



## Week One:

# Let God speak in unexpected ways

### Let God speak in unexpected ways

**When things don't turn out as we expect and life is difficult, it can take time to recognise God speaking to us and through us in unexpected people and places. We sometimes recognise this has happened when we look back over our experience, and notice that something has happened to make our hearts strangely warm. We feel an increase in hope, love, faith and courage.**

**Group facilitator welcomes everyone. Each person introduces themselves. Leader reminds people of the guidelines. Leader begins by reading out the session title and two sentence explanation.**



#### **Connect (5–10 minutes)**

What has made your heart sing over the last few days and increased your sense of hope, love, and faith? Share with one another. You may want to do this in twos or threes, rather than as a whole group.



#### **Contemplate (5 minutes)** Based on a prayer of Teresa of Avila

One person slowly reads this prayer out loud. In silence notice the line that speaks most strongly to you and repeat it to yourself listening to what God is saying to you and your church.

Christ has no body but yours,  
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours.

*Teresa of Avila. Adapted.*

After two minutes let each person have an opportunity to repeat the line which spoke to them either without explanation or with no more than one line of explanation. Do not comment on each others' contribution's. This is heart speaking to heart.

Hold a further minute of silence as everyone feels the impact of the phrases.  
A different person slowly reads the prayer to close this time of contemplation.



#### **Consider (15 minutes)**

**John 20:11-18** or the Gospel passage just used in worship.

Someone reads the setting. Two people read the passage slowly one after the other.

#### *Setting*

Early on the Sunday morning, on the third day after Jesus' death, Mary finds the tomb empty. In her grief she stands weeping, wondering who has stolen the body. Then unexpectedly she meets someone in the garden, whom she mistakes for the gardener. When Jesus speaks to her, she recognises him. He does not let her cling to him, because he is alive as the same Lord, but in a new way. She goes to tell the others "I have seen the Lord." Perhaps the earliest affirmation of faith that we have.

### **John 20:11-18 (NRSV)**

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

*Three minutes' silence to think about the passage individually. Guard this time of silence for personal reflection. Each person has the opportunity to share a word, phrase or idea which lights up for them or a question raised for them. You may want to do this in twos or threes, rather than as a whole group. Listen carefully without comment to each person's contribution.*

Only when everyone has had the opportunity to share, let a conversation develop. The conversation may develop from the contributions or a focus for the conversation might be:

*A time where you unexpectedly found new life, in a different way, when difficult things have happened to you.*



### **Commit (5 minutes)**

Commit this week to practise paying attention to God in 'given' moments of each day. Look at the list of suggestions and see if you can commit to one suggestion or commit to an alternative idea.

Give everyone the opportunity to share what they will be doing this time tomorrow.

### **Close with the series prayer.**

*God of amazing grace,  
you entrust to us the gift of your life.  
You invite us to notice and treasure you.  
May the threads of our lives,  
mundane and spectacular,  
speak of you, that your love may overflow to others  
and the whole world.  
Amen.*