

Sense Making Faith: group activities plain text version

This section contains material for use by group leaders and is for using *Sense Making Faith* in a group setting. The first part is an introductory session, but after this the group material has a common format as follows:

Starting out Groups can first be encouraged to look at what gifts and resources you have already relating to the physical sense discussed in each chapter and to think about how those assets can be developed.

Going deeper an activity related to broadening out the exploration of the sense in question.

Entering the world of... an activity related to the absence of the particular sense

Reaching out an activity which seeks to engage people outside the church through the sense in some way

Celebrating... an activity to build up fellowship and confidence within your group, - which may involve doing something outside the session environment out in the community.

Praying together Each session ends with ideas for prayer and reflection.

You can mix and match these suggested activities depending on the time and space available and the interests and makeup of your particular group. Alternatively, you can do the various activities sequentially over a number of shorter sessions.

Journey points for the introduction

Purpose of the journey:

To introduce the theme of journey by physical movement around a space

To open up awareness of the world, ourselves and our senses

Equipping people to meet others on their spiritual journeys

The activities in this session are designed to form an introduction to the rest of the material in *Sense Making Faith* so it is quite a long process if done in one session and will take up to a whole day. With any group, try to use the space (even a small space) in such a way that people move from point to point, from a beginning point to an end point. In a large space, this might mean moving from a wall or floor with displayed pictures, to different open areas with chairs. If there is limited space, ask people to move to a different chair at each journey point, so that they have a slightly different view and situation at each one. At each transition, people will need a short space to settle and become ready for the next activity or experience. Separate activities are indicated with a symbol.

Depending on the type of group and the time and space available, you can add or omit sections, or you can run this introductory material in a series of short sessions using link modes, such as a picture or prayer carried over to the next session as a reminder.

There are five sections to this introductory material including: working with pictures together with discussion; meditation with optional video; games and imagining; bible study; prayer.

1. Activity: Wonders of the world

Preparation

Collect photos of some 'wonders' of the world, including any local 'wonders' -anything that catches the attention. You can look at the website www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk for ideas and downloadable pictures. Spread the photos out on a table or floor or mount them on a board so people can look at different ones.

There are four elements to this activity: choosing photos, discussing the photos, discussing practical issues about your church, prayer and thanksgiving. You can mix and match these as appropriate.

- ⊕ Ask people to choose a photograph that means something to them. Allow people to look at each other's choices and compare them.
- ⊕ Discuss in the group:
 - For photos and images which show natural wonders*
 - What about this catches the attention?
 - Why would you want to photograph this or remember it?
 - How does looking at this 'wonder' make you feel?

For photos and image which are manufactured wonders

What kind of person or persons made this?

What would it take to make it?

What skills or other qualities would you need to make it?

⊕ Discuss and record

In what ways do the local church buildings catch people's attention?

What could we do to get people to stop and wonder about the local church?

What skills have people got in our own community for people to wonder at?

In what ways could local talents and skills be used to make things which would attract people's attention and interest?

⊕ Conclude this session by thanking God for the wonder and beauty of creation and for the extraordinary variety of human skills. Pray that such skills be used to create beautiful and useful things and not used to hurt or destroy.

2. Meditation: Being Human

Preparation:

Make a short (five minute) video recording of a sports programme, or arts programme such as dance. Or, use short sections of an exercise video. A short section of the film Billy Elliott where he is bouncing on the bed, running or dancing, along with his description of how he feels when he is dancing might be helpful. If you are using this material in a day session, you could think about involving a children's dance or gymnastic team to demonstrate their skills.

Ask the group to move to a new location, then sit on chairs or on the floor

⊕ Watch the video or presentation if you are using this.

Ask the group to remove their shoes (where practical), close their eyes, put their hands in their laps and sit quietly and comfortably until relaxed. Ask them to become aware of their bodies breathing, their hearts beating, their digestive system working, their sense of the temperature, their clothes against skin.

Encourage people to imagine looking inwards at their own bodies. Think about the amazing nature and intricacy of the internal workings of the human body. Are we aware that we are alive? Think about the precious gift of health and how we should not abuse our bodies or take its health for granted.

⊕ Ask the group to think about the potential of the human body, its strength, endurance and athletic abilities. Why do we admire great athletes such as Kelly Holmes, Paula Radcliffe, Jonah Lomu, Steve Redgrave, Tanni Grey-Thompson, the late Jane Tomlinson?

- ⊕ Conclude by thanking God that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Thank God for the example of those who show us human beings fully alive in their physical abilities and gifts.

3. Games, imaginings: Appreciating our senses.

Preparation:

Some excerpts from Terry Waite's Taken on Trust, or Brian Keenan's An Evil Cradling might help set the mood. You will need pens and paper, ice cubes, apples and potatoes, scarves etc if you want to play the various games mentioned below. You will need a scented candle, a bowl of cut oranges or lemons and a tape or CD player with appropriate music if you want to do the meditation.

Ask the group to move to a new location, and put chairs in circle.

- ⊕ Ask the group for any brief stories of temporary sensory deprivation, such as injury or operation. Ask story tellers to explain what it was like to be deprived of the senses. What was it like to recover?
- ⊕ Imagine together and discuss the experience of being held hostage in solitary confinement for several years, as Terry Waite was, for example. Ask the group to imagine:

Being blindfolded all the time

Being blasted with radio white noise so you can't hear coherent sounds or experience silence

Being given nothing to eat but stale bread

Being forced to remain in a room smelling of excrement and vomit

Being unable to move until you can't feel the sense of touch

Ask the group what things might sustain them if they were in this sort of situation.

- ⊕ You can play sensory deprivation games together such as
Blind man's buff/pin the tail on the donkey/draw a pig blindfold and sign it
Chinese whispers
Hot or cold (put an ice cube on a blindfolded person's arm)
Apple or potato (ask a blindfolded person holding their nose to tell which)
Ask the children in your local school, church or fellowships for variations of these games and ask them to teach your group how to play them.

Discuss: how did playing the games make people in the group feel?

- ⊕ Prayer and meditation
Light a scented candle and perhaps play some meditative music or lay out a bowl of oranges or cut lemons. Conclude by thanking God for our senses and sense experiences. Bring before God all those whose humanity is being denied by being hostages or

unlawfully imprisoned. Are there those in your own community whose ability to be fully alive is being compromised? What could be done about it?

4. Bible Study

Preparation:

Give each member of the group a copy of the Bible passage John 12. 1-8. The passage is included as a separate photocopiable pages in traditional and modern versions at the end of this document. You can also photocopy the passage from the text in Sense Making Faith. Or people can use their own bibles.

Relocate the group and assemble in a seated group suitable for bible study and prayer together.

- ⊕ Ask a suitable group member to read John 12.1-8. This passage can also be used as a role play.

Questions:

What is Judas really complaining about and how do we know he has become an ‘outsider’?

How does this passage compare with the accounts of the Last Supper?

What is the importance of the body and the physical senses in the passage?

How does this passage help us to think about worshipping the Lord?

5. Prayer

Preparation

Make copies of St Teresa’s prayer for group members, or write it up on a board for people to look at. You can photocopy the prayer from the introduction or download it from the website. It is available at the end of this document. You can include an image or icon for focus, or a candle.

Move to a final location around an image, or in a circle

- ⊕ *Say together*

Lord,

We offer you our souls and bodies

Use our bodies to bear witness to your truth

Help us to walk the journey

Searching for signs of you

Delighting in finding you

Making friends

Being disciples

Amen

Note to group leaders: in each of the sense chapters which follow, the group material has a common format. Groups can be encouraged to look at what gifts and resources you have already relating to the physical sense discussed in the chapter and to think about how those assets can be developed. This then leads into an activity related to broadening out the exploration of the sense in question. After this, there is provided an activity related to the absence of the particular sense, followed by an activity which seeks to engage people outside the church through the sense in some way. There is then offered another activity to build up fellowship and confidence within your group which may involve doing something outside the session environment out in the community. The session ends with ideas for prayer and reflection. You can mix and match these suggested activities depending on the time and space available and the interests and makeup of your particular group. Alternatively, you can do the various activities sequentially over a number of shorter sessions.

Journey points for Seeing

Purpose of the journey

To learn to use our eyes for God

To learn more about the spiritual journeys of those around us

To help others discover more about God through visual resources

1. Starting out. What have we got?

Preparation

It is possible to start this session by going into your place of worship and asking people to take a good look at whatever they can see.

This section has three questions for discussion by the group, but you can use just one or two of them if you prefer, or as time allows.

⊕ Asking the group to think about how people outside or on the fringes of the Church might encounter Jesus through your own local church situation.

- What will non churchgoers see in our place of worship when it is empty?

In discussion of the question it can help to make a list of items in response to these supplementary questions:

- What parts of our place of worship explain our faith visually?
- How can people find out what different things are for and why they matter?
- What else could we have in our place of worship visually to teach people about the basics of Christian faith?

⊕ Ask the group to consider the question:

- How do people learn what goes on in the Church if visitors come when it is empty?

Lead the group in a discussion of what resources you have to show people visually what goes on in your place of worship. Do you have photographs of people in your building? Do you have videos or DVDs available for enquirers to show them what happens at a wedding or baptism? If you have any visual resources of this kind, you could review them with the group and consider whether they are up to date and capable of generating attention.

Make a list of any visual resources you have to offer visitors and make a decision to add at least one more. This could then be a practical outcome by the group, to put up photographs showing what happens in your place of worship or make a short video.

⊕ Ask the group to consider the question:

- What visual signs are there that the congregation, no matter how few, actually loves and cares for your place of worship and for the Christian faith?

Discuss and make a list with the group about the things which go on ‘behind the scenes’ such as cleaning, doing the flowers, polishing the silver, washing linen, running off service sheets or making kneelers.

Discuss the proposition that if one of the most important evangelistic resources is communicating the idea that we love our place of worship and want to honour and praise God through caring for it, how will a person coming into our building know that the people who come here love it?

Ask the group to consider if there are any areas in which the church could be better loved and cared for and if so what resources you have to do so.

2. Going deeper: seeing the familiar differently

Preparation:

Find an unusual image of the crucifixion or other religious scene, which can be mounted for display or otherwise shown to the group. If you are unable to find a suitable image, look at the downloadable material on the website. You might want to use fairy lights or indoor sparklers for part of the session.

⊕ Spend some time in a group looking at the image and then share together what you think and feel about it.

Other activities in which the group can explore the familiar differently include:

- ⊕ Ask the group to get into pairs and to look into each other's faces. Ask each of the pair in turn to describe to the other what they see.
- ⊕ Ask members of the group who wear glasses to take them off and look at some illuminated fairy lights or an indoor sparkler. Ask them to describe what they see. Ask the group to consider what is different about their experience to normally sighted individuals?

3. Entering the world of the blind

- ⊕ Work together in the group to re-write a bible story from the point of a blind person eg the birth of Jesus, the haul of fish, the crucifixion or the resurrection appearances. There are also examples already done on the website under Dream/bible study which you can use if you prefer.

4. Reaching out to others: advent calendars

(This is a Christmas activity, but if you want to do this activity at another time of year, you can still adapt the activity to fit the season.)

Preparation

Ask group members, or find examples yourself of secular advent calendars, including any that have sweets or chocolate included. Try to find religious calendars to compare them with. You will also need craft materials, pictures, cards etc to make the alternative calendar.

- ⊕ Ask the group to examine the calendars and discuss what messages are being sent by them. You can also eat the chocolate or sweets in the process!

Invite the group to design and make an advent calendar. Use pictures from the internet, pictures drawn by children or bits of Christmas cards and stick them on to a large piece of card with lift up flaps or contained in envelopes so that they tell the Christmas story. The images can be traditional or contemporary.

- ⊕ The advent calendar you make as a group can be further used to imagine or role play the Christmas story. The advent calendar can also be used in schools or displayed on a notice board outside the church, - perhaps one image per day.
- ⊕ You can also organise the group to make other kinds of calendar or story board to fit with the liturgical year or to tell bible stories. Discuss with the group other ways inside and outside your church to encourage others to open the envelope or look behind the door to see what's inside or behind.

5. Celebrating being church together: a visual journey

Preparation

Decide on what kind of visual journey from the options below is most appropriate for our group and get the materials together.

Options include:

- ⊕ Using the stations of the cross as a visual journey. If this is not a tradition in your place of worship and you want to explore the stations with the group, you can use online versions projected on to a screen, or downloaded from internet sites, such as <http://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/stations/face.htm>
- ⊕ Use the images from *The Christ We Share* CMS third edition:
 - See Jesus through the eyes of Christian artists from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This will enable the group to experience representations of Christ from around the world and explore understanding of Jesus; learn about different world theologies; and discover what this means for the community.

Go to <http://www.cms-uk.org/resources2.htm> for this resource

- ⊕ Use the Stations of the Cross journey or the images of Jesus from our spiritual journeys website.

6. Praying together

- ⊕ Spend some time together in silent prayer and meditation perhaps around a candle or an image.

Lead the session to a close by using this prayer or any other appropriate prayer you prefer. Alternatively, you can photocopy the prayer from this page and say it together as a group.

Lord,
The world is a beautiful creation
Brought into being by you
Sustained by you
Loved by you.

We have broken and hurt your world,
We have hurt its created life,
And left it in pain

Teach us to be agents of your healing power
To find you in the light

To find you in the darkness
To bring the hope of restoration

Amen

Journey points for Hearing

Purpose of the Journey: to learn to use our ears for news of God

To explore what other people are hearing and to make connections between our spoken and musical traditions and theirs.

1. Starting out: what have we got?

Preparation

Bring some Christian music (hymns, organ music, carols etc) on a CD or a tape.

- ⊕ Begin this item by asking the group to spend a few minutes together in silence. Ask the group to concentrate on all the noises around them, both externally and within their own bodies.

After this make a list of the sounds on a board or flip chart.

Discuss in the group what the noises might be telling us about our world and our bodies. What might God be saying if we only paid enough attention through these noises?

- ⊕ For the second part of this item invite the group to listen to some familiar Christian music on a CD or a tape. You can then use the following questions to help the group explore the music tradition in your place of worship and its relevance to people who don't go to church.
 - What different kinds of music do we have in our worship? Is our music and singing something which engages everybody or is it there as a filler while something else (eg the collection) happens?
 - Who is involved in our music? (Is the music something which is left to a choir or music group, or is everyone encouraged to be part of the musical tradition of the church?). Who else could get involved in the music who isn't now?
 - What will visitors hear if they visit our place of worship? (for example: if your building is open to visitors do you have any taped worship music playing?) Is the music appropriate to visitors' needs (eg will there be times of silence?)

As a result of this discussion, make a plan with the group to do one thing to improve any visitor's experience of what they hear.

2. Going deeper: what do hymns and worship songs mean?

Preparation:

Make a CD or a tape of some well known hymns, anthems, carols or other worship songs. Have some hymn books available.

- ⊕ Ask the group to look at the words of *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* (you can choose another commonly used hymn or carol if you prefer)

Remind the group that Christmas, for example, is a time when we can expect to see people who only come on that one occasion. They will probably be familiar with at least some of the traditional carols.

Work through the words of the carol with the group, and see if people could explain what it is about in simple language to a person who has never had anything to do with the Christian faith. One way to do this is to divide people into pairs or small groups and each work on a particular phrase, for example:

‘God and sinners reconciled’
‘Christ the everlasting lord’
‘late in time behold him come’
‘veiled in flesh the Godhead see’
‘the incarnate deity’
‘our Emmanuel’

Conclude this section by asking the group to reflect together on how easy or difficult this task was.

3. Entering the world of the deaf

Preparation:

Check the rules and process for the game Charades and prepare in advance some hymn titles or bible stories that lend themselves to mime. If doing the last activity, make a short video of a section of any popular TV programme/advertisement or use a video or DVD film.

- ⊕ Divide the group into teams. Explain the rules of Charades and ask the group to act out a hymn title or well known bible story for the others to guess. At the conclusion of this activity, ask people how hard they had to concentrate in order to understand what might be going on.

Another way of doing this would be to choose a well known bible story such as the ‘prodigal son’ or ‘the man fallen among thieves’ and ask a few people to take on a role play only using mime. At the conclusion of the activity, ask the group whether it was difficult to work out what was happening without any words.

- ⊕ Play a short excerpt of a TV programme or advertisement or film to members of the group, with the sound off. Ask the group to discuss afterwards what the characters were saying and what was going on. If you like, you can replay the excerpt and ask people to invent the dialogue in any creative way you like as it goes along.

Conclude this section by asking the group to reflect on the experience; -were there any aspects of the story which came out more strongly because the story could not be ‘told’ in a straightforward way? How might being ‘deaf’ sharpen the attention to other things which are going on?

4. Reaching out to others: connecting with what others hear

Preparation:

Ask some young people in your congregation, worship group or community to suggest some contemporary music for you to listen to. [If you have young people in your group already then perhaps they could lead this section in particular, or even the whole process]. Collect several kinds of music from different genres for playing to the group and if possible record some tracks from music videos.

Ask your worship leader, choir/organ master or other music leader about the most requested music at baptisms, weddings and funerals. You can also make a tape of some of these.

- ⊕ Play the music and video extracts to the group. Divide people into pairs and ask them to discuss:
 - Did you enjoy listening to the music? (Be honest!)
 - Was there any music that connected to your own spiritual journey? If so, in what way?
 - Were there things about the music that you found difficult to hear or to understand?

Round this off by collecting the positive and negative feedback from the whole group.

- ⊕ If possible, ask invite young people in your congregation or community to come to the session to share their own feelings about their favourite music and what it means to them. If you have people in your congregation or fellowship who go clubbing, ask them to describe the attraction of the music and the clubbing community.
- ⊕ Discuss with the group the kinds of music used for the occasional offices in your church. What kinds of music or hymns are most popular? Have you come across any unusual requests? Does your church or fellowship have a standard set of music possibilities for these occasions? What could be done to engage people's own spiritual journeys more effectively?

Ask the group for suggestions for one thing that could be done in your situation to engage more effectively through music those people who don't often come to church.

5. Celebrating being church together

Preparation:

Work with others such as a local school, or your church choir to organise an activity such as a concert, carol singing, Songs of Praise evening or other music making activity and try to involve the local community.

Involve the group in your musical evening and gather together for feedback.

- ⊕ If a musical event is impossible, or you want to keep to the group session, watch the excerpt from the film *Sister Act* where the singing of Salve Regina brings young people in off the street (there is material about this film on our website). Another film excerpt might be the scene in *The Blues Brothers* where Jake sees the light in James Brown's church (there is material about this film on our website). Make sure these films are suitable for your group's ages. Ask the group what the excerpt suggests to them and discuss what kind of music would tempt people in from off the street in *your* area.

6. Praying together

Preparation:

If you don't want to sing together, you will need a music tape or CD of suitable music.

- ⊕ Spend some time together in prayer using a Taizé chant or listening to other meditative music such as Gregorian chant. Use the time to reflect on what God is saying through the music.

Agree on a favourite hymn with the members of the group and hum it quietly together without articulating any of the words. Ask the group to pray the words through in their minds.

Finish the time together with a period of complete silence.

Journey Points for Smell

Purpose of the journey: to become aware of the importance of smell in our lives.

To use awareness of smell to illuminate scripture and the way we worship.

To see shared smell experiences as a means of witness and learning from others.

1. Starting out: what have we got?

Preparation:

Be prepared to take your group around your church or place of worship.

- ⊕ Ask members of the group to walk around your place of worship and identify the prevailing smell. Ask them to consider what the smell is like? How welcoming is it?

Ask the group to discuss in pairs what kinds of smell make people feel welcome, relaxed, open, receptive, happy, peaceful. In pairs, or small groups, think about what smells could be associated with praise, prayer, confession, etc

2. Going deeper: identifying smells

Ask members of your group to bring along examples of scents or scented products which they use frequently on their person or in their homes. For the last activity you will need to collect examples of different smells eg hay, lavender, camphor, disinfectant, coffee, a pine branch etc

- ⊕ Using a flipchart or board, ask members of the group to list all the smells about their person: soap, shampoo, cologne, deodorant, washing powder, foot spray, liniment etc. List these in two columns, one for men and one for women. How many different fragrances for men and women are present? Are there groups of scents common to the group?
- ⊕ How good is your nose? Ask members of the group to bring along an example of a scented product they use frequently. Put these, unidentified, on a table and ask people to pick one not their own. Divide the group into pairs and get the pairs to try out their chosen scents and to try to identify who they belong to.
- ⊕ Ask the group to think about the familiar scent of people they love and to describe how they would recognise them if they had to by smell alone.
- ⊕ Provide examples of different distinctive smells. Ask members of the group to consider in pairs 'where were you when you last smelled this'?

Encourage the unfolding of stories by permitting people to have continued access to the smell.

Discuss together

- can shared smell bind us together as a loving community?

3. Entering the stench

- ⊕ Ask members of the group to list on a flipchart or board things that smell really bad. What do we think and feel about people who have to live with such smells? Where are the bad smells in the local community?

Ask the group to consider what initiatives could the church be involved in, or is already involved in, to transform the 'bad' smells of the local community?

Try to get the group to agree to engage in *one* thing which would help to transform the 'bad' smells within the community.

4. Reaching out to others

Preparation:

With others, organise a wine or juice tasting to which people outside the church can be invited. Ask permission to use some of the wine you use for communion (unconsecrated) in the tasting session, which you can water down as appropriate.

- ⊕ Organise a wine or juice tasting and ask people to concentrate on describing the smell of the drinks. The descriptions could be written on a board or on post it notes. Encourage people to be creative in their descriptions. The TV wine taster Jilly Goolden has even gone as far as to suggest she could smell 'wet dog' and 'rubber' in wine, so encourage people to be extravagant in their tasting descriptions. Make a note of what people say about the communion wine.

You can encourage the group to follow up any friendships made with others through this activity with an invitation card or a few lines about the Last Supper or Holy Communion.

5. Celebrating being Church together

Preparation:

Collect examples of any thing that will help imagine a bible story in terms of smell eg cooked fish or meat, the hay of the nativity stable. There are examples on the website to help you.

- ⊕ Take a familiar passage of scripture and study it together concentrating on the smell background and any imagery. Ask the group to consider if looking at scripture in this way brings out new perspectives and meanings. Ask the group to explore what being a disciple of Jesus would smell like.

6. Praying together

Preparation:

Collect together items to create a perfumed environment for prayer: scented candles, incense, essential oils or other perfumes.

- ⊕ Spend some time in silent meditation with perfume as a background. Ask people to concentrate on the scent and to imagine prayer being like a fragrance escaping from its source, permeating everything around with praise, petition or thanksgiving. Ask people to think how the scent can connect us with our memories, such that our whole lives can be offered to God and as a witness to his glory.

Journey points for Touching

Purpose of the journey: to think about and understand how much of the world we encounter through touch.

To understand the importance of touch in creating community and relationship.

To understand the responsibility involved in touching others.

To use touch to heal and to reconcile.

1. Starting out: what have we got

Preparation:

Notify the group in advance to bring along their favourite fabrics or favourite pieces of clothing. If doing the second activity, you will need to ask people to bring along clothing contributions and bring or create a dressing up box.

⊕ Dressing up

Use this especially to celebrate diversity within the group

Begin by encouraging people to bring their special fabrics or favourite item of clothing into a sacred space: this is my fabric. The items can be arranged or displayed if appropriate care is taken with them.

Ask the group to talk in pairs about why they chose their items. Or ask questions to draw out the stories the fabrics may bring with them eg why is this sari silk important, why is this college scarf so full of memory? Allow people to touch the items with care and reverence and to experience what they feel like.

⊕ Role play

Make a dressing up box and ask members of the group each to contribute an item, - clothes, shoes, hats etc. Ask members of the group to find items in the dressing up box and to use the items in a role play. The role play can be an imaginary story or relate to a Bible story such as Joseph's coat, the nativity or the scene at the empty tomb.

Ask the group to discuss what would be found in the Church's dressing up box? Make a list of any items (eg altar cloths or vestments, banners etc) which might be found. What might people outside the Church make of such items? How could you explain to those people what such items are for?

2. Going deeper: experiencing touch

Preparation

Find someone in your community who is skilled at face painting and/or makeovers using cosmetics and ask them to be part of this activity. If you have children in your group, the children might enjoy the face-painting. Older people might prefer to be part of the make-over experience. Check that the volunteers' skin is suitable for the paint and cosmetics and check that the materials used are safe and non-allergenic. Make similar checks if using face masks, soap and flannels. You will also need towels and tissues, make-up remover etc for clean up afterward.

Face-painting

- ⊕ Introduce the face-painter(s) to the group. Ask the group to select a willing volunteer to have their face painted or to experience the makeover. Ask the face-painter to take the group through the process, explaining what is going on at each stage. Invite the group to comment and ask questions.

Ask the painter(s) what it was like to touch people's faces and change their appearance. Ask the painted people what the experience of being painted was like and how they feel about their new look.

Any men who feel this activity is not for them could be invited to try a face mask or simply have their face washed and dried carefully by another person.

Mask making

- ⊕ A very interesting, but more complex task is mask making. If you want to try this in your group you should first check out an excellent description of the technique and its implications for spiritual discovery in Olive M Fleming Drane's article *Making Masks, healing persons, and teaching Practical Theology* which is available on our website. (Web icon)

3. Entering the world of the untouchable

Preparation:

Prepare a parcel of something like a small box of chocolates or bag of sweets as for a game of pass the parcel. You will a tape or CD player as you will need to control when the music stops and starts.

- ⊕ Ask the group to sit in a widely spaced circle. Ask one person to volunteer to be an 'untouchable'. In a large group there could be several volunteers. Tell the group you are going to get them to play pass the parcel but that the untouchable is never allowed to receive or pass on the parcel or to touch anyone in the course of the game. You will need to control the music to make sure this happens. If the volunteer inadvertently gets hold of the parcel, stop the game and take it away from them.

When someone finally wins, you must direct that the chocolates or sweets are shared out among the group, except for the 'untouchable' volunteer who doesn't get anything.

Ask the group to discuss what it was like to exclude a member from the activity and ask the volunteer to share his or her experience of being left out. Share any memories of being excluded or shut out and what that feels like. Finish by re-including the member in the group by some appropriate act of touching and by sharing some other food or drink with them. Ask the volunteer to share any thoughts on what is it like to be 'back'.

- ⊕ Ask the question: who are the untouchables in our community? How could we reach out to them in Christian love? Ask the group to try to find *one* thing the local church could do to reach out to people who never get to join in.

4. Reaching out to others: touch therapy, fabrics

Preparation:

Invite someone from the local community or local hospital who practices some form of therapeutic touch therapy to come and talk about what they do and to give a talk or demonstration. It is advisable to invite somebody who only offers physical therapy for relief of symptoms (eg physiotherapy), not spiritual healing, which may cause confusion.. The second activity requires prior planning for a community project involving fabrics. You could try to involve a sewing circle or knitting club, or anyone in your community who is good at craft and design. You will need fabric and frame materials for making the tent and sewing materials. You will need to give instructions about the project and commission the various parts of the construction.

- ⊕ Introduce the person who is to talk about and demonstrate their touch therapy. Members of the group can then be invited to ask questions, comment and to reflect on the talk or demonstration.

Tent-making

- ⊕ The artist Tracey Emin created a piece called *All the people I have ever slept with* in which she placed all the names of lovers and bedfellows in a tent. You could encourage the group to transform this idea by creating a ‘tent of joy’ using a large piece of fabric on a simple frame in which are placed or embroidered the names of people we love, or a ‘tent of healing’ for those who are sick and in need of Christ’s healing, or a ‘tent of remembrance’ as a means of celebrating the lives of people who have died.

Ask the group to discuss this experience and then encourage them to draw up a list and send invitations to others outside the church to ask if they want to contribute a name to the tent or be involved in the project. You could also ask local schools if they want to be involved in such a project.

If it is not possible to make a tent, a large sheet can be hung on a wall and similarly decorated, preferably in a way that enables people to touch rather than just look.

4. Celebrating being church together: A Coat of many colours

Preparation:

Following Peter Privett’s inspiration from the chapter on touch, find an old liturgical garment or a large spare coat or robe. A long scarf or shawl would also do. Decide on a ‘theme’ for the coat, related to something current within the church. It could be a liturgical event of a theme such as ‘reconciliation’. You will also need paper or card, safety pins, pens, pencils or paints.

Agree a suitable theme with the group. Bring the coat or scarf to the session and ask people to touch, hold and wear the garment while meditating on the chosen theme. Ask

the group then to look for scripture texts and images relating to the theme and to write or paint the texts on to paper or card. These can be carefully pinned to the garment. Gradually build up layers of texts and images. When it is finished discuss with the group how to use the garment within the church's liturgy in whatever way is appropriate, whether as a sermon illustration, a prayer point or an interactive event.

- ⊕ If you prefer, you could encourage the group to take the lead in another textile project such as a prayer quilt. There are lots of ideas for this at www.prayerquilt.org

Praying together

Preparation:

If you have made a tent or hanging, this can be used for prayer. Otherwise bring to the session a selection of items with interesting textures (eg a stone, cotton wool, a feather, a flower, a pine cone etc) which people can choose to hold as they pray. Ask people to close their eyes and spend a few minutes exploring their item with their fingertips. Then lead the group in this, or another appropriate prayer.

Lord,
Your world comes to us
In softness and hardness
In the rough and the smooth.
We feel the warmth of your sunlight,
The cold sharpness of your frosty air.
Our faces know your drying wind
And the wet splash of spray and rain.
May our hands reach out to others
With healing and unbroken hope,
So that they may come to recognise
The perfect touch of your divine love.
Amen

Journey points for tasting

Purpose of the journey: to think about taste experiences.

To investigate the relationship between feeding and our life with God.

To learn more about the responsibility involved in eating and sharing with others.

1. Starting out: what have we got?

Preparation:

You will need paper, pens, flip chart or board and a calendar

If your place of worship has a social or events committee or group, invite someone from that group to your session to contribute to the discussion

- ⊕ Ask the group to think about what kinds of social events take place in your community which involve food? These events can also include non-church events. Make a list of such events against a calendar.

Ask the group

- How many people outside the church are involved in such occasions?
- What would it take to offer more hospitality to more sections of the community?
- In what ways can a connection be made between sharing food and God's love for people?

Make a plan with your group to add at least *one* more social event to the life of your church or fellowship.

2. Going deeper: exploring flavours

Preparation:

Ask people to bring in a selection of foods or drinks with different tastes. For example, ask for a selection of different teas or coffees, wines, sweets, biscuits, fruits or spicy foods. You can just have a range of Pot Noodle if you like!

- ⊕ Invite group members to try a little of each and to write down the different flavours in order of preference.

Invite group members to share their preferences and to explore why some people prefer one kind of flavour to another. Ask the group to think further about whether your place of worship has a 'flavour' (eg denomination, style of worship, church tradition).

- What could be done to accommodate people who don't like the 'taste' of church?

- ⊕ You could also have a blindfold tasting of the various foods and invite the group to consider:

- How easy are different foods to identify by taste? Do any particular foods stand out?
- What do you think is the distinctive taste (or ‘salt ‘or ‘leaven’) of Christian faith in your own community?

3. Entering the world of the hungry

Preparation:

Tell the group beforehand that you are organising a fast day. If you don't already hold family fast days in your church or fellowship you should give guidance on what to do and invite people to go without food as appropriate to their age and health. This might mean going without food completely, or reducing to one meal, eating smaller meals, or ask people to give up tea, coffee or other favourite drink for that day.

- ⊕ Organise a fast day for the group. Ask people to come to the session feeling hungry

Place some food (eg a few pieces of fruit or pieces of cake etc) in the centre of the group and have it as a centrepiece throughout the discussion.

In pairs, invite people to share their experiences of times when they have gone without food, - perhaps in war time or before an operation.

After this time of sharing ask people to stop and listen to their bodies. What does talking about food in the presence of food do to our physical bodies? Invite people to notice their hunger and how they feel.

At the conclusion of this activity, throw the food away without allowing anyone to eat it. Invite the group to discuss how they feel about wasting the food.

- ⊕ As a result of raising awareness through this exercise, you could ask the group to help organise further fast days for your church or fellowship in which the money saved from not eating for a day is donated to an aid agency of your choice.

4. Reaching out to others: providing refreshment

Preparation:

In advance of the session give everyone in your group the task of making some snacks (cakes or biscuits, chapattis, pies, etc) and sharing it with someone they know, as a gift to a neighbour or a friend, or for people at work.

- ⊕ Invite the group to discuss in pairs what it was like to make the food and what reactions they got from sharing it. Invite the whole group to discuss together how the activity made people feel?
- ⊕ Ask the group to suggest locations, events and times when it would be possible to offer simple refreshments to people outside the church (eg visitors coming to your church,

social events, school events etc). Organise at least *one* further occasion when visitors or people you don't know, could be offered hospitality.

5. Celebrating being Church together: Feasting

Preparation:

Organise a party, either in someone's home or by asking members of the group each to bring a contribution to a shared meal, or by organising a fish and chip supper, agape meal or some other celebration.

- ⊕ This is intended to be a purely social and hospitable occasion. There is no outcome to this meal, - just allow everyone to enjoy themselves.
- ⊕ If you prefer, you could set the celebration within a worship context by organising the party to take place after a celebration of Holy Communion.

6. Praying together

Preparation

Decide what pilgrimage you would like to do and ask a couple of group members in advance to set up the refreshment, eg tea and cake or juice and crisps.

- ⊕ Use the church pilgrimage at <http://www.wordbytes.org/holyland/index.html> or construct a short pilgrimage around your own church or surrounding area with short prayers to use at each stop. There is material to help you do this on our website. Invite everyone to pause at the end of the pilgrimage and share in refreshment.

Journey points for imagining

Purpose of the journey: to learn about the power and possibility of imagination, wondering and dreaming

To learn more about the imagination of others

To encounter others creatively and to find ways to share faith.

Starting out: what have we got

Preparation:

You will need a number of everyday objects eg a bucket, a cheese grater, a mousetrap a dog's lead etc about twice as many objects as there are people in the group. Try to include some objects relating to church life, - a hymn book or a gift envelope.

The never-ending story

- ⊕ With the group sitting in a circle, place the objects in the centre. Ask each person to choose an object and to spend five minutes thinking about it, - what the object is, where it comes from, what might be done with it. Ask each person in turn to begin a story about his or her object. After about a minute, or sooner, if people begin to dry up, ask the next person to continue the story but to bring in their own object.

After everyone has told the story of their object, ask people how they felt about the exercise.

- Were some objects easier to deal with imaginatively than others?
- Did the group want to continue the story or to reach some sort of proper ending or conclusion?
- Was the exercise fun or hard work?

Going deeper: The game of the gift

Preparation:

You will need an 'unpleasant' object such as a bloody knife/axe from a joke shop or other toy store. Make sure the object looks as if it has been involved in violence. You can also do this game with a 'magic' ring.

- ⊕ Seat members of the group in a circle. Indicate at the beginning that there are no right or wrong answers in playing the game. The rules of the game are that each person in turn must hold the object. Beginning with the first person, each person offers the knife as a 'gift' to the next person. No one may refuse the gift but must treat the object as a gift from a friend, thank their friend for the gift and say what they might do with it before passing it on. This can also be done by miming or role play.

Without attributing the comments to individuals, make a list of what people said they would do with the knife (wash it, get rid of it, give it to police etc).

Check to see if anyone during the game spoke about using the knife in a violent way. If not, why did people want to avoid the violence of the knife?

- ⊕ Another version of this interesting game is to use a ‘magic’ ring. Play the game as in the knife example, but invite people to say what they would do with a magic ring.

Make a list of what people suggested would be uses for a magic ring. Were all the suggested uses ‘good’ uses? Would anybody be tempted to use the ring for personal gain, but said the ‘right’ thing anyway?

- ⊕ Invite the group to discuss whether handling these objects and talking about them was uncomfortable and if so why?

Entering the world of fading memory

You will need information for a memory task, and if you wish collect pictures of film stars and/or pop singers for a visual display. If you do the second activity you will need to use a pub quiz book or download a suitable quiz or mixture of quizzes from the internet. Try to use a wide range of categories.

- ⊕ Divide the group into pairs and give everyone a memory task. The task could be to write down all the verses of a long hymn, or to recall the plot of a well known film including the names of all the actors and the names of the characters they played. Alternatively, display pictures of film stars or pop singers past and present and ask people in pairs to identify them *and* name what films they starred in or the names of their hit singles.

Ask people to review their results. What did people do with any gaps, leave them blank? Guess? Make something up?

- ⊕ Get the group to do a pub quiz together by organising teams which are as mixed as possible in age range. Or you can organise a team game of *Trivial Pursuit* or *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* There is an interactive pub quiz about Jesus on the rejesus website www.rejesus.co.uk.

Ask group members to reflect on the questions they didn’t know the answers to or couldn’t quite remember. How did the team co-operate to find the answers?

Ask the group to discuss what they would feel like if they did not know any of the answers or remember any the details.

Reaching out to others: other people’s stories

Preparation:

Collect a set of magazine/newspaper photographs of unknown people (eg advertisement models) or ask the group members to bring in a selection of photographs which include a number of people in the background. A holiday video will do as well.

- ⊕ Invite group members to concentrate on one person in the background and imagine what they are doing there. Build up an imaginary profile of the person, -
 - What is the person called?

- Who are they with?
- Why are they there?
- What are they doing?
- How are they feeling?
- What is their life like?
- What dreams do they have?
- Where might they be a year's time?

The purpose of this process is to explore what it takes to turn strangers into friends and to examine the empathic process. Ask the group members to remember this exercise when they next make friends with a stranger or newcomer.

5. Celebrating being Church together

Preparation:

This section contains larger and more extensive activities using imagination resources. You can choose a single book or a film or a bible study for the exploration of imagination in this journey, but these activities can also be extended beyond the group and are supported by materials on the website.

Start a film club

- ⊕ Choose a suitable film or TV episode and allow enough time for people to watch and enjoy it together. Encourage people to discuss the themes, issues and ideas of the film afterwards. Draw out any themes and issues which are important to Christians.

Form a Reading Group

- ⊕ Choose a suitable book and give people at least a week to read the book. (In a regular reading group, you might want to meet at monthly or quarterly intervals). Encourage people to discuss the themes, issues and ideas of the book afterwards. Draw out any themes and issues which are important to Christians.

Imagining through Bible Study

- ⊕ The basis of the *Godly Play* experience is 'I wonder....' Choose a well known bible story and read through it in the group. Ask the group then to imagine the *back story* to what happens in the chosen story, where had the people just come from when they appear in the story, who had they talked to earlier in the day, what things had happened on the way to the story and what happens to them afterwards. This can be done as role play if you prefer.

Invite the group to consider how an invitation to wonder and dream can make bible study more creative and interesting.

6. Praying together: making a labyrinth

Preparation:

Using pieces of paper or card as stepping stones, construct a simple labyrinth in the form of a spiral, ending at a central point marked by a chair. While people are walking the labyrinth, it can help to dim the lights and have some quiet music playing in the

background. If you do this exercise with care, the labyrinth might be reusable, repeatable or could be scaled up as a resource for your whole congregation.

Ask the group to agree some simple images representing matters for prayer relevant to your particular church. Get members of the group to draw the images on to the stones.

Make some time for the group to walk the spiral one by one, praying through the issues marked by the images on the stones. Invite people to pause for about half a minute at the chair before leaving the labyrinth.

John 12 1-8 (New International Version)

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

John 12 (King James Version)

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Prayer from St Teresa of Avila

Lord Christ,

You have no body on earth but ours,

No hands but ours,

No feet but ours.

Ours are the eyes through which your compassion must look out on the world.

Ours are the feet by which you may still go about doing good.

Ours are the hands with which you bless people now.

Bless our minds and bodies, that we may be a blessing to others.

Amen