

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## *Calling on God:*

### *Inclusive Christian Prayers for Three Years of Sundays*

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This is a guide for small groups that come together to work with *Calling on God*. Ideally, the group will take several weeks to write fresh prayers in the style used in the book, basing them on the lectionary scripture readings, other written reflections, and events in the community and the wider world.

This multi-session discussion guide is modeled after the collaborative process that has evolved in the Celebration Circle mission group in Seekers Church for writing a fresh liturgy for each season of the liturgical year. As members of your group, encouraged by the prayers in *Calling on God*, combine traditional scripture, contemporary events and fresh ideas into prayers for community and personal worship, we believe you will encourage one another to bring this approach to prayer into other settings.

This outline suggests a five-session program for your group to work with *Calling on God* and explore fresh ways of preparing inclusive prayers for worship. Each session includes:

- An opening prayer from the book
- Time for group members to check in with each other
- Some work together as a group
- A closing prayer developed by a member of the group in the style of *Calling on God*
- A suggestion for some work between group sessions to help prepare for the next meeting.

## SESSION ONE

### **Opening Prayer**

The person convening the group will offer the opening prayer from the current week in *Calling on God*.

### **Sharing**

- Who are you?
- What has been your experience with liturgical prayers?
- What interests you about this group and this approach to prayer?

### **Working Together**

- Decide on the group's structure and interactions:
  - Determine the number of sessions and the frequency of meetings,
  - Discuss opportunities to share the results of the group's work in other gatherings,
  - Establish the confidentiality level in personal sharing.
- Select a liturgical season of 4 to 8 weeks to work with as a group.
- Review the section in *Calling on God* that describes the liturgy development process used in Seekers Church.

### **Closing Prayer**

The convener may offer the closing prayer or ask for some other volunteer.

### **Homework**

- Read the lectionary scriptures for the season selected by the group.
- Read the prayers in *Calling on God* for the season.
- Pay continuing attention to current events at the global, national, local and individual levels.

## **SESSION TWO**

### **Opening Prayer**

The convener will offer the opening prayer from the current week in *Calling on God*.

### **Sharing**

How has your preparation for this meeting affected your prayer life?

### **Work Together**

- Brainstorm possible themes for the worship season the group has selected.
  - List significant moods, events and expectations at the global, national, local and individual levels that might inform prayer during the chosen season.
  - List major images, parables and stories from the lectionary scriptures for the chosen season.
- Select one of the themes to guide the writing of prayers for the season.

### **Closing Prayer**

The convener may offer the closing prayer or ask for some other volunteer.

### **Homework**

Search through favorite readings for a “reflection paragraph” or poem that can focus the prayers being written by the group.

## **SESSION THREE**

### **Opening Prayer**

The convener will offer the opening prayer from the current week in *Calling on God*.

### **Sharing**

How has your search for a reflection paragraph or poem for this meeting affected your prayer life?

### **Work Together**

- Share reflection paragraphs or poems.
  - Rotate sharing by letting each participant read one contribution at a time.
  - Make a list of each item by author and key word so they can be found easily for later rounds of sharing.
- Once all contributions have been read, repeat those that are of most interest to members of the group. Then select one paragraph or poem to provide focus for group work.
- Identify common types of liturgical prayers as a focus for further group work, like the call to worship, the confession and assurance or the benediction.
- Have each group member select one of these categories for homework focus. (Try to have at least one person working on each type of prayer.)

### **Closing Prayer**

The convener may offer the closing prayer or ask for some other volunteer.

## **Homework**

- Have the member who contributed the selected poem or paragraph share it with everyone so all members of the group have access to it for reference.
- Have each group member prepare a draft of the type of prayer they selected during the meeting, based on the theme, scripture for the season and ideas from *Calling on God*.

## **SESSION FOUR**

### **Opening Prayer**

The convener will offer the opening prayer from the current week in *Calling on God*.

### **Sharing**

What challenges did you encounter in preparing for this session?

### **Work Together**

- Share the prayers in a sequence based on a common order of worship.
  - One example would be: call to worship, opening prayer, confession, assurance, thanksgiving and praise, petition and intercession, benediction.
  - You might use prayers from *Calling on God* for the opening prayer, the prayers of praise and thanksgiving and the prayers of petition and intercession.
- Invite group members to share favorite lines from each other's contributions.

### **Closing Prayer**

The convener may offer the closing prayer or ask for some other volunteer.

### **Homework**

- Have each group member write fresh prayers for a community in which she or he is a participating member.
- If possible, arrange to lead worship for that group or offer the new prayers at an appropriate time.

## **SESSION FIVE**

### **Opening Prayer**

The convener will offer the opening prayer from the current week in *Calling on God*.

### **Sharing**

What was your experience in offering more inclusive prayers in another group?

### **Work Together**

- Reflect on the challenges, opportunities and accomplishments of using more inclusive prayers.
- Discuss whether to continue with another liturgical season, change the focus of the group, or conclude the meetings.
- Thank one another for lessons learned.

### **Closing Prayer**

Conclude this session with a prayer offered by all members of the group.