# Seeking God’s Way Together

Facilitator’s Guide

# Introduction and Explanation

Seeking God's Way Together is a way to prayerfully come to a common mind on a particular decision. Through a structured process we are enabled to slow down and hear each other and the Holy Spirit in a safe space.

The process requires a facilitator: you may have someone locally who can do this but if not, then please contact Julia Hill (julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org) for a facilitator from the Deanery Parish and Support Team and we will be glad to help.

The framework is set out below and it creates space to consider any question facing you by

* prayerfully reflecting on existing knowledge and experience on that question
* listening to each other and God
* responding to the question together in the light of what you feel God is calling you to do

## The Structure

### Introduction

* **Welcome and outline** of the structure and purpose of meeting together.
* **Name today’s question** and ideally why it has been chosen.
	+ *It can help if someone has drafted a version/s of the question in advance so that the group can refine it.*
	+ Check that the question is the right one and don't be afraid to adapt it
	+ Make sure that the question is displayed for all to see
	+ *If you are Seeking God’s Way Together as part of the ‘Church – What we are and what we could be’* process then example questions might be:
		- ‘What gives us life and energy?’
		- ‘What gifts is God calling us to use ?'

### The Process - creating the space to seek God's way together

* Start with **Dwelling in the Word** to help us focus on God and each other
* Set out the ground rules for the process:
	+ **Attend** - actively listen to each other through, in and beyond words
	+ **Assert** - speak honestly, without apology or domination
	+ **Decide** - reach a ‘common mind’ about the matter
	+ **Act** - live out our faith according to our decisions; action will be the fruit of this conversation.

### Pool everyone's thoughts - what information or thinking do we already have that will help us answer this question? Where is God in all this?

During this stage we are **only** capturing people’s thoughts **not** discussing them – that comes later.

* Keep the question and the ground rules central
* Someone should capture the contributions as they are made
* If the whole group is big then split into smaller groups and come back together for the summarising and talking about stage.
* Give people some individual time to reflect before making their contributions and consider what sources, documents, thoughts and knowledge we have to support us in considering the question in hand.
* **At this stage we brainstorm the current issue or question from three viewpoints :**

- **Scripture and Tradition** ( the Scriptures, creeds, liturgy, worship, prayer, the legacies and stories of our Christian tradition and ancestors)

- **Society and Culture** ( what we see on the news, in our neighbourhoods, society in general, in schools, at the office, human institutions and values)

- **The Experience of the Faithful**, both personal and communal ( personal and community experience of this issue) If you were in groups then each one reports back to the full group

At the end of this section, if you were in groups then each one reports back to the full group

### Re-read the Philippians passage

### once out loud and let it sit a moment.

### Have an open or 'floated conversation

### based on the thoughts and learning we have gathered and bearing in mind 'What is God up to here? as we explore our question.

### Refer to the brainstormed ideas and open up and talk about them.

### Now is the chance to talk about what we have noted down (an open conversation).

### Reflect together on what we have heard and summarise what we have discerned. What is the 'sense of the room' now ?

### At the end of this conversation, someone reflects back on what they are hearing – this is the “sense of the room”.

### It is important to articulate this so that it can be refined until it feels that it is really the collective sense of the room.

### This doesn’t mean that every individual will feel that the collective will would have been their own choice but that there is a shared sense of what the answer to the question is. We talk here about our shared sense of where we have got to.

### Moving Forward.

### Agree how you will now move forwards in terms of action – even if that is just for someone to send the thinking that has emerged around for a further time of reflection and agreed point for decision making.

### Close with prayer.

# Suggested timeframe for Seeking God's Way Together.

 The whole process can be achieved in around 90 minutes but you may wish to extend this to a couple of hours to include refreshment etc.

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|  | 5 mins | Welcome, introduction, explain process |
|  | 5 mins | Name today’s question |
|  | 15 mins | Dwelling in the Word |
|  | 5 mins | Set out the ground rules for the process |
|  | 15 mins | Pooling of our thoughts from three viewpoints |
|  | 5 mins | Re-read Philippians passage |
|  | 15 mins | Open or floated conversation  |
|  | 10 mins | Reflection and summarising |
|  | 10 mins | Moving Forward |
|  | 5 mins | Closing Prayer  |

For a short version of this document for participants please see attached card which is part of ‘Enabling Ministries – a Guide for exploration’