

Devotions for meetings

Following 'The Week' there has been a decision to use a process similar to 'Dwelling in the Word' at the start of circuit events and meetings, and where appropriate, church meetings.

Four readings have been selected to be used for three months each, beginning in Advent 2018. The readings relate to elements of 'Our Calling', which Methodism is looking to reaffirm. More details can be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

December - February	Worship	Romans 12:1-12
March – May	Learning and Caring	Philippians 2:1-13
June – August	Service	John 13:1-17
September - November	Evangelism	Matthew 28:16-20

Below are details explaining how to engage with this process. If you have any queries, please contact Revd. Jenny Dowding or Revd. Alison Parker.

Dwelling in the Word

Guidance for leader

Explain the process to the group, and distribute copies of the passage.

Read, or ask someone else to read, the passage aloud. Explain that each person should notice where their attention is drawn – a word, a phrase, an idea. It may be something new, something puzzling, something affirming.

Have a few minutes silent reflection.

A different person reads the passage again.

People pair up and share as below.

Then, EITHER, ask people to make 4s or 6s, and each report on what their partner said,

OR (depending on the size of the group, and the time available), each person reports to the whole group.

How we Dwell in the Word

- ❖ Find a person in the group you do not know or know less well, a 'reasonably friendly-looking stranger'.
- ❖ Listen to that person as s/he tells you what they heard in the passage. They may mention something they'd never heard before, or something odd, or something comforting, or something about which they'd like to ask a Bible scholar.
- ❖ Listen well, because your job will be to report to the rest of the group what your partner has said, not what you yourself said. Some people even take notes to help them focus and remember.

A prayer as we Dwell in the Word

Loving God,

Although our destination is not yet clear,

May we trust in your graceful promises;

Though we are uncertain of ourselves,

May we be rooted in your loving regard;

Though our attention is inclined to wander,

May we hear the things you are saying;

Though we often neglect your influence,

May we be convicted of your power to change,

In Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Why do we do Dwelling in the Word?

The churches in Caversham learned this spiritual practice as part of a 3-year process called Partnership for Missional Church (PMC). In our case we (and other churches) were given one passage for a whole year, and we were encouraged to do Dwelling in the Word as often as possible.

The practice assumes that:

God has a preferred and promised future for each church;

God speaks to the churches today through scripture;

God speaks to the church through *every one* of us.

By using one passage many, many times, we 'dwell in the word until the word dwells in us.' It was clear that, over time, we began to change the way we thought, and that key insights from our passage became part of our thinking. Gradually our mindset changed and we thought in a more mission-minded way than before.

However, interestingly, it was also noticeable that, even many months into the process, people were noticing, as if for the first time, words and ideas that had previously been noticed and mentioned by others. It seems it takes a long time and many readings of a passage before God can get through to all of us!

Some people mentioned that, as a result of doing Dwelling in the Word, they pay much more attention to Bible readings in church, the words of hymns etc. Most people who engaged fully with the practice admitted that, to begin with, they were unhappy about reading the same passage over and over again, but that they came to recognise the value of it.