

Shapes for Living

Week 3 Working. Group leaders notes

Before the meeting

Please look at the course booklet and web page resources and decide where you want your group to focus.

Decide how you want to structure the time - discussion, praying, activity ...

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

Invite people to *briefly* share their story of working life. Stress that this includes home, family, voluntary work as well as career and employment. Of all the themes in this course, 'work' will invoke many of the daily stresses and strains and the tendency to look to others for blame for, or to provide solutions to, problems.

Many will not have done this sort of exercise before.

You will need to ensure no one takes over with long stories!

Be sensitive to people's stories that may be painful. Help the group to empathise. 'That sounds very painful'. 'That must been a difficult time'.

Give equal weight to the 'work' that people do to earn a living as well as 'work' in the context of voluntary activities, or if someone is retired – everyone is valued equally.

Activity

In the resources for this week there are suggestions for making quite a visual display of the range of peoples 'work'. This could work in small groups too.

Helping churches be more supportive and aware of the working lives of their community.

Try to encourage a discussion that is positive rather than moaning.

What could help make a difference?

Could these be taken back to your PCC or church leaders for further discussion?

Some prayer activities are suggested in the resources

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 10 mins for this.

With silence between each section and a few minutes to share at the end.

Pray the Shapes of Living course prayer.

Point people to this resource

You can sign up to receive a regular resource on everyday faith - <https://www.churchofengland.org/everydayfaith>

There are further resources on the Shapes for Living web pages: <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/shapes>