



#LIVELENT

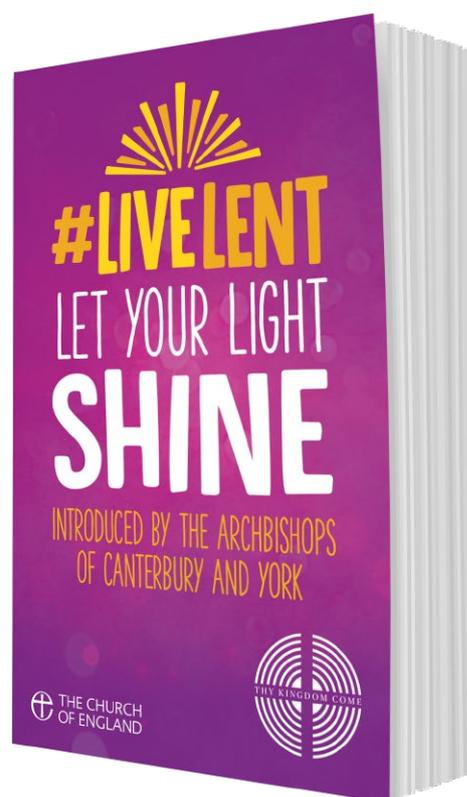
LET YOUR LIGHT
SHINE

A 5-SESSION COURSE
FOR GROUPS



#LIVE LENT

**Did you know that the 2017
#LiveLent campaign from
the Church of England
reached over 2.5m people
on social media?**



We are hoping to engage even more people during Lent 2018, which begins on 14 February (Ash Wednesday) and finishes on 1 April (Easter Day).

There are lots of ways you can take part in **#LiveLent** online and share it with your friends, family, church and community.

- Buy booklets from www.chpublishing.co.uk
- Find out more at www.churchofengland.org/lent
- Sign up for the **Let Your Light Shine** daily reflections by phone or e-mail
- Download the **#LiveLent app** for iOS or Android devices
- Download a **5-session Lent course** based on the weekly themes in *Let Your Light Shine* together with videos and other materials to support churches and groups.
- Find a range of graphics and other **resources to share** on social media in support of the campaign.

**Copies of the book are available individually
or in bulk-saving packs from Church House Publishing.
Order via www.chpublishing.co.uk or call 01603 785923**

GROUP LEADERS NOTES

Welcome to the **LiveLent** group study materials! The Gospel is God's rescue mission to bring us from darkness to light. This is the work of Jesus, the Light of the World. But it's not a solo mission: Jesus turns to his followers and says, "You are the light of the world... so let your light shine."

This resource is designed to complement the **LiveLent: Let Your Light Shine!** daily booklet <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/live-lent> for 2018. Over the next five weeks, you will have the opportunity to explore with your group what the challenge to let your light shine might mean in the context of your daily life. The material has been written by **Anna Drew**, based on the booklet by **John Kiddle**.

The sessions are designed for use with small and large groups and are flexible enough to suit the group you're working with. Timings are for guidance only and you may find that want to spend more or less time on each element. You know your group best, so feel free to adapt the materials to make them work for you – and don't forget to let us know how you got on info@churchofengland.org. Each group session consists of five elements, intended to last no more than 1 ½ hours in total:

- **Gathering:** Ease into the session together by discussing the theme in broad terms. Make sure that you allow time for people to shed some of the cares of the day before diving into deep spiritual conversation – things will flow more easily if people feel they are being given space and time to be themselves.
- **Word:** Look at the Bible together and explore what God might be saying through the Gospel passage. Each reading is linked to the corresponding week in the LiveLent daily booklet. This section follows a very simple form of Lectio Divina ('Holy Reading'), which some may be familiar with – especially those who have participated in the Pilgrim course. It's easy to follow and allows space for people to hear from the text without being too 'led'.
- **Story:** Share and discuss either a short video (less than 2 minutes long) or a real-life story that illustrates that week's theme. All the videos are available for download (see the links in each session's notes) and the written stories are provided in the notes below.
- **Challenge:** The notes provide suggestions of weekly challenges that your group might like to take up in response to your time together. These can be individual activities or something you do as a group – feel free to create your own.
- **Prayer:** Close with a time of prayer – both a chance to pray for one another's needs and to respond to that week's theme in prayer.

One final tip: it's a good idea to read each session's notes in advance to check what you might need for each session, especially if you decide to do any of the optional activities. If you have any questions or concerns about how best to use this material – or feedback to help us improve our resources for future – please don't hesitate to get in touch info@churchofengland.org.

May God bless you and those you meet with in Lent – and may we all learn to shine more brightly for His glory,

The LiveLent Team

SESSION 1: CHANGE

The Gospel of John describes the miracles of Jesus as 'signs'. These signs help us see and understand the change that Jesus brings to our lives and our communities. The life and person of Jesus tell us that God is with us in the joys and in the mess of life. They also tell us that God's presence with us is not passive; it brings transformation. For the first of these signs, Jesus transforms 700 litres of water into the very best wine at a wedding banquet. This week is an opportunity to reflect on God's glorious transformation and to pray that we might be more open to all that God wants to do in our lives and our situations.

YOU WILL NEED: PAPER AND PENS, A BASKET OR BOWL, COLOURED RIBBON OR STRING, CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS.

Gathering

20 mins

If the group has not met before or there are any new faces, allow time for introductions and for people to share what their hopes for the course might be. It's worth reminding people of the need to listen to each other and not to share outside the group anything personal that another member has shared in the course of the group's discussions. Explain that no one will be forced to contribute, but that it will be much more interesting if they do share their thoughts and experiences, as far they are comfortable.

Opening prayer:

Lord of Light,

Be present to us as we meet in your name.

May we recognise your face in one another,

May we hear your voice in the tones of our companions,

May we understand your truths in scripture,

May our light shine for you,

Amen

This week is all about change. Invite people to share briefly with one another one thing that has changed for them over the last year – has that change been positive or negative for them, big or small? If you have a large group, ask people to share in twos or threes.

Word

30 mins

Explain to the group that you're going to use a method of reading scripture known as 'Lectio Divina.' Some may be familiar with this, but for others it will be completely new. You're going to read the passage slowly three times, pausing after each time to take a few moments of silence and reflect on a different aspect of the reading. It's important that everyone is given time to participate and share what God might be saying. While God speaks through his Word, he also speaks to us through one another. So, as we listen to others we need to open our hearts to hear the Lord's voice speaking through them. You'll use this method each week, so while it might feel strange at first, by week two or three it should be familiar.

Read **John 2:1-11** slowly, three times – ask a different person to read each time, if possible, so there are a variety of voices. Pause for a few moments of silence after each reading before asking people to reflect on and discuss:

- After the **first** reading: What do you find most surprising about the story – if you could ask Jesus one thing about it, what would it be?
- After the **second** reading: What do you think God might be saying to your group through this passage?
- After the **third** reading: What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

Story

20 mins

Either watch Patricia's story <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-in-action/faith-action-videos/faith-action/1302/helping-people-find-work> or read Jacob's story together (Sheet A) and then discuss:

- Sometimes change is forced on us and sometimes it is an invitation - how does God help us when change is unavoidable?
- Change can feel scary or threatening – what can make it harder to face up to the need for change? What can make it easier?
- What change would you most like to see:
 - in your community?
 - in your workplace/ the place you spend most of your time?
 - in your home?

Challenge

10 mins

Take a look at this week's Challenge Sheet (B) and ask people to think about one challenge they would like to take up for the coming week. Ask them to write it down on a piece of paper and place it in the bowl or basket. As they do this, invite them to take a length of the coloured ribbon or string. They might wish to tie it to a keyring or place it somewhere they will see it often, as a reminder of the commitment they have made. They'll be invited to share how they got on with the challenge at the start of next week's session.

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Prayer

10 mins

Ask people if there is anyone or anything that they would particularly like prayer for this week. Allow for a time of prayer – either with members of the group praying for one another out loud or silently – encouraging people to consider what God might wish to change within each of you and asking for his comfort and guidance in this. Offer to God the challenges that people have agreed to take on and have placed in the basket. Ask for partnership and blessing for each member of the group as they seek to work for change in their own way.

Suggested closing prayer:

*God of water into wine and old lives made new,
Thank you that there are no lost causes in your Kingdom.
Breathe on our lives afresh that we may see new possibilities in familiar faces and places,
Give us the courage to break old patterns and to live our new life here and now.
Amen.*

SESSION 2: BREAD

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty". Alongside the seven 'signs' in John's Gospel are seven sayings of Jesus which he begins with the words "I am..." These sayings are an invitation to see Jesus for what and who he truly is. As the 'Bread of Life', Jesus invites us to come to him and be fed, to be nourished and refreshed. He calls us to feed and nurture others. Even if we feel the gifts we have are only crumbs, they can, in his hands, become the means of bringing life to others.

YOU WILL NEED: FRESHLY-BAKED BREAD (OPTIONAL), PAPER AND PENS, A BASKET OR BOWL, COLOURED RIBBON OR STRING, CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS.

Gathering

20 mins

This week we are thinking about bread. Something that sustains and nourishes us, bread can be a staple food in our diets, something that we often take for granted. We will be thinking together about what we need for life and how we might nourish and feed others.

*Lord of Light,
Be present to us as we meet in your name.
May we recognise your face in one another,
May we hear your voice in the tones of our companions,
May we understand your truths in scripture,
May our light shine for you,
Amen*

Optional: After the opening prayer, begin the session by sharing a loaf of freshly-baked bread together while discussing the questions below (bear in mind that some may not be able to share the bread due to dietary restrictions).

Ask if anyone would like to share how they got on with their chosen challenges over the past week, reflect together on any group challenges you may have undertaken. Reassure people that it's ok if they found it hard or didn't achieve what they set out to – they may still have learned something important.

Invite people to share with the group one thing they feel they couldn't live without –something that sustains them in their physical or spiritual life. What makes that thing so special? What would life be like without it?

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Word

30 mins

Read **John 6:35-58** slowly, three times – ask a different person to read each time, if possible, so there are a variety of voices. Pause for a few moments of silence after each reading before asking people to reflect on and discuss:

- After the **first** reading: What do you find most surprising about the story – if you could ask Jesus one thing about it, what would it be?
- After the **second** reading: What do you think God might be saying to your group through this passage?
- After the **third** reading: What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

Story

20 mins

Either watch Margaret's Story <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-action-videos/combating-loneliness-one-cake-time> or read Marcella's story together (Sheet C) and then discuss:

- It's quite easy to notice when we haven't had enough food because we usually feel hungry, but it is not always so obvious when some of our other basic needs aren't being met – for example, if we are lonely. What might be some of the signs of spiritual or emotional hunger?
- The Church is often thought to be good at meeting people's needs – how is this shown in your own church or faith community?
- Our stories demonstrate how meeting someone's physical or immediate needs can often have a bigger impact than you might expect. How have you experienced that in your own life?
- What does it mean for you to think of Jesus as the Bread of Life? How over the years has this been a reality that has fed and nurtured you?

Challenge

10 mins

Take a look at this week's Challenge Sheet (D) and ask people to think about one challenge they would like to take up for the coming week. Ask them to write it down on a piece of paper and place it in the bowl or basket. As they do this, invite them to take a length of the coloured ribbon or string. They might wish to tie it to a keyring or place it somewhere they will see it often, as a reminder of the commitment they have made. They'll be invited to share how they got on with the challenge at the start of next week's session.

Prayer**10 mins**

Ask people if there is anyone or anything that they would particularly like prayer for this week. Allow for a time of prayer – either with members of the group praying for one another out loud or silently – encouraging people to consider what God might wish to say to each of you and asking for his comfort and guidance in this. Offer to God the challenges that people have agreed to take on and have placed in the basket. Ask for partnership and blessing for each member of the group as they seek to work follow him.

Suggested closing prayer:

*Bread of Life,
Sustain and bless all those who hunger and thirst.
Give us an appetite to see your Kingdom come here and now.
Out of your generosity, we find ourselves satisfied.
Out of our abundance, may we feed others.
Amen.*

SESSION 3: LIGHT

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John tells us that Jesus came into the world as a light shining into darkness. That light, he says, is the life that is in all people. Yet it was a light that was recognised and welcomed by only a few. As Light of the World, Jesus reveals blindness in the hearts and lives of those he meets. But Jesus' light also brings the liberation of seeing ourselves, and others, as we truly are. More than anything, the light of Jesus helps us see as God sees, with love and compassion and with hope.

YOU WILL NEED: A CANDLE AND MATCHES (OPTIONAL), STICKY NOTES, PAPER AND PENS, A BASKET OR BOWL, COLOURED RIBBON OR STRING, CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS.

Gathering

20 mins

This week is an opportunity to reflect on the light that Jesus brings to your life and your situation – and on the opportunities and responsibilities we might have as light-bearers.

Optional: Before the opening prayer, light a candle in the centre of the group. Keep the candle burning throughout your time together as a symbol of Christ's light and presence with the group.

*Lord of Light,
Be present to us as we meet in your name.
May we recognise your face in one another,
May we hear your voice in the tones of our companions,
May we understand your truths in scripture,
May our light shine for you,
Amen*

Ask if anyone would like to share how they got on with their chosen challenges over the past week, reflect together on any group challenges you may have undertaken. Reassure people that it's ok if they found it hard or didn't achieve what they set out to – they may still have learned something important.

Invite people to share with the group one person who has been a 'light' to them in their life. What made that person special? What lasting impact did that person's presence leave in their life?

Word**30 mins**

Read **John 8:12-20** slowly, three times – ask a different person to read each time, if possible, so there are a variety of voices. Pause for a few moments of silence after each reading before asking people to reflect on and discuss:

- After the **first** reading: What do you find most surprising about the story – if you could ask Jesus one thing about it, what would it be?
- After the **second** reading: What do you think God might be saying to your group through this passage?
- After the **third** reading: What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

Story**20 mins**

Either watch Benjamin's story <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-action-videos/learning-be-christian-school> or read Andrew's story together (Sheet E) and then discuss:

- Jesus was the personification of God's light in the world – write on sticky notes the different character traits that you would associate with the Light of the World. Stick your notes around the candle at the centre of the group (if using).
- Sometimes, a beam of bright light can be startling or feel intrusive – what is it about spiritual light that can make us feel uncomfortable? Why?
- What does the light of Christ wish to show you in yourself and in others? How might you learn to see more often and more clearly as God sees?
- What would it look like for you to 'shine your light' in your workplace, school or community?

Challenge**10 mins**

Take a look at this week's Challenge Sheet (F) and ask people to think about one challenge they would like to take up for the coming week. Ask them to write it down on a piece of paper and place it in the bowl or basket. As they do this, invite them to take a length of the coloured ribbon or string. They might wish to tie it to a keyring or place it somewhere they will see it often, as a reminder of the commitment they have made. They'll be invited to share how they got on with the challenge at the start of next week's session.

Prayer

10 mins

Ask people if there is anyone or anything that they would particularly like prayer for this week. Allow for a time of prayer – either with members of the group praying for one another out loud or silently – encouraging people to consider what God might wish to say to each of you and asking for his comfort and guidance in this. Offer to God the challenges that people have agreed to take on and have placed in the basket. Ask for partnership and blessing for each member of the group as they seek to work follow him.

Suggested closing prayer:

*Light of the World,
Shine gently into our hearts
and help us see clearly what you would show us there.
Enlighten dark corners,
make us your partners in bringing truth and justice.
Guide our feet and guard our integrity,
for your glory and praise,
Amen.*

SESSION 4: LIFE

Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The greatest gift that Jesus offers is life. The life he brings is generous and joyful, it is liberating and purposeful. It is a life lived to the full and overflows to bring life to others. Like a good shepherd, he loves deeply and personally - and at great cost. He lets go of his life so that we can receive life.

YOU WILL NEED: PAPER AND PENS, A BASKET OR BOWL, COLOURED RIBBON OR STRING, CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS. **OPTIONAL:** SMALL PLANT POTS, SEEDS AND COMPOST.

Gathering

20 mins

This week is a chance to explore together the nature of the resurrection life that Jesus invites us to share, and to ask what it might mean to live 'life in all its fullness'.

*Lord of Light,
Be present to us as we meet in your name.
May we recognise your face in one another,
May we hear your voice in the tones of our companions,
May we understand your truths in scripture,
May our light shine for you,
Amen*

Ask if anyone would like to share how they got on with their chosen challenges over the past week, reflect together on any group challenges you may have undertaken. Reassure people that it's ok if they found it hard or didn't achieve what they set out to - they may still have learned something important.

Invite people to share with each other one sign of life or hope that they have noticed in the world around them over the past few months. It might be a good news story they have read or a new person or situation they have encountered. What was it about that 'sign of life' that gave them hope?

Word

30 mins

Read **John 10:1-21** slowly, three times – ask a different person to read each time, if possible, so there is a variety of voices. Pause for a few moments of silence after each reading before asking people to reflect on and discuss:

- After the **first** reading: What do you find most surprising about the story – if you could ask Jesus one thing about it, what would it be?
- After the **second** reading: What do you think God might be saying to your group through this passage?
- After the **third** reading: What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

Story

20 mins

Either watch Kenny's story <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-action-videos/learning-be-christian-school> or read Tanya and Steve's story together (Sheet G) and then discuss:

- Has anyone ever offered you a 'lifeline'? What did that feel like? How did it make a difference to you?
- What does 'life in all its fullness' mean for you? How does Jesus enable you to have life, and have it abundantly?
- What are the ways in which society encourages us to live life to the full? How do these compare with what God has to offer?
- How might you bring new life in a particular situation, or offer someone a lifeline? What might you need to 'lay down' in order to do this?
- Which of your family or friends do you greatly desire would taste the fullness of life Jesus came to bring?

Challenge

10 mins

Take a look at this week's Challenge Sheet (H) and ask people to think about one challenge they would like to take up for the coming week. Ask them to write it down on a piece of paper and place it in the bowl or basket. As they do this, invite them to take a length of the coloured ribbon or string. They might wish to tie it to a keyring or place it somewhere they will see it often, as a reminder of the commitment they have made. They'll be invited to share how they got on with the challenge at the start of next week's session.

Prayer

10 mins

Ask people if there is anyone or anything that they would particularly like prayer for this week. Allow for a time of prayer – either with members of the group praying for one another out loud or silently – encouraging people to consider what God might wish to say to each of you and asking for his comfort and guidance in this. Offer to God the challenges that people have agreed to take on and have placed in the basket. Ask for partnership and blessing for each member of the group as they seek to work follow him.

Optional: After people have shared their prayer needs with one another and as you pray together, invite people to each plant a seed in a small pot. They can take this home after the session to remind them of their calling to nurture and pray for life in every situation they encounter.

Suggested closing prayer:

*Jesus our Good Shepherd,
Lead us into the delights of your resurrection life.
Nurture in each of us the spark of your presence,
inspire us to sow the seeds of your Kingdom and
give us courage and strength to face the cost.
Amen.*

SESSION 5: LEAVING

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.” As Jesus prepares to leave his friends and face the cross, he is anointed at Bethany with love and fragrance. He is welcomed into Jerusalem with joy and song. When some people ask to see him, he shows them a seed falling to the ground. “My leaving,” he says, “is a death that will give life. I lay my life down that others, many others, can live.” Jesus invites us to follow him and let go of those things that stop us in our tracks: to let go of status so that we can, like him, kneel and wash feet; to release our fear so that we can, in obedience to him, love one another.

YOU WILL NEED: PAPER AND PENS, A BASKET OR BOWL, COLOURED RIBBON OR STRING, CUT INTO SHORT LENGTHS.

Gathering

20 mins

Your final week as a group together offers a chance to think more directly about Jesus' call to follow him. What might God be calling you to do next - as individuals? as a group of disciples?

*Lord of Light,
Be present to us as we meet in your name.
May we recognise your face in one another,
May we hear your voice in the tones of our companions,
May we understand your truths in scripture,
May our light shine for you,
Amen*

Ask if anyone would like to share how they got on with their chosen challenges over the past week, reflect together on any group challenges you may have undertaken. Reassure people that it's ok if they found it hard or didn't achieve what they set out to - they may still have learned something important.

Invite people to share with the group about a time when they had to leave a place or situation - perhaps a move of house, a change of job or relationship. What did they have to leave behind? How much did they know about what lay ahead? Would they do the same thing again?

Word**30 mins**

Read **John 12: 12-26** slowly, three times – ask a different person to read each time, if possible, so there is a variety of voices. Pause for a few moments of silence after each reading before asking people to reflect on and discuss:

- After the **first** reading: What do you find most surprising about the story – if you could ask Jesus one thing about it, what would it be?
- After the **second** reading: What do you think God might be saying to your group through this passage?
- After the **third** reading: What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

Story**20 mins**

Either watch Emily's story <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-action-videos/learning-be-christian-school> or read Cathie's story together (Sheet I) and then discuss:

- Jesus' call to follow him can sometimes lead us in surprising directions. How open are we to the unexpected call of God?
- Reflect on all that Jesus left behind and let go of. What did it cost him? What did it enable?
- What might God be inviting you to let go of or leave behind? How might this enable you to follow Jesus more closely - and in so doing discover life?
- This week, in what situations can you love others with openhanded generosity and practical service?

Challenge**10 mins**

Take a look at this week's Challenge Sheet (J) and ask people to think about one challenge they would like to take up for the coming week. Ask them to write it down on a piece of paper and place it in the bowl or basket. As they do this, invite them to take a length of the coloured ribbon or string. They might wish to tie it to a keyring or place it somewhere they will see it often, as a reminder of the commitment they have made. They'll be invited to share how they got on with the challenge at the start of next week's session.

Leaving (Optional activity)

10mins

Even if this group continues to meet in the future, this session signals the end of your time together in Lent. As you prepare to leave one another and this study material, this activity offers an opportunity to encourage one another in seeking their calling through Christ.

Give everyone a piece of paper and pen. Each person should write their name at the top of the piece of paper, then pass it to the person on their left. Each person then writes a short message of encouragement or affirmation for the person whose name is at the top of the paper and folds the paper so that their message is not visible but the person's name can still be seen. After 30-60 seconds, everyone passes the pieces of paper around to their left again. This continues until everyone has written on everyone else's paper and each person has received their own sheet back.

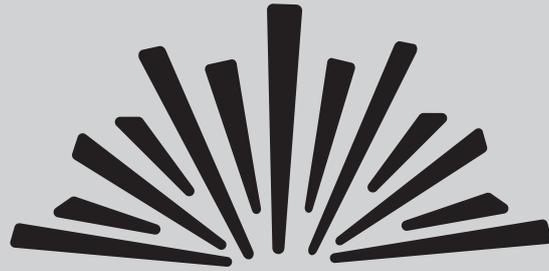
Prayer

10 mins

Ask people if there is anyone or anything that they would particularly like prayer for this week. Allow for a time of prayer – either with members of the group praying for one another out loud or silently – encouraging people to consider what God might wish to say to each of you and asking for his comfort and guidance in this. Offer to God the whole of your time together over the last five weeks and the challenges that people have agreed to take on and have placed in the basket. Ask for partnership and blessing for each member of the group as they seek to seek to follow Jesus anew and let their light shine.

Suggested closing prayer:

*Triumphant King,
May we be found among the crowds cheering your return.
Open our ears and our hearts to hear your call,
Give us strength and imagination that we might respond.
Kindle in each one of us your light,
That we may let that light shine
For the world's blessing and your glory.
Amen.*



EXTRA SESSION RESOURCES

SHEET A: JACOB'S STORY

Jacob (not his real name) seemed to have it all: a high-powered job, a great salary, beautiful partner and young son, his dream home. But Jacob woke up one morning in late 2013 and everything had changed. In the night he had suffered a massive stroke and when he woke up he was paralysed.

“Within three months I’d lost everything,” he explains. “My partner went away - she couldn’t deal with me being disabled. I lost my house, I lost my car, my job; everything just disappeared.” Jacob became increasingly anxious in the days and weeks following his stroke until one particular night when he lay in his hospital bed consumed by these feelings.

A nurse who was on night duty that evening came to sit with Jacob in an encounter that would change everything again. “He saw that I was in distress and he came over and sat with me and he held my hand.” With Jacob’s consent, the nurse prayed for him and stayed with him throughout the night. It wasn’t until the following morning that it transpired that the nurse’s own daughter was seriously ill and had been in the high dependency unit at the hospital that same night (she later made a full recovery). After that, every night when he came on duty the nurse sat with Jacob and prayed with him before beginning work.

Jacob had never even considered church or faith in his pre-stroke life, but he speaks of that night as the first of a number of ‘signposts’ on his path to finding faith and building a new life. Other friends and neighbours offered help and guidance for him on his journey of faith and rehabilitation.

Having been told by doctors that he was unlikely to walk, work or drive again, Jacob has surpassed all expectations for his recovery and is now able to do all three. He credits his faith for this: “That has been with the help of my religion, the church and how they’ve supported me, they’ve helped me and given me encouragement and fellowship.”

But aside from the physical stuff, there’s been a deeper change in Jacob too. “My stroke had changed me and, dare I say it, for the better. Other stroke survivors I know and keep in touch with who haven’t got faith are just like, ‘Jacob, you’re mad!’ My life has got more depth to it, it’s more fulfilling. I have someone to hold onto now, you know, when I do get low.”

Four years on and now Jacob is trying to be a ‘signpost’ for others who are asking questions about faith and life, as a leader on a local Alpha Course: “I enjoy it so much, you know, meeting other people who are in effect pretty much where I was two years ago. I’ve met some challenging people and amazing, good friends. It’s good to see the same people coming back week after week. I haven’t met anyone bad yet. Jesus has obviously decided to give them a signpost, too.”

SHEET B: CHANGE CHALLENGE SHEET

Individual challenges:

- **Make new:** Gently and respectfully seek to draw out something new and life-giving from a familiar person or situation you encounter this week.
- **Make room:** Consciously make space this week for somebody else. Pause long enough to notice when someone is pushed out or pushed away and do something about it.
- **Set Free:** Ask God to help you know how much you are loved and show that love to others. Give someone a small gift or card to help them feel special and loved.
- **Thirst:** Make time today to give a gift which brings refreshment. Buy someone a drink. Stop and listen. Be open to starting a conversation about the love of God.
- **Stand up:** Pray for all those who today are waiting for help or healing. Ask God to show what you can do to help and take the first step.

Group challenges:

- Identify one thing you would like to see change in your local community. What might be the first step in making that change? Commit to taking that step this week.
- Who in your community is 'thirsty'? Perhaps residents of a local nursing home or a marginalised community group? Make time as a group to visit them with refreshments, making space and time to listen to their stories of change and challenge.
- Identify an area in your community where litter is a problem. Arrange a group to spend a morning or afternoon clearing the area together (see here for tips and inspiration).

SHEET C: MARCELLA'S STORY

For nine years, Marcella, 32, a trained veterinary nurse, has suffered from a chronic spinal condition. Unfortunately, when her health deteriorated, she was forced to stop working to undergo a spinal operation and it was then that she began to notice herself struggling.

She explained: "Sometimes it's very difficult to manage, even budget, especially when the price of food, gas and electric is not cheap anymore. It's so hard to pay rent and survive at the moment. People should not just be surviving though, they should be able to live and have a life."

Marcella never expected to have to use a foodbank, but when her benefit support of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) was switched to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), the payment that she so desperately relies on was delayed and she found herself turning to The Trussell Trust for help.

Marcella is very grateful that the foodbank was able to help her through this difficult time, especially for signposting her to another agency, who have been able to provide her with a social worker for some extra support. She explained: "The foodbank gave me faith that there are people who understand and who you can trust. They made me feel comfortable and reassured. I felt a bit ashamed at not being able to support myself but they took the pressure off. The foodbank really helped and was there for me in every way."

Since then, Marcella's confidence has improved: "Without their support, I don't feel like I would have been able to cope. We need to stop judging people and listen to every individual to understand how they got into the situation."

Marcella is currently focusing on getting her health back on track and is looking forward to the future.

Story used with permission of the Trussell Trust.

SHEET D: BREAD CHALLENGE SHEET

Individual challenges:

- **Feed:** Make time this week to feed someone else with food, love or kindness. Offer what you have, even if it feels inadequate, with thanks and generosity.
- **Let go:** Give something away that you've been holding onto. Would it be of more benefit to a foodbank, charity shop, or friend or neighbour?
- **Impact:** In a world where so much is transient, make time to do something for someone else that might have a lasting consequence beyond the immediate.
- **Learn:** Ask someone you consider to be a mature Christian (in faith, rather than years) to share with you how Jesus has been the Bread of Life for them.
- **My story:** Make some time to write down or draw the story of your relationship with God, how it began, how it has grown, what it means today. Look for an opportunity to share your story.

Group challenges:

- What are the immediate needs of your local community? Spend some time this week finding out more about your community and each bring what you have discovered to share next week during 'Gathering' time. The Church of England's statistics webpages are a good place to start (<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/research-and-statistics>). Things to research might include:
 - the demographics of the local population
 - how many schools are there?
 - what local charities operate in your area?
 - how many different faith communities are present?
- Check out your local foodbank's shopping list of most-needed items. Each choose one or two items to buy and bring next week. Gather all the items together and take them to the foodbank.
- As a group, each agree to give up one thing that's important to you for a week (you don't have to share what you've chosen if you don't want to). When you meet again next week, during 'Gathering' time, reflect together on what it felt like to give that thing up and how it affected you.

SHEET E: ANDREW'S STORY (LIGHT)

Dr Andrew Miller, is a retired NHS consultant in respiratory medicine and a worshipper at St Aldates Church in Oxford. He has worked voluntarily as a street pastor since 2010 and is chairman of the Oxford group.

“We are a group of 19 trained volunteers from across the Christian denominations. We are in partnership with the police, night clubs and the council. We try to work in a group of at least three every Saturday and one Friday a month – especially after pay day when many people go out and celebrate. We leave our base at around 10:45pm and we finish usually around 3.45am the next day.

“Our motto is ‘caring, listening, helping’ and we help people in a range of situations – handing out water and a space blanket for warmth, flip flops where clubbers have abandoned walking in their high heels, or lollipops as a way of defusing tensions. There are people who want to talk – I recently met somebody who had just been to a friend’s funeral and was pretty distraught and just wanted someone to listen, as do some rough sleepers. We don’t tell people what to do, we don’t preach, we let them talk and we listen.

“We walk six to eight miles a shift and we walk slowly, if you walk at normal speed people don’t tend to stop and talk to you. People are often curious and baffled as to why we do this work for nothing but they are glad we are there as a presence on the streets. We are a range of different people working as street pastors. In south London, where I worked as a street pastor before, we had two 83-year-old team members; one was so famous for her work that she was known on the streets as ‘The Legend’.”

SHEET F: LIGHT CHALLENGE SHEET

Individual challenges:

- **Courage:** Look out this week for situations where truth needs to be gently and respectfully spoken. Take the opportunity to gently and respectfully speak truth.
- **Light a candle:** Go into a church or chapel and light a candle to remember and give thanks for someone who has been a 'light' in your life. Reflect prayerfully on how you might be a 'light' for someone else.
- **Witness:** Take an opportunity to share the truth of Jesus in a way that brings freedom and life to others.
- **Risky gift:** Who might you need to forgive? Or perhaps you need to receive forgiveness from someone else. Make an opportunity to give or receive the gift of forgiveness. Notice how this makes you feel.
- **Fresh perspective:** Make time to see a person, place or a tricky situation, in a new light. Let God use that new perspective to help you make a difference.

Group challenges:

- Contact the headteacher of your local primary or secondary school (this may be best done via the local priest or school chaplain). For the next month, offer to pray as a group for them in their role, for their staff and students. Invite them to share with you any particular needs - prayer or otherwise – that they may have as a school community.
- Speak to the coordinator of your local Street Pastors group <https://www.streetpastors.org> and find out about volunteering opportunities. Pledge to go out with the team, or join their prayer network, depending on what's most appropriate for your group.
- Work with your church leaders to plan a candle-light prayer service (or fairy light prayer service, if that's more appropriate) for your church or local community. Plan a short, reflective service of the theme of 'Jesus, Light of the World'. Invite people to come, light a candle and give thanks for someone who has been a light in their life.

SHEET G: TANYA AND STEVE'S STORY

One evening, foster carer Tanya* was watching the news and felt moved by the plight of refugees: "I remember seeing an image of one of the boats with the words, 'In God we trust' written at the front. It really struck a chord with me. We had been foster carers for years, but I just thought 'I could actually do this. I could look after these young people.' I hadn't looked after any young unaccompanied people before, but I just remember feeling drawn to the situation."

It was then that Tanya and her husband Steve* received a phone call asking whether they would be willing to foster a young person from Eritrea. Tanya remembers their first encounter well: "He was 14 and he had been through a heck of a lot... I could tell immediately that he was in shock and I just went back to basics, just as you would with a young child. It was a lot of facial expressions, because he couldn't speak English, just to try and help him feel comfortable and secure. I spent a lot of time with him. What was amazing to us was that he liked us to pray for him. He had a very strong faith. He was quite anxious at first, but when he realized we were Christians, he visibly relaxed."

Steve adds: "It's such a traumatic experience. All the children we eventually looked after had been through a hell of a journey. They had gone through Libya, then there is the trip on the Mediterranean, and then you have to get from where you arrive in Italy to us. Many have seen people they know killed, and they themselves have been threatened."

The experience drove Tanya and Steve to set up a social and learning group to address a wider need in the community: "There were a lot of Eritreans who had been fostered because so many of them were so young," Tanya explains. "But then you also had those over sixteen who were considered old enough to live by themselves, but in groups. So many couldn't speak English and they needed a basic level to access courses." Their church was very supportive and within a month it was all set up. Tanya explains: "You would see these young people come in at first and they would be so startled. But then they would meet others from their own country. They were reassured by their peers that it was going to be ok, that made a difference. All the young people we were involved with are now in education and/or working."

Tanya and Steve went on to foster four young unaccompanied asylum seekers. "When they phoned their parents for the first time, that was incredible and very emotional," says Tanya. "Sometimes they would cry and sometimes I would cry with them. I could understand loss a bit as I've experienced loss myself, but not to the scale they have experienced. Losing their school, their culture, their families... They have lost every bit of security they have known, and to rebuild trust and an identity was hugely important for them. It changed my perspective on family and what is important."

*not their real names

SHEET H: LIFE CHALLENGE SHEET

Individual challenges:

- **Reach out:** Make time this week for someone who is vulnerable: a refugee, someone who is homeless people or exploited, very young or elderly... do something practical to make a difference to them.
- **Celebrate:** Enjoy a bit of joyful extravagance! Live life to the full. Perhaps have a party, invite some friends and perhaps even some you don't yet know well.
- **See deeply:** Take some time to get to know someone better. Refuse shallow judgements or labels, and ask God to help you see them more clearly.
- **Resurrection signs:** Deliver a plant to someone who might need a sign of hope and life. Share it with them directly, or leave on their doorstep as an anonymous gift.
- **Grief:** Make time to notice someone else's sadness and be moved by it. Cry out to God for them.

Group challenges:

- Research the Incredible Edible initiative <https://www.streetpastors.org>, an urban gardening project that seeks to grow food in public spaces for the whole community to enjoy. As a group, identify some local spaces that might be suitable, share your ideas and hopes for developing the project.
- Find out about local charities or projects that work with refugees and asylum seekers. Get in touch to find out about volunteering opportunities or offer ongoing prayer support.
- Look into whether there is a local community choir operating near you. Whatever your singing ability, arrange to go along together as a group to try it out. Get ready to celebrate and sing!

SHEET I: CATHIE'S STORY

Revd Cathie Aldis is serving her curacy (part of her training to become a fully-fledged priest) in Ashford, Kent. She comes from a long line of priests and missionaries, but resisted entering into the 'family business' for a long time – working instead (as she continues to do) in education: first in teaching and later for the Local Authority. So, when she came to offer herself for the priesthood it was not without some reluctance. “It began by saying, ‘Oh please, no!’” she recounts. “I come from an entire family of ordained people and I was head of a church school and thought, ‘Well, that’s it, I’m called to be a Christian in the secular workplace.’ Which I really thought was a fantastic calling.”

Cathie describes how God ‘got hold of her’ one Sunday morning at Church: “I heard this sermon about a reluctant ordinand and I thought, ‘Oh the preacher’s talking about himself,’ and then I suddenly realised that probably it was something I needed to listen to.” Mulling this over privately, Cathie went to work the next day and a colleague said – completely out of the blue – “I’ve got a question to ask you, Cathie. Why have you never considered ordination?”

She rang up her vicar and asked to meet with him, initially declining to tell him what it was about. He said, “Well, before you tell me, when I was preparing this sermon, two people’s names came to mind - and yours was one of them. I thought, ‘Well if they need to hear this sermon then they’ll be there.’ You were there and the other person wasn’t. Now what do you want to talk to me about?”

She concluded that God was saying loud and clear, “Look, Cathie, just stop running.” It wasn’t so much that she’d been on the wrong track – more that God was calling her now to something different: “It’s being prepared to recognise that what we think we’re going to do for a lifetime may change. And I wouldn’t change that now for anything. I just think this is such a privilege. But you bring all of that into ministry in terms of your background of experience, which I think is hugely helpful.

“Ministry isn’t a one-size-fits-all. It’s about knowing in your ‘knower’ who you are in Christ. God calls all sorts of different people. God takes who you are and what you are and uses you wherever you are. God doesn’t call people who are clones. He calls you because he’s given you the gifts to go and use.”

SHEET J: LEAVING CHALLENGE SHEET

Individual challenges:

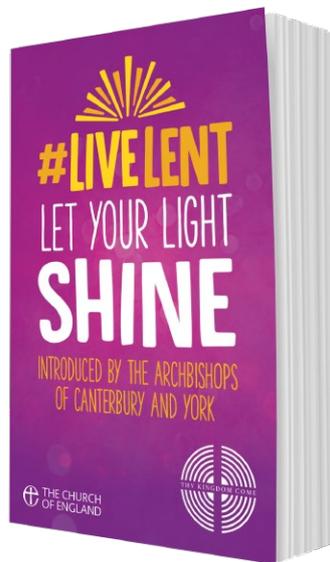
- **Anointing:** Make time for fragrance: offer a gift of perfume, burn some incense or a scented candle, pick and share a sweet-smelling bunch of flowers.
- **Hospitality:** Create space for someone in your home, your diary, or your heart this week.
- **Grow:** Plant a seed this week – in your garden, in a relationship or amongst the pains of the world.
- **Serve:** Make time this week to serve someone else – practically, lovingly, unconditionally. Pray that they might glimpse God's glory and love.
- **Heal:** Reflect on relationship that has been broken. Take steps this week to start to restore at relationship.

Group challenges:

- Find out more about Thy Kingdom Come and plan a group activity during the global wave of prayer (10-20 May, 2018).
- Building on your experiences and discussions over the past five weeks, decide together on one final challenge for your group. Perhaps you'd like to revisit or develop one of your challenges from a previous week? Or maybe you have identified a need or mission opportunity in your local community that you'd like to address. Discuss together practical ways of addressing this as a group. Over to you!



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