



WAY OF LIFE

STAY ♦ SHARE ♦ SERVE

# *Treasures of Darkness*

## *Discipleship in Times of Mystery and Unknowing*

Resources for Participants & Group Leaders

[lent2026.wayoflife.london](http://lent2026.wayoflife.london)



— DIOCESE OF —  
**LONDON**



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*There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here  
Say it is late and dusky, because they  
See not all clear.*

*O for that night! where I in Him  
Might live invisible and dim!*

Excerpt from *The Night*, Henry Vaughan

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If you prefer a plain text and/or easy-read version of this resource, you can access this at [lent2026.wayoflife.london](http://lent2026.wayoflife.london), or email [mirjam.ngoy@london.anglican.org](mailto:mirjam.ngoy@london.anglican.org).

*The five themes of our sessions are inspired by Dazzling Darkness, a Lent offering created for Leicester Cathedral in 2023 by Mirjam Ngoy-Verhage and Fiona Koefoed-Jespersen ([www.ordinarypilgrim.co.uk](http://www.ordinarypilgrim.co.uk)).*



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# INTRODUCTION

### OVERVIEW

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*I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. Isaiah 45:3*

#### ◆ The offering

This Lent series invites us to explore discipleship amid uncertainty, mystery, and unknowing. Drawing on Scripture, lived experience and the wisdom of disability and suffering theologies, we reflect on following Christ not despite our struggles, but as we encounter God's grace and guidance within them.

Inspired by Isaiah 45:3, each session helps us attend to the treasures hidden in darkness and the unexpected places where God reveals new riches, often beyond our usual ways of seeing or understanding.

This offering invites honesty about the realities of human life, while trusting that God is present and active within them, shaping us as disciples in ways we might not have anticipated.

Throughout the series, we use the language of darkness carefully, not as a moral category, but as a way of naming uncertainty, mystery, and the unseen places where God is also present.

#### ◆ Weekly themes

- WEEK 1: Beginning
- WEEK 2: Mystery
- WEEK 3: Shadow
- WEEK 4: Pain
- WEEK 5: Dawn

#### ◆ How the sessions work

The programme consists of five weekly online sessions, each lasting one hour and hosted by our bishops and archdeacons.

British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation will be provided during the live online sessions.

You can:

- **Join live on Tuesday evenings**  
Watch individually or as a church group, then gather for small group discussion using the provided handouts.
- **Watch the recording later**  
Recordings will be available by 4:00 pm each Wednesday ([lent2026.wayoflife.london](http://lent2026.wayoflife.london)). Watch at a convenient time and hold small group reflection afterwards.

All online sessions follow the same basic pattern:

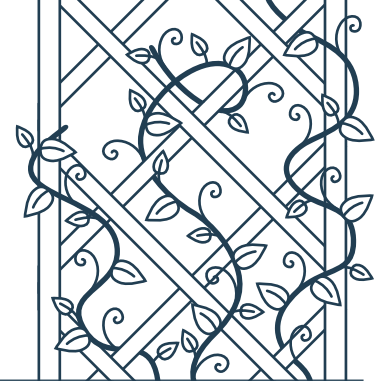
- Welcome and opening liturgy
- Opening question
- Reflection by the guest speaker
- Conversation with the hosting bishop/archdeacon
- Embodied practice
- Notices and closing liturgy

After each online session, participants are invited to meet in a Listening Group for around half an hour, facilitated by group leaders in their own context. These groups aim to provide space for attentive listening



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## INTRODUCTION



### OVERVIEW

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and shared reflection, following the guidance in the *Group Leader Resources*.

#### ◆ **Embodied practice**

We include an embodied practice each week to highlight that Christian discipleship is never only a thinking or believing journey; it is fully embodied.

Scripture and the Christian tradition remind us that we encounter God through our whole selves. By paying gentle attention to breath, posture, movement and sensation, we learn to notice God with us in our real, lived experience – our vulnerabilities, limitations, joys, and longings.

Given the sensitivity of our topic, we also hope these practices will help us integrate mind, heart and body when words are not enough or when prayer feels difficult.

Whether our bodies feel strong or fragile, mobile or limited, each of us is invited to honour the gift of our physical life and to collaborate with God in it. Practices can be adapted for all bodies and all access needs. Movements can be done with hands, eyes, breath, imagination, or stillness.

#### ◆ **A note on human experience**

Life is a journey filled with both joyful moments and times of struggle. Alongside experiences of fulfilment, we all face physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual challenges that bring us into seasons of darkness and difficulty. For some, these struggles are temporary; for others, they are ongoing realities that shape daily life and identity.

In a culture that often expects constant happiness, these hard times can be overlooked or seen only as negative. This series invites us to look at such struggles differently, as opportunities to uncover hidden gifts that can enrich our lives and the world around us.

Too often, society assumes that experiences like disability, mental health challenges, and emotional distress are simply suffering. Yet God's presence can transform these moments, offering deep insight and revealing profound truths about ourselves, others, and God.

#### ◆ **A note on language**

The language of light and darkness runs deep through Christian scripture and worship. These images have long expressed God's goodness, guidance, and hope, as well as mystery and the hidden work of God beyond what we see.

However, this rich imagery has sometimes been reduced to simple opposites, with light seen as good and darkness as bad. When that happens, such language can cause real harm. Historically, it has reinforced damaging ideas about bodies, identities, and racial and ethnic origins. This offering seeks to reclaim and expand the meaning of darkness, not as something merely negative, but as a rich space of mystery, creativity, and transformation.

In Scripture, darkness is not simply absence or negation. It is the fertile ground from which creation emerges (Genesis 1), the hidden place where God's Spirit moves, and a space where God's presence is encountered in unexpected ways (Exodus 19; Psalm 139). Both light and darkness are places where God is present and active, inviting us to trust beyond what we see, lean into unknowing, and recognise God's grace in struggle, doubt, and waiting.

Mindful of the historical pain tied to light and dark imagery, we choose our words carefully. This journey invites us to resist oversimplified opposites, challenge injustice, and welcome the fullness of God's presence beyond human categories and expectations.

# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

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## PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS





## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# THE LITURGY

### OPENING

#### 1 Candle

*We light a candle as a sign of God's presence with us.*

*After a moment of silence, we gently blow out the candle, as a sign that God is also with us in the darkness.*

#### 2 Breath prayer

You give us treasures of darkness (*inhale*) and call us by our name. (*exhale*)

#### 3 Opening prayer

Holy God,  
we gather in your presence  
to explore what it means to follow you  
in times of mystery and unknowing.  
In our longing and uncertainty,  
you are already here.

**Show us treasures of darkness.**

Jesus Christ,  
you walk with us through the unknown,  
revealing grace in places we might  
overlook. Open our hearts to the wisdom  
found in darkness.

**Uncover your hidden riches to us.**

Holy Spirit,  
guide us as we listen, reflect, and learn  
together. Draw us into compassion for  
ourselves and one another, and help us to  
trust the path we cannot yet see.

**Reveal yourself to us. Amen.**

#### 4 Bible reading

### CLOSING

#### 1 Breath prayer

You give us treasures of darkness (*inhale*) and call us by our name. (*exhale*)

#### 2 Closing prayer

Holy God, we have gathered in your name, to listen, to slow down, and to explore discipleship in times of mystery and unknowing. Thank you for meeting us here: in our uncertainties, in our silences, and in our shared journey.

**Show us treasures of darkness.**

Jesus Christ, as we go from this place, may your grace continue to reveal itself, and your love guide us through the mysteries we carry.

**Uncover your hidden riches to us.**

Holy Spirit, keep our hearts open to your presence, and strengthen us to walk with trust when the way is unclear. May we be companions of compassion and courage for one another.

**Reveal yourself to us. Amen.**

#### 3 Blessing

May God's compassion hold us near,  
Christ's tender love surround us here,  
The Spirit's wisdom be our guide,  
With peace and hope close by our side.

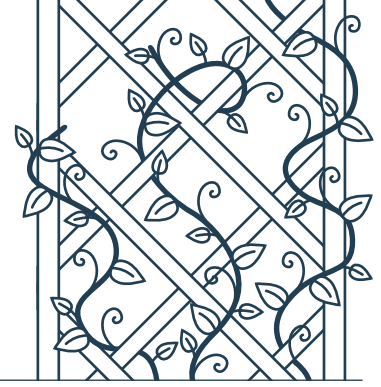
As we walk by trust, not sight,  
May love sustain us day and night.  
Called by name, embraced with grace -  
Together we go forth in peace.

*We light our candles in gratitude  
for what we have received.*



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 1 | BEGINNING



### PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

“Darkness is as essential to our biological welfare, to our internal clockwork, as light itself.”  
Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Our Vanishing Night*

#### ◆ Theme: Beginning

This session invites us to embrace darkness not as emptiness or absence, but as a place of creative potential and spiritual depth, trusting that God meets us there in ways that are often hidden and unfolding.

The session will be hosted by Bishop Emma Ineson, with guest speaker The Revd Preb John Beauchamp.

You can find the opening and closing liturgy on a separate handout (*page 6*).

#### ◆ Bible passage

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSV)*

#### ◆ Opening question

When you hear the word *darkness*, what comes to mind?  
What images, feelings, or memories arise for you?

#### ◆ Embodied practice

##### Sitting in the Dark

You will be guided through this practice during the session. You can adapt the practice so it works for your body.

The practice will include turning off the lights and sitting in darkness together. If darkness is uncomfortable, please let your

group leader know. You can dim the lights instead or close your eyes.

We will use the following breath prayer:

**We wait in darkness, (*inhale*)  
for the treasures of your presence. (*exhale*)**

#### ◆ Listening Group

A Listening Group offers a gentle, safe space to share your thoughts and feelings about the session:

- This is a confidential space; agree together that what is shared stays here.
- Sharing is voluntary, so it’s okay to pass or simply listen.
- Listen with kindness and respect, avoiding fixing, advising, or correcting.
- Sharing is framed by moments of silence to pause and reflect.
- You might share by speaking, writing, signing, or other ways that work for you.
- If you need a break, it’s okay to step away and come back when you are ready.

##### Wondering Questions for Reflection

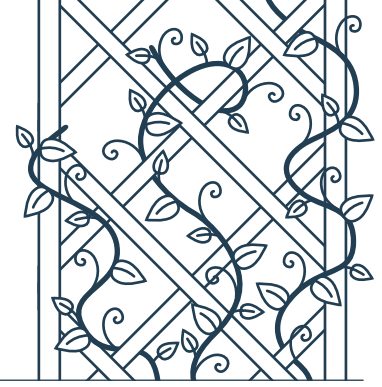
Take turns reflecting on one or more of these wondering questions, allowing 30 seconds of silence between each share:

- I wonder what today’s session stirred within you.
- I wonder what it feels like to sit quietly with darkness instead of rushing towards the light.
- I wonder what it means to embrace darkness as part of God’s creative, life-giving work.
- I wonder how moments of darkness in your life have shaped your trust or hope in God.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 2 | MYSTERY



### PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves... Live the questions now.” Rainer Maria Rilke

#### ◆ Theme: Mystery

This session invites us to embrace doubt, absence, and unanswered questions as vital parts of faith. We discover God’s presence through patient hope and faithful companionship in the midst of mystery and waiting.

The session will be hosted by Archdeacon Peter Farley-Moore, with guest speaker The Revd Dr Lia Shimada.

You can find the opening and closing liturgy on a separate handout (*page 6*).

#### ◆ Bible passage

*On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.*

*The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.*

*Exodus 19:16-19, 20:21 (NRSV)*

#### ◆ Opening question

When you hear the word *mystery*, what comes to mind – or where do you notice mystery in your life at the moment?

What images, feelings, or memories arise for you?

#### ◆ Embodied practice

##### Holy Waiting

You will be guided through this embodied practice during the session. If movement isn’t accessible, you can imagine the movement or adapt it in a way that works for your body. We will use the following breath prayer:

Here in the cloud, (*inhale*)  
we wait for you. (*exhale*)

#### ◆ Listening Group

A Listening Group offers a gentle, safe space to share your thoughts and feelings about the session:

- This is a confidential space; agree together that what is shared stays here.
- Sharing is voluntary, so it’s okay to pass or simply listen.
- Listen with kindness and respect, avoiding fixing, advising, or correcting.
- Sharing is framed by moments of silence to pause and reflect.
- You might share by speaking, writing, signing, or other ways that work for you.
- If you need a break, it’s okay to step away and come back when you are ready.

##### Wondering Questions for Reflection

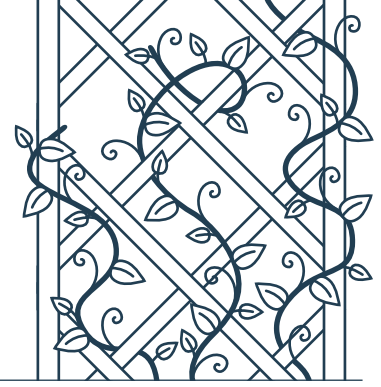
Take turns reflecting on one or more of these wondering questions, allowing 30 seconds of silence between each share:

- I wonder what today’s session stirred within you.
- I wonder where mystery is present in your life or the life of your community just now, and how you feel about it.
- I wonder how you experience God when there are no easy answers, or when God feels hidden.
- I wonder whether there has been a time when waiting, or not knowing, led you somewhere unexpected.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 3 | SHADOW



### PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

“O guiding night! O night more lovely than the dawn! O night that has united the Lover with his beloved transforming the beloved in her Lover.” The Dark Night, John of the Cross

#### ◆ Theme: Shadow

This session invites us to explore the parts of ourselves that are often unseen or hidden: the ‘shadow self.’ Like Nicodemus approaching Jesus under the cover of night, we come with our fears, questions, and uncertainties, learning that God’s love meets us there with grace and acceptance. The session will be hosted by Archdeacon Katherine Hedderly, with guest speaker Prof Chris Cook. You can find the opening and closing liturgy on a separate handout (page 6).

#### ◆ Bible passage

*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? John 3:1-4 (NRSV) (Full reading: John 3:1-8)*

#### ◆ Opening question

As you consider the parts of yourself that you tend to keep private or find hard to share, what comes to mind?

#### ◆ Embodied practice

##### Embracing Presence in the Shadow

You will be guided through this embodied practice during the session. If movement isn’t accessible, you can imagine the movement or adapt it in a way that works for your body. We will use the following prayers:

##### Focus

*God of light and shadow, meet me here. Help me notice what is stirring within me, my thoughts, my feelings, my sensations, without judgement or resistance.*

##### Make space

*God, I make space for the feelings and reactions I find within myself today. I attend to the emotions they awaken in me, trusting that you meet me here with compassion.*

##### Let Go

*God, help me loosen my grip on the need to control, on the need for certainty, and on fears that keep me from resting in your love. Teach me to release what I can, so I may receive your healing presence.*

#### ◆ Listening Group

A Listening Group offers a gentle, safe space to share your thoughts and feelings about the session:

- This is a confidential space; agree together that what is shared stays here.
- Sharing is voluntary, so it’s okay to pass or simply listen.
- Listen with kindness and respect, avoiding fixing, advising, or correcting.
- Sharing is framed by moments of silence to pause and reflect.
- If you need a break, it’s okay to step away and come back when you are ready.

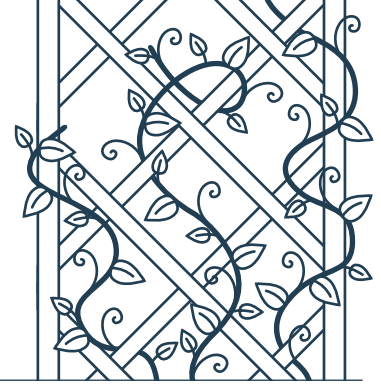
##### Wondering Questions for Reflection

- I wonder what today’s session stirred within you.
- I wonder how the story of Nicodemus coming at night speaks to your own shadows or fears.
- I wonder how God’s love has met you in your vulnerabilities or struggles.
- I wonder how your struggles connect you with the struggles of others in your community.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 4 | PAIN



### PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

"I have never felt closer to God than when he has tears running down his face. I don't delight in this, but by this, I know that I am seen." This Here Flesh, Cole Arthur Riley

#### ◆ Theme: Pain

This session invites us to reflect on the God who meets us in places of pain – in our bodies, our minds, our stories, and our world. In Matthew 27:45–56, we witness Jesus entering the deepest human suffering, crying out in lament. In Him, we meet a God who is fully present in anguish, standing with all who endure chronic illness, grief, or the weight of injustice.

The session will be hosted by Bishop Anderson Jeremiah, with guest speaker The Revd Dr Sharon Prentis.

You can find the opening and closing liturgy on a separate handout ([page 6](#)).

#### ◆ Bible passage

*From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.*

Matthew 27:45-50 (NRSV)

#### ◆ Opening question

As you reflect on *pain*, where does life feel most difficult or tender for you at the moment? Where do you notice pain or struggle being carried by others around you?

#### ◆ Embodied practice

##### Placing our Pain in God's Hands

You will be guided through this embodied

practice during the session. If movement isn't accessible, you can imagine the movement or adapt it in a way that works for your body. It will include the following prayer:

*God of all comfort, we bring to you our wounds and the wounds of the world. In your hands, may our pain find healing and our burdens be lightened. Help us to carry one another's sorrows with compassion and grace. Bind us together in solidarity, so that none of us suffers alone. Amen.*

#### ◆ Listening Group

A Listening Group offers a gentle, safe space to share your thoughts and feelings about the session:

- This is a confidential space; agree together that what is shared stays here.
- Sharing is voluntary, so it's okay to pass or simply listen.
- Listen with kindness and respect, avoiding fixing, advising, or correcting.
- Sharing is framed by moments of silence to pause and reflect.
- You might share by speaking, writing, signing, or other ways that work for you.
- If you need a break, it's okay to step away and come back when you are ready.

##### Wondering Questions for Reflection

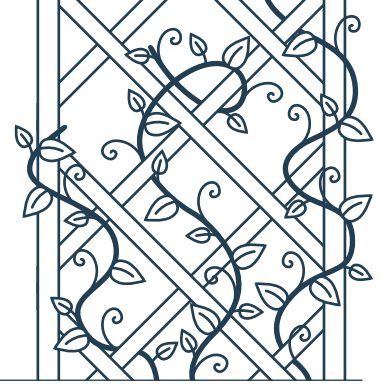
Take turns reflecting on one or more of these wondering questions, allowing 30 seconds of silence between each share:

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder how you notice God's presence or absence when you're hurting.
- I wonder what helps you find comfort or hope during painful times.
- I wonder how carrying pain together with others changes the way you feel or relate to your struggles.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 5 | DAWN



### PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

“New life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark.” Learning to Walk in the Dark, Barbara Brown Taylor

#### ◆ Theme: Dawn

New life often starts unseen, buried in the dark like a seed sending roots deep before breaking the surface. Mary Magdalene’s early journey to the tomb took place while it was still dark – a quiet, uncertain moment before life was revealed.

This session invites us to embrace the mystery of hope rising from sorrow, to see that God’s work is often hidden but deeply present in the shadows. The session will be hosted by Bishop Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, with guest speaker Grace Thompson.

You can find the opening and closing liturgy on a separate handout ([page 6](#)).

#### ◆ Bible passage

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb...*

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’*

*John 20:1, 11-13 (NRSV)*

*(Full reading: John 20:1-2, 11-18)*

#### ◆ Opening question

As we reflect on *dawn* as a sign of hope, what comes to mind for you? Can you think of a time when hope began to emerge, like the first light of dawn?

#### ◆ Embodied practice

##### Lighting the Dawn

You will be guided through this embodied

practice during the session. If movement isn’t accessible, you can imagine the movement or adapt it in a way that works for your body. We will start in darkness, and light a candle as part of this practice. If darkness is uncomfortable, please let your group leader know. You can dim the lights instead or close your eyes.

We will use the following breath prayer:

**We wait in darkness, (*inhale*)  
for the coming of your light. (*exhale*)**

#### ◆ Listening Group

A Listening Group offers a gentle, safe space to share your thoughts and feelings about the session:

- This is a confidential space; agree together that what is shared stays here.
- Sharing is voluntary, so it’s okay to pass or simply listen.
- Listen with kindness and respect, avoiding fixing, advising, or correcting.
- Sharing is framed by moments of silence to pause and reflect.
- You might share by speaking, writing, signing, or other ways that work for you.
- If you need a break, it’s okay to step away and come back when you are ready.

##### Wondering Questions for Reflection

Take turns reflecting on one or more of these wondering questions, allowing 30 seconds of silence between each share:

- I wonder what today’s session stirred within you.
- I wonder what it is like to choose hope while it is still dark.
- I wonder if you have experienced life beginning again after a difficult season.
- I wonder how hope and new life might feel different from what you expected.

# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

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## GROUP LEADER RESOURCES





## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# GROUP LEADER INTRODUCTION

### ◆ Welcome

Thank you for taking on this important role for the Lent series. Your presence and care help create a safe and supportive space where participants can engage thoughtfully and vulnerably.

As a group leader, you don't need to have all the answers or solve problems. Your role is to hold the space with openness, kindness, and attentiveness, helping everyone feel heard and respected.

### ◆ Pastoral care

This series explores sensitive themes such as vulnerability, suffering, disability, and pain. Some participants may experience strong emotions or difficult memories. Your role is to foster a safe and respectful environment throughout. You are not expected to be a counsellor or therapist but to offer compassionate presence and gentle guidance.

Encourage participants to share only what they feel comfortable sharing, honour silence and voluntary participation, and gently check in if someone appears distressed.

If difficult feelings arise, it's okay to pause and acknowledge them with care. Encourage seeking professional support if needed (this series is not a substitute for mental health care).

For your reference, and to help signpost participants as appropriate, the following

organisations offer professional support:

- NHS Talking Therapies: [www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service)
- Mind: [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/)
- BACP: [www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists](http://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists)
- UKCP: [www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/)
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Rape Crisis England & Wales: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>

### ◆ The online session

#### *Before the online session*

Remind your group that this is a confidential and caring space, and sharing is voluntary. If the session brings up difficult feelings, it is okay to step out and rejoin if and when they feel ready.

#### *During the online session*

#### **Opening question (online-led)**

Participants won't have time for group conversation here but can jot down brief responses individually on sticky notes or post-it notes. If possible, someone can type a few into the chat to share with all.

#### **Embodied practice**

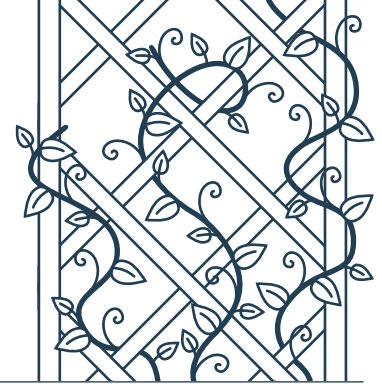
Please remind participants they may adjust their experience as needed, according to their bodies and access requirements. They can open their eyes, change posture, take



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## GROUP LEADER

### INTRODUCTION



breaks, or engage in ways that feel safe and right for them.

#### *After the online session*

#### **Listening Groups (locally-led)**

Invite participants to join a Listening Group for reflective sharing. A full outline is included in the weekly group leader notes.

#### ◆ **Introduction to Listening Groups**

Listening Groups are a key part of this Lent series, offering space for reflective sharing and deep listening after each online session. Unlike typical discussion groups, Listening Groups focus on openness, attentiveness, and the value of silence, rather than problem-solving or debate.

The aim is to create a safe and supportive environment where participants can:

- Share their personal experiences, questions, and insights with honesty and respect.
- Listen deeply to one another without interruption or judgment.
- Embrace silence as part of the process, allowing space for reflection and prayer.

#### **Key Principles**

- Sharing is voluntary; participants may pass or hold space silently.
- Groups can stay whole or divide into smaller groups of 3-4 people, depending on what feels supportive.
- Respect multiple communication modes (spoken word, AAC, writing, BSL).
- Encourage participants to share only what they feel comfortable with.
- Listen with openness; silence is a valuable part of the process.
- Confidentiality is essential: what is shared stays in the group. Safeguarding concerns must be reported per church policy.
- Be mindful of pastoral needs and pause conversations or gently signpost to

professional support if difficult emotions arise.

#### **How Listening Groups Work**

- The facilitator checks-in with participants to make sure everyone is comfortable with the process.
- The facilitator introduces the provided wondering questions from the handout.
- Participants take turns speaking in a round, reflecting on a chosen wondering for 2–3 minutes without interruption.
- Silence of about 30 seconds follows each sharing, try not to rush or fill this silence.
- It is perfectly acceptable for participants to pass or simply listen.
- This cycle continues until everyone who wishes to share has had their turn.
- Optional Bible passage reflection may follow if time allows.

For full facilitation guidance, see the Listening Group Outline for each week's session below.

#### ◆ **Optional: leading sessions offline**

We understand that some groups may not be able to join the live online sessions. If this is the case, you have flexibility in how you run each week's session.

You may choose to show the full recording of the session and then facilitate the Listening Group practice. Alternatively, you might prefer to lead the liturgy, opening question, and embodied practice yourself, while showing only the recordings of the guest speaker's contribution and the conversation with the bishop or archdeacon, followed by facilitating the Listening Group practice.

#### ◆ **Weekly group leader notes**

Following this introduction, you will find the weekly group leader notes designed to support you in leading and preparing each session.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 1 | BEGINNING

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

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*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.*

Genesis 1:1-5 (NRSV)

#### ◆ Theme: Beginning

##### *Faith in Disorientation*

This session invites us to embrace darkness not as emptiness or absence but as a place of creative potential and spiritual depth. Drawing on the biblical story of Creation, we reflect on how God's Spirit hovers over the dark waters, preparing for life to emerge.

Darkness challenges our assumptions that faith requires clear vision and certainty. Instead, we are called to trust in God's presence even when the way ahead is unclear.

By connecting this theme with disability theology, particularly the experience of sight loss, we discover new ways to understand faith as a journey through disorientation and unknowing. Like night vision adjusting to shadows, our spiritual sight can become more attuned to God's hidden workings.

This session encourages us to lean into mystery and to sense God's life-giving presence in the dark places of our lives.

#### ◆ Biblical grounding

##### *Primary passage*

- Genesis 1:1-5

##### *Additional passages* (suggested for shaping Lent Sunday services)

- Psalm 139:7-14, John 1:1-15, 2 Corinthians 4:4-7

#### ◆ Preparation

##### *Materials*

For this week's online session, each participant will need:

- A copy of the liturgy ([page 6](#))
- A copy of the participant's handout for this week's session ([page 7](#))

The group will also need:

- A candle
- Sticky notes and pens (helpful for the opening question)

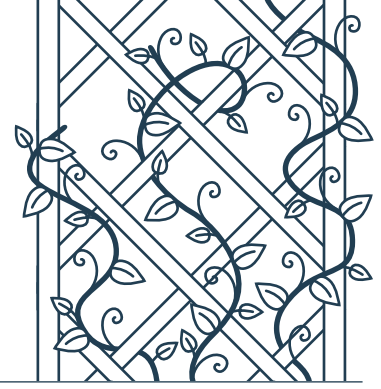
##### *Personal preparation*

- Read Genesis 1:1-5 slowly and prayerfully.
- Reflect on your own responses to themes of darkness, beginning, and disorientation.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 1 | BEGINNING



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Opening Question

When you hear the word *darkness*, what comes to mind?  
What images, feelings, or memories arise for you?

#### Embodied Practice: Sitting in the Dark

*This practice can be adapted to suit all bodies and access needs. Please encourage participants to honour their own comfort and boundaries, adjusting posture, taking breaks, or engaging in ways that feel right for them. If full darkness feels uncomfortable, you can dim the lights or invite participants to close their eyes instead.*

##### ◆ Arrive

When everyone is comfortable and ready, please close the curtains and turn off the lights.  
Notice how your body and senses adjust as you settle into the darkness.  
Bring your attention to your breathing and the breathing of those around you.  
Feel yourself arriving fully into this moment.

*Pause*

##### ◆ Open

Now, gently open your awareness to what you can hear, feel, or sense around you, things you might not usually notice.  
Maybe you notice faint shapes or shadows in the dark, the soft ticking of a clock, the distant sound of footsteps, or the quiet hum of electrical devices. You might notice the feeling of your body resting against the chair or floor, the subtle shifts in your breathing, or the warmth or coolness of the air on your skin. Even in the dark, your senses are alive.  
Allow yourself to gently notice these small details without trying to change them.

*Pause*

##### ◆ Receive

We reflected in our session on how the Spirit hovered over the waters, bringing life and order (Genesis 1:1-5).  
Imagine God's presence with you now in this darkness, hovering, creating, and holding you.

As you breathe, join me in this simple breath prayer:

**We wait in darkness, (inhale)  
for the treasures of your presence. (exhale)**

Sit quietly with the possibility that this darkness holds.

Notice what arises in your body, mind, or heart without trying to change it or find answers.

*Pause*

##### ◆ Return

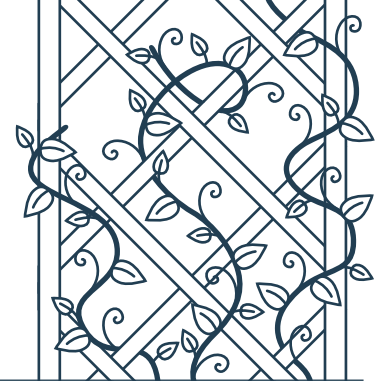
When you feel ready, gently bring your awareness back to the room. Turn the light back on, open the curtains.

We carry with us the sense of waiting and the presence of God in the darkness as we move forward together.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 1 | BEGINNING



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Listening Group Outline

##### ◆ Before you begin

- Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is shared stays within the group, unless someone's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- Emphasise voluntary participation: everyone may speak or pass. If anyone needs a break, it's okay to step away and return when they feel ready.
- Encourage respect for different communication styles, including spoken word, AAC, writing, and BSL.
- Highlight the importance of silence by inviting the group to allow around 30 seconds of quiet after each person's sharing.

##### ◆ Core principles

- Share honestly from your own experience of God.
- Listen deeply without interruption.
- Avoid judgment or giving advice.
- Embrace silence for reflection.

##### ◆ Practice

###### *Wonderings:*

Choose someone to read each of this week's wondering questions aloud. Then take turns reflecting on one wondering of your choice for 2 to 3 minutes without interruption. After each sharing, hold a silence of about 30 seconds before moving to the next person. If time allows, go around the group again, with each person reflecting on a different 'wondering.'

###### **Wonderings**

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder what it feels like to sit quietly with darkness instead of rushing towards the light.
- I wonder what it means to embrace darkness as part of the creative, life-giving work of God.
- I wonder how moments of darkness in your life have shaped your trust or hope in God.

###### *Bible Passage (optional):*

Choose one person to slowly read this week's Bible passage aloud. Next, take turns sharing a word or short phrase from the passage that stands out to you without explanation. Have someone else read the passage aloud again. Take turns sharing briefly, up to one minute each, about why that part of the passage speaks to you. Hold a silence of about 30 seconds between each person sharing.

##### ◆ Pastoral care reminder

Be attentive to group emotions; pause if distress arises, and signpost support as needed.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 2 | MYSTERY

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

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...Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him... The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Exodus 19: 18-19, 20:21 (NRSV) (Full reading: Exodus 19:16-19, 20:21)

#### ◆ Theme: Mystery

##### *Doubt and the Absence of Answers*

This session invites us to sit deeply with the ache of unanswered questions, doubts, and the experience of absence – not only in our personal lives but also within our communities. Loss, grief, and uncertainty can leave us feeling disoriented and vulnerable, especially when faced with mortality or the pain of losing loved ones.

In these shared spaces of waiting and not knowing, we discover that God's presence often feels most real not in clear answers or resolution, but in faithful accompaniment and patient hope. Rather than rushing to fill the silence or explain the unknown, we practise being still and creating space for mystery together, acknowledging that waiting and grieving happen both individually and communally.

This week encourages us to embrace doubt and the unknown as vital parts of faith, learning to trust God's unseen presence within the mystery. By cultivating patience and compassionate presence, we open ourselves to new ways God reveals grace and hope in our waiting.

#### ◆ Biblical grounding

##### *Primary passage*

- Exodus 19:16-19, 20:21

*Additional passages* (suggested for shaping Lent Sunday services)

- Psalm 46:1-11, Habakkuk 2:1-4, John 11:20-33

#### ◆ Preparation

##### *Materials*

For this week's online session, each participant will need:

- A copy of the liturgy ([page 6](#))
- A copy of the participant's handout for this week's session ([page 8](#))

The group will also need:

- A candle
- Sticky notes and pens (helpful for the opening question)

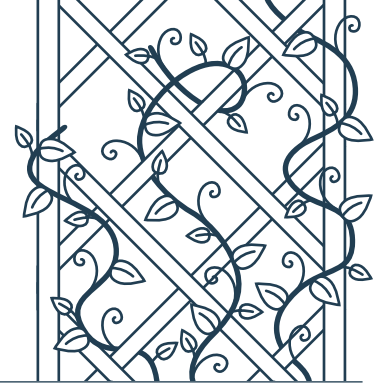
##### *Personal preparation*

- Read Exodus 19: 16-19, 20-21 slowly and prayerfully.
- Reflect on your own responses to themes of mystery, doubt and the absence of answers.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 2 | MYSTERY



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Opening Question

*When you hear the word mystery, what comes to mind – or where do you notice mystery in your life at the moment? What images, feelings, or memories arise for you?*

#### Embodied Practice: Holy Waiting

*This practice can be adapted to suit all bodies and access needs. Please encourage participants to honour their own comfort and boundaries, adjusting posture, taking breaks, or engaging in ways that feel right for them.*

##### ◆ Arrive

Let's begin by settling into our space. Sit comfortably with your feet grounded on the floor. Take a few deep breaths to arrive fully in the moment.

As we begin, bring to mind the scene from Exodus 19: a thick cloud descends, smoke rises, and the mountain trembles. Moses waits and listens. This cloud is not absence but God's way of inviting us deeper: into the mystery of who God is beyond our control or understanding.

##### ◆ Hands Raised - Surrender

Gently raise your hands to shoulder height, palms facing out, fingers softly spread, a gesture of surrender. This posture symbolises letting go of control, the shield of certainty, and offering our questions and doubts to God. Notice how it feels to hold your hands this way. Breathe gently into this posture, opening yourself to mystery rather than answers.

*Pause*

##### ◆ Hands Resting - Openness

When you're ready, slowly lower your hands into your lap, palms turned upward and cupped gently, a quiet sign of openness to God's presence in the unknown. Feel how this shift creates space within you.

You may move your hands between the

raised surrender and lowered receiving postures, noticing the different feelings each brings. These gestures help us embody the journey of faith: letting go and receiving, trusting without needing to grasp fully.

*Pause*

##### ◆ Receive

With your hands resting, join me in this breath prayer:

**Here in the cloud, (*inhale*)  
we wait for you. (*exhale*)**

We'll now sit in silence for a few minutes. As we do, simply be present with whatever arises, thoughts, feelings, questions or stillness itself. You do not need to fix or solve anything. Instead, live your questions, welcoming them as companions on this journey.

Remember, we are not alone; we wait together in this sacred space, united in God's presence even when hidden. If silence feels difficult, gently rest in the awareness that faith is practiced here, in mystery and unknowing.

*Pause*

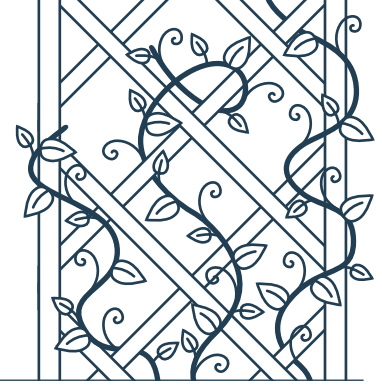
##### ◆ Return

When you feel ready, gently open your eyes. Carry with you the sense of waiting and God's presence in the unknown as we move forward together.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 2 | MYSTERY



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Listening Group Outline

##### ◆ Before you begin

- Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is shared stays within the group, unless someone's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- Emphasise voluntary participation: everyone may speak or pass. If anyone needs a break, it's okay to step away and return when they feel ready.
- Encourage respect for different communication styles, including spoken word, AAC, writing, and BSL.
- Highlight the importance of silence by inviting the group to allow around 30 seconds of quiet after each person's sharing.

##### ◆ Core principles

- Share honestly from your own experience of God.
- Listen deeply without interruption.
- Avoid judgment or giving advice.
- Embrace silence for reflection.

##### ◆ Practice

###### *Wonderings:*

Choose someone to read each of this week's wondering questions aloud. Then take turns reflecting on one wondering of your choice for 2 to 3 minutes without interruption. After each sharing, hold a silence of about 30 seconds before moving to the next person. If time allows, go around the group again, with each person reflecting on a different 'wondering.'

###### **Wonderings**

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder where mystery is present in your life or the life of your community just now, and how you feel about it.
- I wonder how you experience God when there are no easy answers, or when God feels hidden.
- I wonder whether there has been a time when waiting, or not knowing, led you somewhere unexpected.

###### *Bible Passage (optional):*

Choose one person to slowly read this week's Bible passage aloud. Next, take turns sharing a word or short phrase from the passage that stands out to you without explanation. Have someone else read the passage aloud again. Take turns sharing briefly, up to one minute each, about why that part of the passage speaks to you. Hold a silence of about 30 seconds between each person sharing.

##### ◆ Pastoral care reminder

Be attentive to group emotions; pause if distress arises, and signpost support as needed.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 3 | SHADOW

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

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*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old?*

John 3:1-4 (NRSV) (Full reading: John 3:1-8)

#### ◆ Theme: Shadow

##### *Finding God in the Shadow*

This session invites us to explore the parts of ourselves that are often unseen or hidden: the 'shadow self.' Like Nicodemus approaching Jesus under the cover of night, we come with our fears, questions, and uncertainties, learning that God's love meets us there with grace and acceptance.

This session especially honours the complexity of mental health and the shadow self - those parts of us often hidden or misunderstood. At the same time, it invites us to recognise that these shadows are not only personal but also communal, shaped by history, including experiences of racial trauma, marginalisation, and exclusion. Rather than viewing our struggles and limitations as flaws to be erased, this session encourages us to see them as integral parts of our identity in Christ, places where vulnerability becomes a pathway not only to individual healing but also to collective compassion and justice.

By making space for the shadow with openness and compassion, we discover freedom to live more authentically and to

offer the same acceptance to others.

#### ◆ Biblical grounding

##### *Primary passage*

- John 3:1-8

*Additional passages* (suggested for shaping Lent Sunday services)

- Isaiah 43:1-3, Psalm 34:17-22, Romans 8:28-39

#### ◆ Preparation

##### *Materials*

For this week's online session, each participant will need:

- A copy of the liturgy ([page 6](#))
- A copy of the participant's handout for this week's session ([page 9](#))

The group will also need:

- A candle
- Sticky notes and pens (helpful for the opening question)

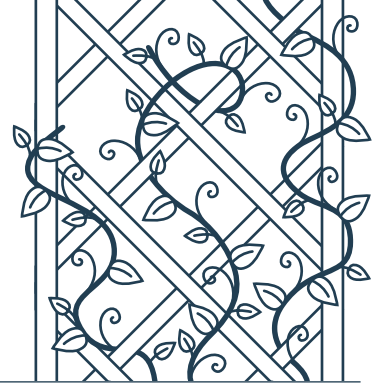
##### *Personal preparation*

- Read John 3:1-8 slowly and prayerfully.
- Reflect on your own responses to this week's theme of finding God in the shadow.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 3 | SHADOW



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Opening Question

As you consider the parts of yourself that you tend to keep private or find hard to share, what comes to mind? Take a moment to notice what arises, without judgement.

#### Embodied Practice: Embracing Presence in the Shadow

*This practice can be adapted to suit all bodies and access needs. Please encourage participants to honour their own comfort and boundaries, adjusting posture, taking breaks, or engaging in ways that feel right for them.*

##### ◆ Arrive

This practice invites us to notice what is happening within us and to open those shadowed places to God's loving presence. We are invited to attend to our inner experience, the feelings, reactions, and sensations that surface, without needing to judge, fix, or change them.

To help us do this gently, the practice guides us through three simple movements: Focus, Make space, and Let go, each helping us become more present to God's compassion at work within us.

So let's now settle into a comfortable seated position. Rest your hands gently on your lap and take a few slow breaths.

##### ◆ Focus

Place your hands on your belly. Feel the rise and fall of your breath beneath your palms, and let this physical centre anchor you.

You might notice a mixture of sensations: perhaps tightness, fluttering, heaviness, or even a sense of ease. Whatever you find, simply let it be.

*God of light and shadow, meet me here. Help me notice what is stirring within me, my thoughts, my feelings, my sensations, without judgement or resistance.*

##### ◆ Make space

Move your hands to your heart. Notice the warmth beneath your hands, the steady

rhythm of your breath around this place of feeling and relationship. Here you might become aware of emotions rising to the surface: perhaps sadness, tenderness, frustration, gratitude, or even numbness.

*God, I make space for the feelings and reactions I find within myself today. I attend to the emotions they awaken in me, trusting that you meet me here with compassion.*

##### ◆ Let go

Place your hands gently on your forehead or temples, the space where thoughts, stories, and interpretations often gather. You may notice busy thinking, resistance, planning, or the familiar pull of self-criticism or worry. Whatever is here, offer it gently to God.

*God, help me loosen my grip on the need to control, on the need for certainty, and on fears that keep me from resting in your love. Teach me to release what I can, so I may receive your healing presence.*

Let us sit together in silence for a few moments, resting in God's gentle gaze.

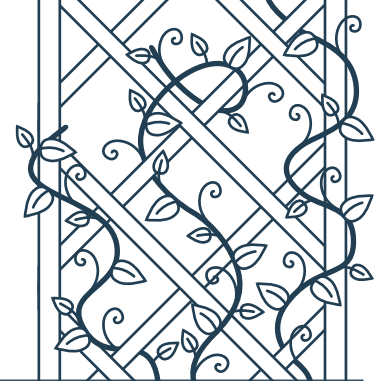
##### ◆ Return

When ready, slowly bring your awareness back to the room. Gently move your hands and open your eyes, carrying with you a sense of God's steady presence and loving acceptance.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 3 | SHADOW



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Listening Group Outline

##### ◆ Before you begin

- Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is shared stays within the group, unless someone's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- Emphasise voluntary participation: everyone may speak or pass. If anyone needs a break, it's okay to step away and return when they feel ready.
- Encourage respect for different communication styles, including spoken word, AAC, writing, and BSL.
- Highlight the importance of silence by inviting the group to allow around 30 seconds of quiet after each person's sharing.

##### ◆ Core principles

- Share honestly from your own experience of God.
- Listen deeply without interruption.
- Avoid judgment or giving advice.
- Embrace silence for reflection.

##### ◆ Practice

###### *Wonderings:*

Choose someone to read each of this week's wondering questions aloud. Then take turns reflecting on one wondering of your choice for 2 to 3 minutes without interruption. After each sharing, hold a silence of about 30 seconds before moving to the next person. If time allows, go around the group again, with each person reflecting on a different 'wondering.'

###### **Wonderings**

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder how the story of Nicodemus coming at night speaks to your own shadows or fears.
- I wonder how God's love has met you in your vulnerabilities or struggles.
- I wonder how your struggles connect you with the struggles of others in your community.

###### *Bible Passage (optional):*

Choose one person to slowly read this week's Bible passage aloud. Next, take turns sharing a word or short phrase from the passage that stands out to you without explanation. Have someone else read the passage aloud again. Take turns sharing briefly, up to one minute each, about why that part of the passage speaks to you. Hold a silence of about 30 seconds between each person sharing.

##### ◆ Pastoral care reminder

Be attentive to group emotions; pause if distress arises, and signpost support as needed.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 4 | PAIN

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

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*From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.*  
Matthew 27:45-50 (NRSV)

#### ◆ Theme: Pain

##### *God With Us in Suffering*

This session invites us to reflect on the God who meets us in places of pain – in our bodies, our minds, our stories, and our world.

In Matthew 27:45–56, we witness Jesus entering the deepest human suffering, crying out in lament. In Him, we meet a God who is fully present in anguish, standing with all who endure chronic illness, exhaustion, grief, or the weight of injustice.

Rather than rushing towards resolution, this week creates space to acknowledge pain as part of our human experience and as a place where compassion and solidarity can deepen. When we speak honestly of suffering, our own and that of our communities, we discover a God who does not turn away, a God whose presence can be found even in the darkest hours. Through this lens, we are invited to listen, to lament, and to recognise the quiet strength that emerges when we bear pain together.

#### ◆ Biblical grounding

##### *Primary passage*

- Matthew 27:45-54

*Additional passages* (suggested for shaping Lent Sunday services)

- Isaiah 53:3-5, Psalm 130, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

#### ◆ Preparation

##### *Materials*

For this week's online session, each participant will need:

- A copy of the liturgy ([page 6](#))
- A copy of the participant's handout for this week's session ([page 10](#))

The group will also need:

- A candle
- Sticky notes and pens (helpful for the opening question)

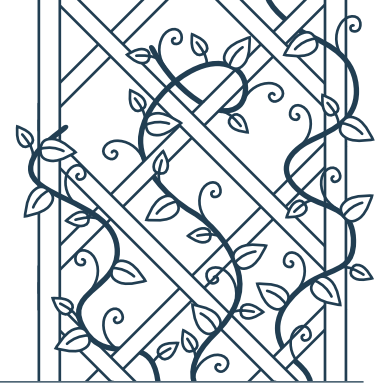
##### *Personal preparation*

- Read Matthew 27:45-50 slowly and prayerfully.
- Reflect on your own responses to this week's theme of pain.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 4 | PAIN



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Opening Question

As you reflect on pain, where does life feel most difficult or tender for you at the moment? Where do you notice pain or struggle being carried by others around you?

#### Embodied Practice: Solidarity Prayer

*This practice can be adapted to suit all bodies and access needs. Please encourage participants to honour their own comfort and boundaries, adjusting posture, taking breaks, or engaging in ways that feel right for them.*

##### ◆ Arrive

Inspired by Jesus' cry of abandonment on the cross, this practice invites us to place our own pain – personal, communal, and global – into God's hands.

Just as Jesus experienced deep suffering and felt forsaken, we too bring our burdens honestly before God, trusting in God's presence amid the darkness. Through this shared act, we enter into solidarity with one another and with Christ, who bears our wounds.

So let's now settle into a comfortable seated position. Rest your hands gently on your lap and take a few slow breaths to centre yourself in this moment.

##### ◆ Open

Now, bring to mind something heavy that you are carrying, whether a personal pain, a shared sorrow, or the suffering of the world. In silence, imagine placing that weight into your cupped hands. Notice what it feels like to hold this burden.

You may want to slowly close your fists, gently or more firmly, allowing your hands to express the weight and intensity of the pain you carry.

##### ◆ Receive

When you feel ready, slowly open your

hands as a sign of entrusting this weight into God's care.

If it feels helpful, you can repeat this closing and opening of your hands a few times, letting your body express and release what needs to be held and then let go.

Remember, in this act you are not alone. Imagine others around the world, here with us and beyond, also offering their burdens to God. Together, we participate in a shared act of solidarity, mutual support, and compassionate presence.

Let us now rest in this communal holding of pain for a few minutes in silence.

*Pause*

Let's pray together:

*God of all comfort,  
We bring to you our wounds and the  
wounds of the world. In your hands, may  
our pain find healing and our burdens be  
lightened. Help us to carry one another's  
sorrows with compassion and grace. Bind  
us together in solidarity, so that none of us  
suffers alone. Amen.*

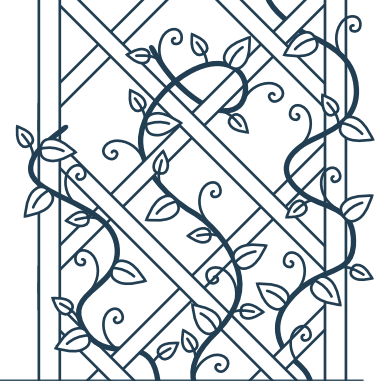
##### ◆ Return

When you are ready, slowly bring your awareness back to the room. Gently move your hands and open your eyes, carrying with you the sense of solidarity and comfort.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 4 | PAIN



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Listening Group Outline

##### ◆ Before you begin

- Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is shared stays within the group, unless someone's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- Emphasise voluntary participation: everyone may speak or pass. If anyone needs a break, it's okay to step away and return when they feel ready.
- Encourage respect for different communication styles, including spoken word, AAC, writing, and BSL.
- Highlight the importance of silence by inviting the group to allow around 30 seconds of quiet after each person's sharing.

##### ◆ Core principles

- Share honestly from your own experience of God.
- Listen deeply without interruption.
- Avoid judgment or giving advice.
- Embrace silence for reflection.

##### ◆ Practice

###### *Wonderings:*

Choose someone to read each of this week's wondering questions aloud. Then take turns reflecting on one wondering of your choice for 2 to 3 minutes without interruption. After each sharing, hold a silence of about 30 seconds before moving to the next person. If time allows, go around the group again, with each person reflecting on a different 'wondering.'

###### **Wonderings**

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder how you notice God's presence or absence when you're hurting.
- I wonder what helps you find comfort or hope during painful times.
- I wonder how carrying pain together with others changes the way you feel or relate to your struggles.

###### *Bible Passage (optional):*

Choose one person to slowly read this week's Bible passage aloud. Next, take turns sharing a word or short phrase from the passage that stands out to you without explanation. Have someone else read the passage aloud again. Take turns sharing briefly, up to one minute each, about why that part of the passage speaks to you. Hold a silence of about 30 seconds between each person sharing.

##### ◆ Pastoral care reminder

Be attentive to group emotions; pause if distress arises, and signpost support as needed.



## TREASURES OF DARKNESS

# WEEK 5 | DAWN

### GROUP LEADER NOTES

---

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb...*

*But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'*

John 20:1, 11-13 (NRSV) (Full reading: John 20:1-2, 11-18)

#### ◆ Theme: Dawn

##### *Hope in the Night*

New life often starts unseen, buried in the dark like a seed sending roots deep before breaking the surface. Mary Magdalene's early journey to the tomb took place while it was still dark – a quiet, uncertain moment before life was revealed.

This session invites us to embrace the mystery of hope rising from sorrow, resisting simple binaries of light and darkness, and recognising both as spaces where God's presence and grace are deeply at work. God's work is often hidden, yet profoundly present in the shadows.

Like Mary, who encountered the risen Christ but did not recognise him at first, we too are called to open ourselves to new life, even when it looks different from what we expect. In the places of grief, struggle, and uncertainty in our lives and communities, hope is quietly taking root. The dawn follows the night.

#### ◆ Biblical grounding

##### *Primary passage*

- John 20:1-2, 11-18

*Additional passages* (suggested for shaping Lent Sunday services)

- Psalm 121, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Romans 15:13

#### ◆ Preparation

##### *Materials*

For this week's online session, each participant will need:

- A copy of the liturgy ([page 6](#))
- A copy of the participant's handout for this week's session ([page 11](#))

The group will also need:

- A candle
- Sticky notes and pens (helpful for the opening question)

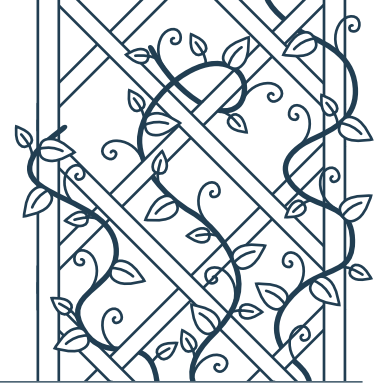
##### *Personal preparation*

- Read John 20:1-18 slowly and prayerfully.
- Reflect on your own responses to this week's theme of dawn.



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 5 | DAWN



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Opening Question

As we reflect on dawn as a sign of hope, what comes to mind for you? Can you think of a time when hope began to emerge, like the first light of dawn?

#### Embodied Practice: Lighting the Dawn

*This practice can be adapted to suit all bodies and access needs. Please encourage participants to honour their own comfort and boundaries, adjusting posture, taking breaks, or engaging in ways that feel right for them. If full darkness feels uncomfortable, you can dim the lights instead.*

##### ◆ Arrive

In this session we have been reflecting on hope that rises quietly in the night, not by escaping darkness, but by meeting God there. In the Gospel, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb while it is still dark. She arrives carrying grief and uncertainty, not yet knowing what the dawn will bring. Light and darkness are not opposites to be conquered, but places where God's presence is already at work.

Let's begin by settling into the darkness. When everyone is comfortable and ready, please close the curtains and turn off the lights. Take a moment to arrive in your space and in your body.

When you are ready, take three deep breaths with me, using this breath prayer:

**We wait in darkness, (inhale)  
for the coming of your light. (exhale)**

*Pause*

##### ◆ Open

If you have a candle, please light it now. If not, a lamp or gently opening the curtains to let in natural light will also work.

As the light enters, slowly raise your hands, palms facing upwards, imagining the gentle unfolding of dawn, the kind of dawn Mary encountered: quiet, unexpected, and easily missed.

Notice how light does not rush or erase the night, but grows within it, revealing what was already there.

##### ◆ Receive

Bring your hands together as if you are receiving God's abundance and blessing for you at this time in your life.

Bring your hands to your heart and rest them there.

Like Mary, we may not immediately recognise what God is doing in us or around us. You may repeat this movement more than once - raising hands, bringing hands together, bringing hand to heart - moving slowly and mindfully with the dawning light, trusting that hope can take root even in grief, confusion, or waiting.

##### ◆ Return

Rest now in the stillness, holding in your imagination the slow breaking of dawn, the movement from waiting to hope, from not knowing to being called by name.

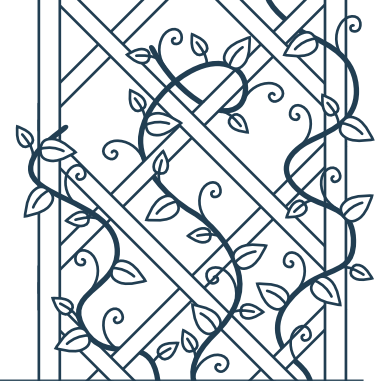
When you feel ready, gently bring your awareness back to the room, carrying this quiet hope with you as you move forward.

We will close with a poem by Jan Richardson called the Magdalene's Blessing ([page 30](#)).



# TREASURES OF DARKNESS

## WEEK 5 | DAWN



### GROUP LEADER NOTES

#### Listening Group Outline

##### ◆ Before you begin

- Remind the group that this is a confidential space and that what is shared stays within the group, unless someone's safety or wellbeing is at risk.
- Emphasise voluntary participation: everyone may speak or pass. If anyone needs a break, it's okay to step away and return when they feel ready.
- Encourage respect for different communication styles, including spoken word, AAC, writing, and BSL.
- Highlight the importance of silence by inviting the group to allow around 30 seconds of quiet after each person's sharing.

##### ◆ Core principles

- Share honestly from your own experience of God.
- Listen deeply without interruption.
- Avoid judgment or giving advice.
- Embrace silence for reflection.

##### ◆ Practice

###### *Wonderings:*

Choose someone to read each of this week's wondering questions aloud. Then take turns reflecting on one wondering of your choice for 2 to 3 minutes without interruption. After each sharing, hold a silence of about 30 seconds before moving to the next person. If time allows, go around the group again, with each person reflecting on a different 'wondering.'

###### **Wonderings**

- I wonder what today's session stirred within you.
- I wonder what it is like to choose hope while it is still dark.
- I wonder if you have experienced life beginning again after a difficult season.
- I wonder how hope and new life might feel different from what you expected.

###### *Bible Passage (optional):*

Choose one person to slowly read this week's Bible passage aloud. Next, take turns sharing a word or short phrase from the passage that stands out to you without explanation. Have someone else read the passage aloud again. Take turns sharing briefly, up to one minute each, about why that part of the passage speaks to you. Hold a silence of about 30 seconds between each person sharing.

##### ◆ Pastoral care reminder

Be attentive to group emotions; pause if distress arises, and signpost support as needed.

## The Magdalene's Blessing For Easter Day

You hardly imagined  
standing here,  
everything you ever loved  
suddenly returned to you,  
looking you in the eye  
and calling your name.

And now  
you do not know  
how to abide this hole  
in the center  
of your chest,  
where a door  
slams shut  
and swings open  
at the same time,  
turning on the hinge  
of your aching  
and hopeful heart.

I tell you,  
this is not a banishment  
from the garden.

This is an invitation,  
a choice,  
a threshold,  
a gate.

This is your life  
calling to you  
from a place  
you could never  
have dreamed,  
but now that you  
have glimpsed its edge,  
you cannot imagine  
choosing any other way.

So let the tears come  
as anointing,  
as consecration,  
and then  
let them go.

Let this blessing  
gather itself around you.

Let it give you  
what you will need  
for this journey.

You will not remember  
the words—  
they do not matter.

All you need to remember  
is how it sounded  
when you stood  
in the place of death  
and heard the living  
call your name.

*Thank you for taking part in  
this Lent offering!*



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**Contact:**

Mirjam Ngoy-Verhage, *Diocesan Discipleship Enabler*  
[mirjam.ngoy@london.anglican.org](mailto:mirjam.ngoy@london.anglican.org)

**Website:**

[lent2026.wayoflife.london](http://lent2026.wayoflife.london)

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