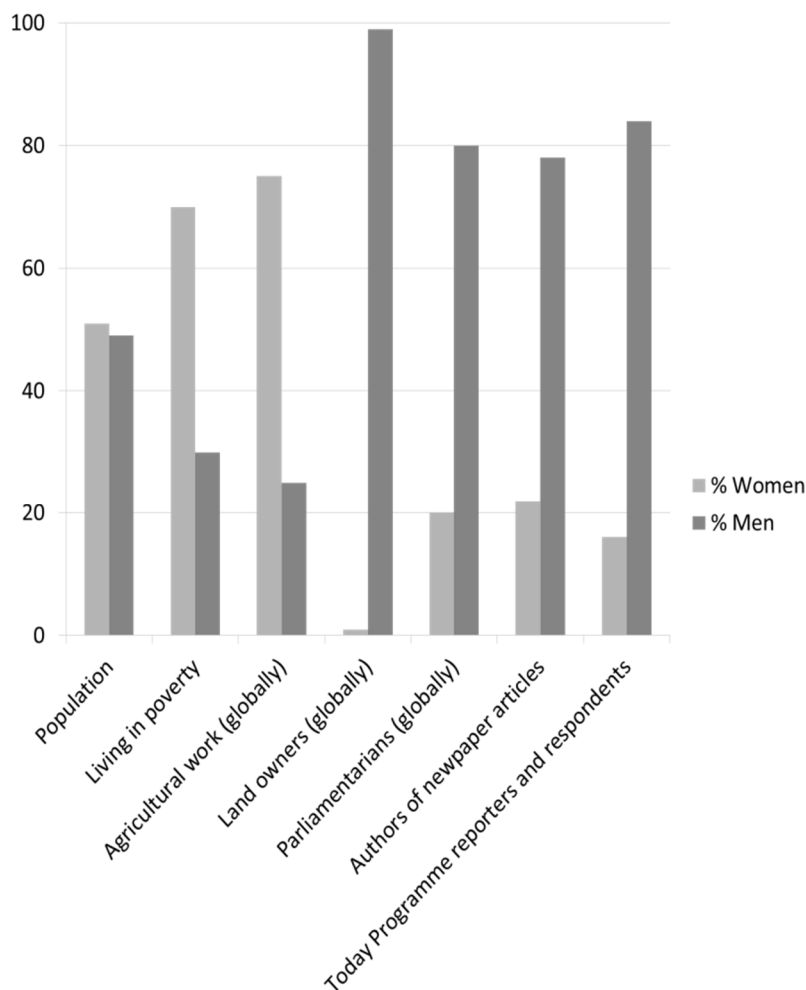
What are the genders that we usually operate with in our culture?

Most people find that their sex and their gender expression fit together more or less comfortably. What happens when people don't fit into "the norm"?

We are going to look at some of this later. But first we think about the two obvious genders for most people: male and female.

4. Men and women (15 minutes)

Look at this chart. Note the differences between men and women's experiences of life across the globe. Discuss this together. How do you react?



If you can, look at this short video about what is called "the Gender Gap" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llj7LzTULog>

Discuss it together. Are there any surprises to you? Is this something that is a problem "over there"? How much do you think it matters?

On average UK women who choose to work are still paid around 20% less than their male counterparts for the same workplace contribution.

Furthermore, real changes in women's access to opportunities to contribute to society in the same ways as men can are quite recent.

- It is less than 150 years (1870) since married women were first permitted to own their own property.
- It is barely more than 100 years (1907) since women were first permitted to participate in local government.
- It is less than 100 years (1918) since women were first permitted to vote, though not yet on the same terms as men, and to stand for Parliament. Equality of suffrage took another ten years to come about. It is not until 1958 that a woman first sat in the House of Lords.
- First woman doctor 1865.
- First woman accountant 1909.
- First woman barrister 1922.
- First woman priests 1994.
- First woman Church of England bishop 2015.

Is it the case that women are treated equally in all areas of life now? Where do inequalities still exist? Should they?

5. Voices speaking about gender differences (20 minutes)

These short extracts from the Inclusive Church Resource book speak from real experience on issues of gender. Read them aloud and then consider the questions below.

Hilary; *a white, educated able-bodied mother of two who lives with her husband (a vicar) in the South-East of England.*

"When God is always, always talked of as male, women struggle to know that they are made in God's image, and with the closeness and sense of true identity that brings. That the way the story of Eve is used means that women live with a sense of being, in essence, bad. That the call to humble, self-sacrificial living is appropriate for men, who hold power, but not for women, for whom salvation actually means standing tall, speaking up, and refusing to be downtrodden any more."

Natalie; creator of DAY, an innovative youth domestic abuse and exploitation education programme and herself a victim of abusive relationship.

“People misunderstand sexual violence. They consider it to be a destructive form of uncontrollable lust, of twisted sexual desire. In fact, rape is not about sex at all. It is about destruction and control. It breaks the soul of every human being subjected to it. It is a choice and rather than a result of lost control, it is the very essence of control; controlling and decimating another human being.”

“Why did he hurt me? Was it my fault? How could someone do that to another human being? The answer, I found, lies fundamentally in my being female. He chose to hurt me because he believed that he owned me and was therefore entitled to behave in the ways he did. Those beliefs of ownership and entitlement are rooted in the patriarchal culture we find ourselves living in.”

David Monteith, Dean of Leicester supporting a team of women and men working in a diocese with a multi-cultural city and rolling English countryside.

“I sit on a Bishop’s staff; I attend the national meetings of Deans; I attend synods and many other church groups. It is nearly always the case that men remain in the majority despite women being the majority ‘in the pews’. Many of my female colleagues have found part-time roles or work in chaplaincy. In my diocese there are still few women as vicars of major parishes or teams.”

Grayson Perry, Turner prize-winning artist, writer and broadcaster.

“Paddle your canoe up the River Thames and you will come round the bend and see a forest of huge totems jutting into the sky. Great shiny monoliths in various phallic shapes, they are the wondrous cultural artefacts of a remarkable tribe. We all know someone from this powerful tribe but we very rarely, if ever, ascribe their power to the fact that they have a particular tribal identity.

They dominate the upper echelons of our society, imposing, unconsciously or otherwise, their values and preferences on the rest of the population. With their colourful textile phalluses hanging round their necks, they make up an overwhelming majority in government, in boardrooms and also in the media.

They are of course, white, middle-class, heterosexual men, usually middle-aged. And every component of that description has historically played a part in making this tribe a group that punches far above its weight. Today, in politically correct 21st century Britain you might think things would have changed but somehow the Great White Male has thrived and continues to colonise the high-status, high-earning, high-power roles.”

Is Hilary right in saying that for women salvation means standing tall, speaking up, and refusing to be downtrodden any more?

Was the abuse Natalie suffered a direct result of the patriarchal culture we find ourselves living in?

Is David fair when he observes women priests still do not hold a full share of power and responsibility in the church?

Can you recognise Grayson Perry's Great White Male, and does he dominate the circles you move in?

How easily do you think we slip into: "What men do is how it is, what women do is women's work."

6. Theologies of Gender and Scriptural resources (20 minutes)

In *Gender: The Inclusive Church Resource*, Rosemary Lain Priestley writes:

"The two main approaches to a theology of gender are known as "egalitarian" and "complementarian".

Complementarians believe that women and men are equal in God's sight but have different roles in the church and at home, where men have the final authority. They are relaxed about women holding leadership positions in secular society because they find no biblical material addressing that issue, but many complementarians believe that in church women should exercise leadership only in relation to other women and to children.

Egalitarians believe that God's call to women and men to fulfil any particular role is based not on gender but rather on an individual's gifts, skills and passions."

How do you respond to these two positions?

In what different ways does Genesis 3 (The Fall) inform and justify one or other of these positions?

What else does The Bible have to say about men and women? Choose one or two of the following resource passages to discuss.

Hebrew Scriptures:

- The abuse of women in a patriarchal society:
 - The treatment of Hagar by Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16)
 - The rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13)
 - The story of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11)
- Stories of women's tenacity, resourcefulness and courage:
 - Miriam, Moses' sister
 - Deborah (Judges 4)
 - Hannah (1 Samuel 2)
 - Rizpah (2 Samuel 21)
 - Esther

- Susannah (Daniel 13)
- Judith
- The “capable wife” (Proverbs 31). Superwoman or a composite figure with a whole raft of competencies, many of which are more stereotypically associated with men such as business acumen, physical strength and political nous?

Jesus and Women:

- In *The Trinity and Subordination* Kevin Giles writes: “Surely if the subordination of women is one of the most important distinctives in God’s perspective on the man-woman relationship, then Jesus would have raised the matter. The fact that Jesus says not one word on the subordination of women or wives – and he says and does much that suggests the contrary – convinces me that it is not God’s ideal.”
- Women were part of Jesus’ disciples (Luke 8: 1-3)
- Challenging orthodoxies to connect with the woman who was suffering haemorrhages
- The widow’s mite and the mother’s care
- In *Jesus and the Gospel Women* Joanna Collicutt McGrath writes: “Jesus’s actions towards women are often designed literally, figuratively or emotionally to lift them up, whereas there are instances of him challenging men towards greater service and consideration of others.” Jairus’s daughter is lifted up, the bent woman is straightened, Mary of Bethany is encouraged to sit with the men and women, notably Mary Magdalene are the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus.

St. Paul:

What do we make of the apparent contradiction when Paul writes:

“For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” 1 Corinthians 11:8-9

and

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28?

7. Beyond Men and Women - Gender Diversity (15 minutes)

At the end of our time we give a few minutes to thinking about gender more widely. Being male or female is not the end of the complex idea of gender. Given that gender is culturally constructed - feelings, behaviours, expectations associated with a particular gender - what do we do about those people who are different?

If you can, look at this remarkable video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFhHieJOH5w>

We saw in our study of the differences between men and women something of the inequalities that women face. What about people who are gender different in other ways - what difficulties do you think they might face? What do you think about welcoming people with such diverse gender identities into church? What would it take to make a church that was truly gender affirming for all and gave people equal value and equal opportunity to serve and share in the church's life?

6. Silence and the Closing Liturgy (7 minutes)

Bring your conversation to a close and sit together in the peace of God's presence in silence.

We bring before God all we have heard,
Our thinking and speaking,
Those about whom we have talked,
The things that have challenged us,
And the ways in which we have heard the still small voice of the Divine:

(short pause for silent reflection)

O God, whom we call by many names,
but who calls each of us "Beloved,"
we come in gratitude for the richness, the diversity,
the great abundance of unique souls in this world.

Thank you for the very complexity that distinguishes each one of us.
May all people find those who will love and accept them,
will value their distinctive beauty and spirit.
May we each feel the presence of your transcending mystery,
may we know that we are part of a process of life that is rooted in divine,
emanating love,
and may we feel the comfort of knowing that every one of us is cherished by God.

In the name of Jesus our friend and lover. **Amen.**

After this the candle is extinguished. Then the meeting may close with one or other of these prayers

**The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy**

In our hearts and homes the love of
God,
**in our coming and going the
peace of God,**

**Spirit
be with us all, evermore. Amen.**

in our life and believing the strength
of God,
**at our end and beginning the
welcome of God.**

Small Group Study Resources

Opening and Closing Liturgy: Gender



The Opening Liturgy

[One voice leads the liturgy. The parts in bold are for everyone to say together. Don't be afraid to hold the opening silence for a minute or two.]

A candle is lit.

May the light and peace of Jesus Christ
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May the divine Presence bless you.

We say together:

In silence we come to God.

**We lay aside the burdens of the day,
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and our own preoccupations;
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We keep silence

Come to us, liberating Love,
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Send your Spirit to lead us into all truth,
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(We say together a version of the Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin**

**Our Father who art in heaven,
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Thy will be done
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Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass**

**against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are
yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

**against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
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For thine is the kingdom, the
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And also with you.

Closing Liturgy

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