



## Introduction: Notes for participants

### *Let your life speak*

The 50 days between Easter and Pentecost are a season of waiting, growing, and transformation in our life with God. On Good Friday we have identified with the grief of the first disciples in the death of Jesus, and then with them are amazed in the realisation of his resurrection on Easter Sunday. The 50 days from Easter Sunday offer us time to learn what it means to live in the light of the resurrection, and to wait for the empowerment of the Spirit. Life is fragile, transitory and precious. How do we live in such a way to continue to make Jesus' life count through our own living? How do we recognise what our spirit is saying to us and how God wants us to make our unique contribution? Use the practice of conversation with others, in these 50 days, to let your life speak of God, of love, hope, faith, and new beginnings.

#### **Class meetings – the process**

You are invited to be part of a class meeting with up to seven other people who you will meet regularly through the Easter season until Pentecost. The idea is that you will meet together in classes as a whole church before or after worship. Methodism began as a renewal movement within the Church of England and people were put into classes to nurture them in how to respond to the gospel. Try to make this class a priority, to help you get to know a small group of people better and to help each other to hear God speaking.

The basics are simple. A 'class' is an opportunity to create space to listen to each other, listen to God and to put yourselves and your daily contexts consciously in the presence of God. There is a straightforward format. It does not require any prior knowledge.

Each meeting will last 30-40 minutes.

Each class will have six to eight people. The group membership can stay the same or change week by week. Each class will have a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to help the group move through the easy format for each class meeting. Notes for facilitators are downloadable from the Deepening Discipleship on pages of the Methodist Church website.

Each meeting will be around a theme for the week and structured in the following way.

There will be a time to:



**Connect** (five to ten minutes) To share a little personal experience and feedback on your commitment to action from the previous week. Each person will have a presence in the group, both to share a little of themselves, verbally or silently, and to listen to all the others.



**Contemplate** (five to ten minutes) To worship together to wait upon God's presence and centre on God.



**Consider** (15 minutes) To use the reading of a passage of Scripture to share insights.



**Commit** (five minutes) To commit to action for the week and come prepared to share briefly how you got on at the following meeting. Your action is to commit to paying attention to small opportunities (each day) to mirror and receive God's love, and in the six weeks to complete one planned intentional risky venture, adapted to the time you have available and your particular context.

### **Ideas for the simple practice of paying attention to God in each day.**

These 50 days are an opportunity to practise the discipline of responding to those spontaneous moments when the Spirit prompts you to an action or attitude of love, hope, faith or a new beginning. You may notice that because our life with God is different, each of us may be prompted differently according to our personality and context. For example, If you always loudly speak your mind, then the prompt may be to hold back to let another speak. If you always hold back, the prompt may be to courageously speak up.

Here are some suggestions to get you going, but you will have lots of different ideas of your own.

- offer a lift to an elderly neighbour
- offer to baby sit for a young parent
- offer to share a skill for the benefit of a community
- send a card or text, letting someone know you are thinking of them
- abstain from cynical comments for a week, and if you slip, pray positively into the situation
- find out what matters to others in your community and be able to talk about it
- take a meal round to someone who it would really appreciate it
- send a secret present to brighten someone's day
- say thank you to someone every day this week for something specific
- invite someone new in the community for a meal
- pray everyday for a week for someone who gets on your nerves and do something nice for them
- let go of an old grudge, and give the person the benefit of the doubt (again?)
- live a day trusting you have all the resources you need to make a kingdom difference where you are.

### **Ideas for living with intention to share in God's love.**

During the 50 days, decide to do one personal risky venture that is intentional about going beyond your normal safe boundaries. Do something that requires some planning and thought.

Here are some suggestions of what you could do – you may have lots of your own ideas.

- organise a coffee morning for a worthwhile cause
- spend a couple of hours visiting your local nursing home
- spend a night out with a street pastor
- offer to serve coffee at a toddler and mum's group
- offer to help out in your local charity shop
- get a map of your area and do a street by street pray
- get involved in a local community project
- visit someone in hospital, or a hospice or prison
- live on a tight budget for a week and donate what you save to charity
- campaign for a worthwhile cause and make an adjustment to the way you live as a result
- befriend someone from a different grouping from you; work out how to connect with them (for example, listen to their sort of music; find out about their sort of sport, hobbies and interests).

When you have done your risky venture, jot down some of your reflections afterwards. There are some downloadable questions which your group facilitator can give you to help reflect on the experience.