

## Shapes for Living

---

### **Week 1 Relating. General leaders notes**

#### **Preparing**

Plan and prepare ahead of each weekly session so that the room is comfortable and all the equipment you need is available. Decide whether to have tea/coffee and if so when to have it, and line someone up to deal with that – you will have plenty of other things to think about! Allow for it in your timing.

#### **Equipment and resources**

If you have the equipment, you might like to show Bishop Rachel's weekly video at the start of each session (perhaps over tea/coffee). The booklet itself is available online in PDF form.

It is helpful to make the contributions each person shares visible to all. Catch what they say in their own words, rather than in your own summary, using a flipchart with coloured pens, or you may be able to use a whiteboard. Individuals and smaller groups may find a notebook or a course diary useful for gathering insights and questions. Make sure you ask people if you are recording anything to ensure they are happy with that.

There are A3 and A4 versions of the Shapes graphic on the website. If groups were able to be at tables you might like to have a large version on each table so that they can jot their ideas onto it. Or there could be smaller versions for individuals.

Using the booklet and the online resources for each week, choose what you wish the group to focus on.

Each week will involve Bible Study so, though it may sound obvious, do ask people to bring their Bible to each of the sessions.

Decide how you want to structure the time as a mix of discussion, praying, activity.

In the booklet some simple questions are provided whose aim is to help to open up each week's topic and begin to dig a little deeper into it.

On the website you will find additional resources to help you explore the themes. You will need to be selective - but do take a few minutes each week to see what is there.

You might like also to use some of the creative ideas you will find online for children, families and schools.

Some people express themselves more visually and find it helpful to draw, paint or make diagrams. Others are happier with words. Week by week choose whichever approach seems helpful for your group, or offer multiple approaches.

## **Beginning the meeting**

Please begin with words of welcome – and give time to share names if folk don't know each other.

An opening prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to be in the room as you gather as God's people. Pray for God's love to be ever present in patience, kindness and mutual respect.

*Confidentiality and sensitivity: Please ask that the time be a 'safe space' for people to share as they wish. Some might share quite personally. It is important to agree that no-one's personal story is shared outside the room.*

*It is a safe space for questions; no questions are stupid or unimportant and everyone should feel they have - and be enabled to by both you as the leader and all participants – an equal opportunity to contribute if they wish.*

## **Introduce the theme**

Whatever you are focussing on there are questions provided to help discussion.

Don't be afraid to leave silences – some people need longer to decide what they want to say.

If someone is tending to talk too much, politely take charge – 'Thank you for what you have said. I wonder if others here have things they would like to share?'

## **Gathering up at the end**

Allow time for people to gather and say what they feel has been important, something they are taking away, a question to go on exploring etc.

A flip chart can help.

It may help to agree what we might want to include by way of closing prayer.

Simple structures are a help:

We thank you for ...

We ask for ...

## **Examen**

You might use the prayer of examen at the end of the course booklet. Allow a few moments between each section.

Pray the Shapes of Living course prayer.