



The Word and the Common Good

Six sessions for groups

HERE : NOW : US
PEOPLE

 TOGETHER FOR THE
COMMON GOOD

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Acknowledgements

The Word and the Common Good is a standalone resource and also forms Part One of the *Here: Now: Us: People* Programme from Together for the Common Good. For more information on this programme, email info@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk.

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[https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/product-search/Calling People of Goodwill/](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/product-search/Calling%20People%20of%20Goodwill/)

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Here: Now: Us: People

Our vision is to see Christians transforming the world in the light of the Gospel by building the Common Good. We see this as:

- **Helping** churches, organisations and their people become better rooted in their community, releasing their gifts to be Christ's hands and feet where they live and work
- **Developing** a relational culture of love and friendship that puts people and communities first
- **Giving** people the resources to build the Common Good in all aspects of their lives
- **Reweaving** a sense of family and belonging in order to resist individualism and heal divisions generated by divisive ideologies
- **Building** durable local relationships between people and organisations for mutual wellbeing
- **Fostering** social solidarity to ensure that nobody and no community is left behind.

In our own context, this might mean a whole variety of different things:

- Better understanding the gifts we have to offer
- Building stronger relationships with neighbouring community groups and local institutions
- Strengthening communal bonds within our parishes and church communities
- Reaching beyond the 'usual suspects' to draw in people from different backgrounds and experiences
- Creating new relationships with others wanting to build the Common Good
- Listening for where God is already working in our locality
- Making small changes to our existing 'social outreach' activity so that we don't do things for people but with them
- Recognising opportunities for our institutions and workplaces to build the Common Good
- Developing new ways to build relationships with those on the peripheries and those we had previously overlooked.

The Word and the Common Good is the first part of the **Here: Now: Us: People** programme that aims to help communities build the Common Good. It works either as a standalone resource or as a warm-up to the latter two parts of the programme. You can find out more about the whole programme online at:

togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/training/here-now-us-people



Part 1

The Word and the Common Good: six 45-60 minute sessions, online or face-to-face, to encounter what the Bible has to say about the Common Good.



Part 2

The Common Good in Practice: a one-day face-to-face workshop to investigate the Common Good principles and explore your unique vocational responsibility.



Part 3

Living and Working for the Common Good: six 30-45 minute consolidating sessions, online or face-to-face, each one focusing on a practical step forward.

Coronavirus

The pandemic has changed so much. This programme is a way to sustain and rebuild relationships in communities that have been impacted, or will be as the consequences unfold. Further, some of the ways we used to do ministry may no longer be possible or appropriate in the new era. These resources can help us re-imagine and re-engage with mission in our localities afresh.

Part 1: The Word and the Common Good

These six 45-60 minute sessions help groups explore the Common Good by reflecting together on passages from the scriptures. They're an opportunity for conversations, relationship building, scripture study and a time to reflect on our own vocation in our own communities. The sessions work as many reflection/sharing/Bible study groups, with the addition of a 'takeaway question' to think about and explore while out in the community to help root the reflections on scripture and the Common Good in each person's own locality.

What it is

- Six sessions, exploring the Common Good through biblical passages
- A place for discussion and an opportunity to build new relationships and form community
- Either a standalone resource, or to be used as the first part of a three-part programme.

Who is it for?

- Groups of up to 20 people
- Ideally those who share an association with a particular place, church or other community
- A group made up of those from a variety of backgrounds, ages, experience, etc.


How

- Either gather a small team, or decide to lead the project yourself and invite others to be a part of it, setting and sharing practical details.
- Run the six straightforward sessions in person or on Zoom.
- For those doing something like this for the first time, more detailed guidelines are included in an appendix at the end of this resource.

Session Outline

1	Welcome, session outline and prayer (2-3 mins)	Make everyone feel welcome and at home and start with a short or simple prayer (you will find some suggestions in appendix 3). At least for the first couple of sessions, a little reminder of the session outline would be helpful. Slides are available here on the digital version of this resource.
2	Introductions (2-3 mins)	Introduce the session you'll be looking at today. If it's the first session, give a chance for people to introduce themselves and introduce the programme. If anyone missed the first session and is new to the group, give them a chance to introduce themselves.
3	Reflections from the previous session (8 mins)	Unless this is the first week, share any reflections that have occurred to people since last week, especially the questions people were invited to 'take away' with them.
4	Context for Bible reading (2 mins)	A chance to share a little context to the passage. Read the notes for the session and share what you think are the most important aspects of it in your own words.
5	Bible reading aloud (2-3 mins)	Invite two people to read the Bible passage aloud, one after the other with a short pause between.
6	Reflection video (or Read) (4 mins)	Play the video of the reflection or, if you're not able to play a video, read it from the <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> booklet. Links to individual videos are posted in each session, but all can be downloaded on the digital version of this resource through this link .
7	Share the questions with the group (1 min)	People should not try and rush to answer all these questions, but take the ones that are most helpful and move between them as is needed.
8	Sharing/discussion (20-25 mins)	You may want or need to break people into smaller groups of four or five.
9	Sharing back (5-10 mins)	If the group is split into smaller groups, invite participants to share a little of their conversations in the wider group
10	Question to take away (2 mins)	Share the 'Question to take away', and for the first couple of sessions explain the concept (see slide 9 or appendix 1 p22).
11	Prayer to end (1-2 mins)	A prayer is provided at the end of the session outline and on the slides, but feel free to make this your own.
12	Next session	Briefly flag the theme and date.

Session 1: All Who Believed Were Together


ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	<p>The first session is a good chance for people to meet each other, though this means that you may not have as much time for discussion in this session.</p> <p>This passage and reflection looks at how the early church's shared faith fostered a sense of togetherness in a community as diverse as they come.</p>	
Duration		45-60 minutes
Slides		Slides 3-10
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people's lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the group first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If you're running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen.</p> <p>If you're running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions).</p>

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	As this is the first session, it's important to give people a chance to meet each other, especially if those involved don't know each other already. The questions in the slides will give people a chance to share a little about themselves but, depending on the number, try to put a cap on how long people should take.

Context	<p>The Acts of the Apostles, fifth book of the New Testament, a valuable history of the early Christian church. Acts was written in Greek, presumably by the Evangelist Luke, whose gospel concludes where Acts begins: namely, with Christ's Ascension into heaven.</p> <p>Chapter 2 starts: 'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place'. It goes on to describe how 'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability'.</p>
The reading	<p>Acts 2: 42-47</p> <p>'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all their people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.'</p>
Reflection video	<p>https://youtu.be/RNmrWz6jdbw</p>
Discussion: Share questions Discussion Sharing back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What story or image came to mind with the reading? • In what ways has God been working to sustain the common life of your church and community? • To what extent does your community embody a 'mutually supportive, practical common life'? • What do you do already as a community that resonates with this reading? What are your 'wonders and signs'? • Rowan Williams once said: 'When you meet another person you are standing on holy ground'. What does he mean, and how does it relate to the passage?
Question to take away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where locally is community built? Where do people come together, share their lives and experiences with people in common, and find meaningful relationships?
Closing the session: Prayer Next time	<p>Lord God Who sends his Spirit upon his people And builds his church; Help us to work together, To build the Common Good, And so make you known. Amen.</p>

Session 2: Come, Let Us Build Ourselves A City


ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	<p>This session contrasts the Tower of Babel with Pentecost.</p> <p>Why does God intervene to frustrate communication in this situation?</p> <p>What are the differences between ‘the Common Good’ and ‘the common bad’?</p>	
Duration		45 mins
Slides		Slides 11-18
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people’s lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the audience first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If you’re running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen.</p> <p>If you’re running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions).</p>

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	If most people were there last week, just let anyone new have the chance to introduce themselves.
Feedback from takeaway Q’s	A chance for people to share anything they explored locally with the takeaway questions from last week.
Context	This is the story of the Tower of Babel. The expression is used colloquially – what does it mean?

	<p>This story is nestled between the story of Noah and the flood and the calling of Abram, later Abraham, and like much of the rest of the book of Genesis it looks to our origins. Although tradition has held that Moses wrote Genesis and the following four books of the Bible, modern biblical scholars believe these books are the work of many hands over hundreds of years.</p>
The reading	<p>Genesis 11: 1-8</p> <p>Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly'. And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for water. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' The Lord came down to see the city and tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, 'Look, they are one people, and they all have one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech'. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.</p>
Reflection video	<p>https://youtu.be/1bY_1JLYmUE</p>
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Share questions</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Sharing back</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does any word or phrase strike you? • Are we ever guilty of putting time into things because of our own particular self-interest or reputation that might not be truly good? • How is God supporting you in your endeavours? • How do you consult God – as a group or community? • What practical steps can we take to ensure we're working for the Common Good
Question to take away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which local institutions are helping to build the Common Good, and are there any you think might be misguided, or seem more like vanity projects?
<p>Closing the session:</p> <p>Prayer</p> <p>-Next time</p>	<p>God of all, Who looks down upon human endeavours, And frustrates wrong plans; Reveal to us what is really good, And plant within us worthwhile aims, So we can build the Common Good. Amen.</p>

Session 3: Establish Justice In The Gate


ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	The prophet Amos calls on the elders of the town to take just decisions and serve the cause of justice after seeing the innocent and powerless being treated unfairly, especially through the workings of unjust markets.	
Duration		45 mins
Slides		Slides 19-26
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people's lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the audience first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If you're running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen.</p> <p>If you're running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions),</p>

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	If most people were there last week, just let anyone new have the chance to introduce themselves.
Feedback from takeaway Q's	A chance for people to share anything they explored locally with the takeaway questions from last week.
Context	Although Amos is considered a prophet, and this book is located alongside the books of other minor prophets in the Bible, he thought of himself as simply a shepherd and grower of figs from Tekoa, just 10 miles outside Jerusalem. His book focuses on denouncing the current state of Israel, having moved away from Yahweh.

<p>The reading</p>	<p>Amos 5: 14-15a</p> <p>‘Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so, the God of hosts will be with you, just as you have said Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate.’</p>
<p>Reflection video</p>	<p><u>https://youtu.be/9xTJEFqlcNk</u></p>
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Share questions Discussion Sharing back</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did something stand out to you in this short reading? • Amos presents a stark choice between good and evil. Is it always clear? • What are the challenges in working for the Common Good? How can we ensure all interests are served? • Building moral markets can entail doing business with integrity, participating as ethical savers and investors, helping those who have fallen victim to debt through dishonest dealing or making wrong choices, or campaigning for adequate conditions of employment. What practical things could you do in your context?
<p>Question to take away</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What examples are there of businesses or other organisations contributing to moral markets in your locality?
<p>Closing the session:</p> <p>Prayer Next time</p>	<p>God of justice, Who promises to have mercy; Enable us to seek good not evil, Establish justice where we are, Sustain moral markets, And help us always recognise your presence among us. Amen.</p>

Session 4: That They May All Be One


ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	<p>This session is all about unity, one-ness, reconciliation and a world that recognises God's love.</p> <p>It is also about the importance of prayer: we are called to pray in the same way Jesus prays to his Father.</p>	
Duration		45 mins
Slides		Slides 27-34
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people's lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the audience first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If you're running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen.</p> <p>If you're running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions)</p>

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	If most people were there last week, just let anyone new have the chance to introduce themselves.
Feedback from takeaway Q's	A chance for people to share anything they explored locally with the takeaway questions from last week.
Context	This passage describing Jesus' prayer for all believers comes just before he is betrayed and arrested and comes after his last teaching moment with his disciples in the Gospel of John. This may indicate that the message is particularly significant.

<p>The reading</p>	<p>John 17:20-24</p> <p>I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.</p>
<p>Reflection video</p>	<p>https://youtu.be/GNN0XuwrS_0</p>
<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Share questions</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Sharing back</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does any word or phrase strike you from Jesus' prayer? • What does it mean for you that God is the eternal Common Good? How might this affect how you speak with people about faith? • What joys and challenges have you experienced when building bridges or being reconciled with others? Do you have any hints or tips for others in this important work? • Working with others for the Common Good is a response to Jesus' prayer. How can our common identity in Christ help in working with others?
<p>Question to take away</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many other Christian communities are there in your neighbourhood? Are there any ways that you know of where Christians have been able to 'be as one' across these communities?
<p>Closing the session:</p> <p>Prayer</p> <p>Next time</p>	<p>God of glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Give us faith; To take risks for the Common Good, And to be reconciled with each other, So that we can be one with you. Amen.</p>

Session 5: You Are God's People


ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	This passage is about the mission of God and his people, and the language Peter uses points us to a rich understanding of what it means to be God's people, and what this asks of us.	
Duration		45 mins
Slides		Slides 35-42
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people's lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the audience first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you're running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen. If you're running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions).

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	If most people were there last week, just let anyone new have the chance to introduce themselves.
Feedback from takeaway Q's	A chance for people to share anything they explored locally with the takeaway questions from last week.
Context	Peter, who describes himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, writes this short letter to fellow Christians in time of the early Church, the period after Jesus' death and resurrection. It is a letter that he hopes to be encouraging for his fellow Christians as they are in the midst of working out what it means to follow Jesus.

The reading	1 Peter 2:9-12 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you, as aliens and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.'
Reflection video	https://youtu.be/ZUHn6iA2SiY
Discussion: Share questions Discussion Sharing back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stands out to you from this passage? • In what ways does your Christian hope shape your life? Reflect for a moment on what it feels like to be God's people. • Do you have a sense of gratitude for what you have received? How might you 'give back'? • As part of its mission, is your church involved in nurturing new social enterprises or helping those who need support?
Question to take away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working for social justice is an important part of working for the Common Good. How have you seen this take shape in your town or locality?
Closing the session: Prayer Next time	God of mission, Help us to live well together: Loving our neighbours, And working for justice; So that our common life witnesses to your goodness, And makes you known among nations Amen

Session 6: An Eternal Gospel

ABOUT THE SESSION		
Overview	The angel's message is proclaimed throughout the world because everyone is valued by God and can respond to the eternal gospel. God is concerned that people should act justly.	
Duration		45 mins
Slides		Slides 43-49
Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and review the reading in the context of what is happening: in the country; in your area; in your community; in people's lives.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	List some examples of your own, to prompt, but ask for examples from the audience first.
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>If you're running it on Zoom/online, have the slides ready to share the prayers, reflection and questions on the screen.</p> <p>If you're running it in person, ensure you have a screen and speakers for the slides, or that you have resources printed off and visible to all (prayers, the reflection from <i>Calling People of Goodwill</i> and questions).</p>

Running the session

Welcome, session outline and prayer	After welcoming people, let them know what to expect from the session and use the Together for the Common Good prayer from the slides or select another to begin the session.
Introductions	If most people were there last week, just let anyone new have the chance to introduce themselves.
Feedback from takeaway Q's	A chance for people to share anything they explored locally with the takeaway questions from last week.
Context	The Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, while in exile. It is the account of judgement and tribulation that was revealed to him, which makes for a very powerful, vibrant and vivid book.

The reading	Revelation 14:6-7 Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.’
Reflection video	https://youtu.be/589ddfi4G4c
Discussion: Share questions Discussion Sharing back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stands out to you from this passage? • Are we prepared to work with others to build the Common Good? Do you think this is a good test of our commitment to working for God’s justice? • Do we recognise the need to care for creation? • Caring for the environment and building sustainable communities is important for both ourselves and future generations. This may involve anything from driving less to making choices that support family life. What practical steps can you take in your context to care for the world around you?
Closing the session: Prayer Next time	Eternal God, Who made all things, And puts all things right; Help us to put you first, And work with everyone of goodwill, As we respond to your call: to pursue the Common Good. Amen.

Appendix 1: How to use this resource

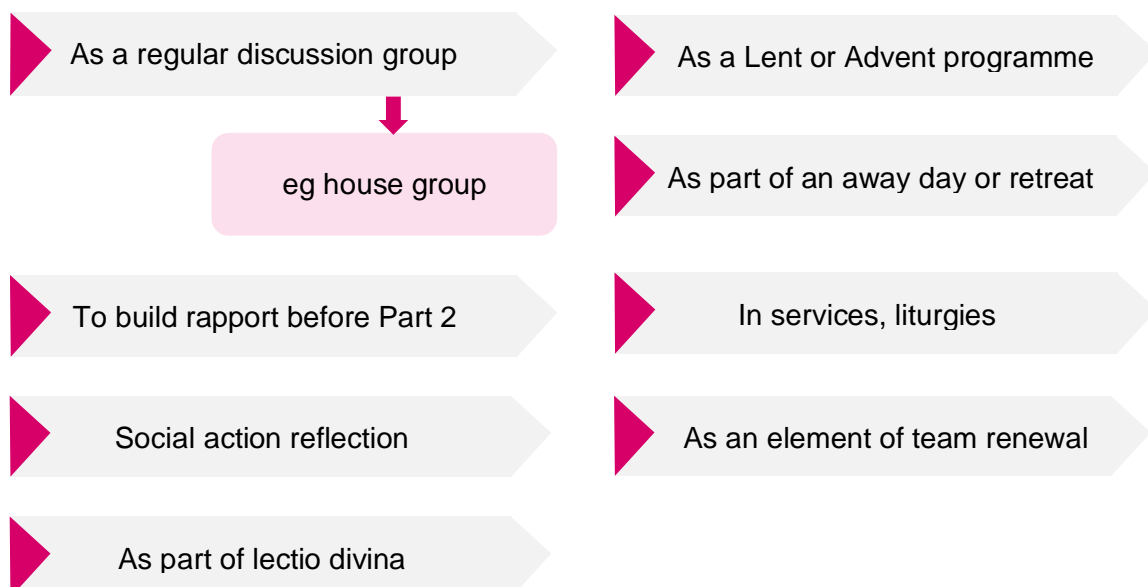
The Word and the Common Good resource is helpful in a variety of contexts. The six sessions work well as a standalone resource. They also form Part 1 of the 3-part *Here: Now: Us People* programme, setting a biblical context for Parts 2 and 3.

This guide is designed for face-to-face meetings but if you're unable to meet in person, the sessions will work well online too. Your group leader can make the necessary adaptations. Appendix 2 has some tips for holding sessions online.

Why you might use the sessions

- To build rapport within a group/groups representative of your community as a prelude for renewing and expanding your work towards the Common Good
- To start you thinking about what God is asking you to do to build the Common Good
- To enable individuals and groups to make sense of the world we live in
- To encourage people to read the Bible more frequently
- To encourage lay leadership in order that people might step forward to help solve problems within their communities

When you might use the sessions



Who could run the sessions

The leader of the group or community could run the first one to role-model how it is done, then share the leadership by asking for volunteers.

Everything is provided so it shouldn't be too daunting. This is a good way of developing leadership; different voices add variety to the sessions.







Everyone should have a voice, so share input and try to encourage everyone to contribute.

Outline of each session

A full outline of each session can be found on page 5 of this guide

Scripture used in the sessions

Six short passages have been chosen from the Bible to illustrate the Common Good. The passages should help people and their communities discern how they can respond to God's call, as a group, with their gifts, at this time, in this place.

	Acts 2	Highlights when the first Christians received the Holy Spirit and how the Common Good is experienced with others. It is a common rather than individual pursuit.
	Genesis 11	Tells the story of a people working together, but for the wrong purpose. They sought their own glory rather than God's.
	Amos 5	Teaches us that the Common Good has a spiritual dimension, as well as including areas of life-like business and legal dealings.
	John 17	Records Jesus' prayer that 'they may all be one', both because his followers are reconciled to one another and because they know God.
	1 Peter 2	Makes a strong connection between the Common Good and witnessing to God. It delves into the Old Testament to show that living for the Common Good is a model of God's purpose for all of us.
	Revelation 14	Shows an angel proclaiming the eternal Gospel, a vision which reveals the wide range of our work for the Common Good.

✓ How to prepare for the sessions

Planning

- ☐ Select a date and time.
- ☐ Decide whether you want a colleague, parishioner to assist you. Another option is to host the first one yourself then alternate the host role amongst participants.
Decide whose contact details will be used.
- ☐ Ideally, organise refreshments – tea, coffee, biscuits etc.

Invitations

- ☐ Consider your purpose in running the programme.
- ☐ If it's the first part of Here: Now: Us People, then consider a mix of participants and see the 'Nutshell' document for guidance on who might participate.
Personal invitations are best. Try not to exceed a maximum of 20 people.
- ☐ Decide how and where to advertise. Select your words carefully. Ideally, match the description within the context of what you know concerns and matters to your intended audience.

The Venue

- ☐ Select a suitable venue: a hospitable space. Book the room.
If holding the sessions online, see the Zoom tips in appendix 2.
- ☐ Consider how to set up the room as a sacred and convivial space: small table with cloth, flowers, candle, statue, crucifix or icon. Put out chairs in a circle.

Resources

- ☐ Order sufficient copies of the booklet, *Calling People of Goodwill: The Bible and the Common Good*. Available from the following at £3.99 plus postage:
[https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/product-search/Calling People of Goodwill/](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/product-search/Calling%20People%20of%20Goodwill/)
- ☐ Consider listing questions on a large sheet of paper to hang on the wall: What is God saying to me? What is God saying to your community now?
- ☐ Bring along a local newspaper or cuttings as part of a display on the wall.
- ☐ Consider using music to start, during reflection time, at the end.

How to open a session

- Start with the Together for the Common Good prayer – **see appendix 3.**
- Decide whether to do introductions at the start. If you want people to have open and honest conversations an early opportunity makes it easier later.
- Start with yourself and say three things: your name, your role/ministry/group you belong to and something of interest to lighten the mood. For instance, best thing that's happened to me this week; nicest thing said to me this week; funniest thing that's happened to me recently. Specify – two minutes, max!
- If it's a large group, ask people to do this in pairs or small groups.
- If you decide to have refreshments at the start encourage the group to mingle, get to know names. And take a lead yourself by making connections in the group.
- Ask people to really listen to one another and to give equal air time to each other. On the other hand, if people do not wish to speak that is fine too. But avoid filling gaps yourself too often.
- Advise people that confidentiality is key: other than what the session is all about, nothing disclosed should be repeated outside the four walls.

Reflections: preparing participants for sharing

After the Bible reading and a few moments of silence there is an opportunity for people to share their thoughts.

It is important that you lead and prompt but do not dominate the sessions. Suggestions for reflection are given below and could be incorporated in the session. But, above all, listen and encourage individuals to do the same.

Here are a few tips to help you prepare people to listen.

1	During the period of silence you have been listening to what God has to say to you.
2	Try to follow a simple principle: do not comment on what another person says. This is counter-cultural; we are used to stating our position. This means that when you are listening, you are not preparing a response, or judging what they say. Listen.
3	Each person has a unique story to tell about what they feel God has said to them in their moments of reflection. By listening we receive gifts from other people and get a richer, multifaceted insight into how God is working in different people's lives.
4	Each person should share only what they feel comfortable sharing. You don't have to say much but it is good to hear all voices.
5	You may want to share how you experienced the Bible passage, the reflection and the question prompts. How this affected you personally, your understanding, your faith, your sense of justice and/or prejudices etc. No need for detailed accounts.

6	Don't worry if you feel like you have nothing profound to share. Often it is the more ordinary statements which are honest reflections of our experience and offer insights that resonate with others. Every now and then you might even surprise yourself and say something you didn't even think was there. Trust that whatever you say, however simple or short, is what you are guided to say.
7	Keep your inputs brief – 3-4 minutes maximum. Too much information is hard to process for others; make sure there is time for everyone. Once everyone has had a chance to speak, there may be time for a subsequent round of sharing.
8	Leave silence between speakers to allow what each person said to settle in our hearts and minds. If you jump in too quickly, they may not feel heard. We need those few moments to gather our own thoughts before we are ready to speak.
9	We live out our faith in different ways. We respect one another's perspectives and individual spiritual journey through listening attentively. Do not try to advise, preach, fix, convert or heal anyone else. God is working with us at our own pace and the group offers space and support for us to tap into the spirit and hear that others are on a journey too.
10	What is shared in the group stays in the group. Avoid carrying on the discussion after the meeting.

Takeaway Questions

The idea of this is to offer you something to ponder as you are out and about in your local community so that the group discussions can be rooted in this reality. It can be something you keep in mind as you are ordinarily out and about, or something you may want to do with others as an intentional activity.

How to close a session

It is very important that the session ends well. Make sure that you leave sufficient time for the Examen and the closing prayer.

- Ensure the candle is lit. Hold a brief silence for everyone to take stock, to pause, to listen to God. This enables a sense of calm before everyone leaves.
- Thank people for their presence and input. Remind them of the next meeting.

Getting feedback

- At the end of the session, or soon after, ask a couple of people whom you know will give you honest responses if they can think of any ways to improve the session. Ask people whom you expect may give you differing opinions.
- Write up a short 'story' of the session describing what came out of it of importance for your community. Please send to T4CG as it is useful to us too. Email info@togetherforthecommongood.co.uk.

Appendix 2: Running the sessions online

When it isn't possible to meet face-to-face, you can hold the sessions online, with some minor adaptations. You may be familiar with platforms like Skype or Zoom. These tips are for Zoom but most will apply to all platforms. If you're new to hosting online meetings, or to Zoom, see the next page.

Appoint someone to host	<p>Once your group has agreed to meet, appoint someone familiar with Zoom to take responsibility for hosting and managing the technical stuff.</p> <p>You may wish to appoint someone else to lead the session content.</p>
How to invite people	<p>Before each session, send a brief and friendly email with the date and time.</p> <p>In your message, encourage your group to be ready for the session with a cup of tea or coffee, arrange to be in a quiet place and light a candle if they wish. Remind them to have their copy of Calling People of Goodwill to hand, and a Bible if they have one.</p> <p>Paste the unique Zoom meeting link, code and password into your invitation message. Reassure people that they just need to click on the link, although they may be asked for the password. Ask them to log on in plenty of time before the session start time.</p>
Hosting the session	<p>On the day of your meeting, ensure you start the Zoom meeting ten minutes before the due start time. As people log on and you admit your participants, welcome each person and chat informally, helping each one learn to use the basic functions:</p>
Getting everyone on board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the Mute button and invite people to test it. In small groups people don't need to mute all the time but may wish to do so when not speaking. Establish an agreed protocol where participants mute themselves when there is background noise at home (dogs, children, drilling, rustling of papers). A larger group may prefer default muting. • Encourage everyone to feel free to contribute, whilst being respectful of each other. Remind them of the importance of listening and giving everyone an opportunity to speak – if they wish. • Invite everyone to click on Gallery view in the top right-hand corner so they can see each other. • Encourage people to use the Chat if they wish to share a thought, word or phrase that resonates - invite them to try it out to get comfortable with it. This feature may be most useful in larger groups. • There is a feature where people click a button to raise a hand to ask a question but this shouldn't be needed in a small group. • You may wish to discuss with your group ways of using the Chat so that good ideas can be collected and perhaps shared with others.

New to Zoom?

Zoom is a video-conferencing platform which enables you to host or join an online meeting. People can access a Zoom meeting from any PC, mac, laptop, tablet or smartphone as long as their device has a camera and microphone and they have good Wi-Fi. People don't need to download the Zoom app to join a meeting. All they need is a link to click on to join.

There are different price plans: there is a free option, which enables you to hold a meeting for up to 40 minutes; you can log in again and re-start for another 40 minutes for free. However if you are going to use Zoom to host a regular group with sessions longer than 40 minutes, you may prefer to pay the monthly subscription. Visit the site here: <https://zoom.us/>

How to set up a meeting	<p>If you have the Zoom app already, set up your meeting using 'Schedule'.</p> <p>If you do NOT have the Zoom app installed, go to zoom.us and select 'Host a Meeting' to start the installation. Do a couple of trials with friends and family until you are confident in using the platform.</p>
Inviting people	Copy the invitation link, password and unique code. Paste it into a friendly email message and send to your invitees (see previous page).
How to join a meeting	<p>Tell your participants all they have to do is click the link they have been sent. They shouldn't usually need a password. Alternatively, go to https://zoom.us/join and enter the meeting code. For more information:</p> <p>https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting</p>
How to host a Meeting	<p>Select 'Manage Participants' under the View menu. This opens a side panel with details of participants joining the meeting.</p> <p>You as the host will be asked to 'admit' each participant. You will see when they've connected their audio and video.</p> <p>Click on 'Gallery view' in the top right-hand corner so you can see all of your group at the same time. 'Speaker view' is better for presentations.</p> <p>Help new users learn how to use the various Zoom features below.</p>
Zoom features	<p>The bottom toolbar has various features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mute/unmute • Start/stop video • Manage/participants • Share screen • Chat • Record • Reactions • End/leave meeting <p>Note: items in bold are for hosts only. The host has the option to mute participants. Permission is required from the host if a participant wants to record the meeting.</p>



Appendix 3: A selection of prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

From Matthew 6:9-13 (Revised Standard Version)

Together for the Common Good prayer

Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit +
Come Holy Spirit. We welcome you here in our midst.
Govern our hearts and minds, govern every aspect of our time together.
Be in every thought and word; in every intention and motive.
Lord, we thank you for those who have been an inspiration to us.
Thank you for calling us through the Gospel to work together,
for ideas and for each other.
We pray for others working for the Common Good and for those who resist it.
Bind us together across our traditions and move our heart's desire closer to the
heart of your desire for us.
Lord, give us the grace do your will, and make our mission a joy.
In the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

General Thanksgiving

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men; We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer

For our communities

Lord, we thank you for our communities, for our places of education and leisure, commerce and recreation. We give thanks for every life-giving encounter and for showing us that you are present in all around us. Help each of us to see that we are each other's gifts, and to discover together our joint purpose and vocation.

Your Kingdom come,

All: Your will be done.

For healing our divisions

Lord, we are all members of one body: give us the courage to listen and look for common ground in unexpected places. Help us build relationships where there is mistrust, suspicion or estrangement. Lord, show us how we can help to heal divisions in our community, local, national and global.

Your Kingdom come,

All: Your will be done.

For human dignity and belonging

We thank you for the dignity of our human nature redeemed in Christ. Restore to the hearts of all people a sense of mutual responsibility and community. Help us to be witnesses to the greatness of human worth, from the weakest to the strongest.

Your Kingdom come,

All: Your will be done.

For reconciliation and our common humanity

Father, give us faith, through friendship with you, to discover our common humanity, to listen to and befriend people who feel sidelined, to encourage and lift up the disheartened, the lonely, the rejected - so that we can be one with you. Give us the courage to take risks for the Common Good, and to be reconciled with each other.

Your Kingdom come,

All: Your will be done.

For our inspiration to transform the world

Father, open our closed hearts. Make your ways known. You sent your Spirit upon your people across the world to help us to work together across our differences, to build the Common Good. Inspire us, across our different traditions, to grow into the Church as you would wish it to be and so make you known among all nations. Help us to serve you with joy: make us instruments of your love and let your glory be over all the earth.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **All Amen.**

Appendix 4: The Common Good Principles

Rooted in Gospel values, these principles can help us as we build our common life together.

The Common Good is the shared life of a society in which everyone can flourish - as we act together in different ways that all contribute towards that goal, enabled by social conditions that mean every single person can participate.

We create these conditions and pursue that goal by working together across our differences, each of us taking responsibility according to our calling and ability.



The Common Good

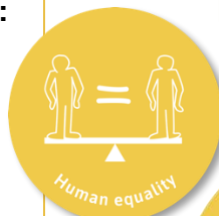
is built as people participate freely in the shared activities that generate it.

It is not a utopian ideal and cannot, by definition, be imposed.

The Human Person

Human Dignity:

Every person is worthy of respect simply by virtue of being human.



Human Equality: All human beings are of equal worth in the eyes of God.



Dignity of Work:

Work is more than just a way to make a living – it is good for our humanity, because through work we participate in God's great creative plan.



Respect for Life:

People matter more than things: each human life has value, from the youngest to the oldest, from the weakest to the strongest.



