

# INSPIRING MUSIC in WORSHIP

## Guidance on facilitating the sessions

To encourage a relaxed informal atmosphere, the sessions begin with a welcome and ice-breaker rather than opening prayer. However, it may help to make it clear from the outset that the whole time together can be approached and held in an attitude of worship and prayer. Time is allocated at the end for a more focused act of worship; session material is punctuated with discussion questions for pairs or groups.

Group facilitators should:

- Familiarise themselves with the icons on page 8, especially the time tracker.
- Keep an eye on the time during the sessions without restricting or cutting short useful conversation.
- Allow the conversations to flow naturally from the material and given questions, but be prepared to draw people back if they stray too far off message.
- Be alert to red herrings and blind alleys.
- Note down important points for future reference in the notepad spaces in the book.
- Note any other important issues raised which may be important but not appropriate for prolonged discussion on this occasion.

### Adult learning

Everyone comes to the course with different knowledge and experience, so everyone can learn from the others in the group. Each person is responsible for their own learning. People learn in different ways, so the course deliberately uses different learning styles, as follows:

- Conversation in pairs
- Discussion in groups
- Bible reading and reflection
- Practical group tasks
- Case studies
- Individual tasks - particularly between the sessions

### Guided conversations

Sessions have built in flexibility. Every conversation will be different, but the material provides a framework and direction of travel. Group facilitators can set out some simple ground rules:

- Arrive on time and send apologies if unable to attend.
- Listen respectfully and allow each person an opportunity to speak.
- Keep confidences within the group.
- Be sensitive and gentle toward one another.
- Encourage growth in faith and discipleship as well as knowledge.
- Recognise differences of opinion and priority with grace and generosity.
- Understand the extent and challenges of each other's gifts and roles.
- Recognise different approaches to what is 'good' or appropriate.

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Please note that *Inspiring Music in Worship* is not:

- A magic cure-all that will suddenly and miraculously solve all your music difficulties. This is a project that demands engagement and effort – both during the course and after it.
- A time to whinge and moan
- An opportunity to criticise others

Bear in mind too that some participants may say things that sound like criticisms, but are in fact no more than personal reflections (sometimes off-the-cuff) on experiences and possibilities. These could flag up areas of weakness that could be further explored within the course or (if appropriate) addressed at some later stage in other ways.

## What the Bible says

The readings have been carefully chosen to introduce the reader to different approaches to worship. The choice of different types of literature encourages biblical literacy and broader understanding.

This section is in the style of 'Lectio Divina' (Latin literally meaning 'divine reading'), which allows the scriptures to speak for themselves. The instructions in the book guide group members through the process, but it may also be helpful to consider some further principles of 'Lectio Divina'.

- Read each passage aloud - prayerfully without rushing.
- Reflect - consciously laying down any personal agenda and open to what God might want to say through these scriptures.
- Read each passage again - which texts really stand out?
- Respond together - allow each person to share the words or phrases that stand out to them without explanation or comment.
- Rest - spend a moment or two in stillness in God's presence.

This is a great way to encourage even the most reticent group member to speak and share something. Consider what prayer is being evoked? The response is inspired by meditation on the Word of God, so encourage everyone to continue to ruminate on these verses after the session. The results of this kind of ongoing meditation and reflection on the scriptures can be transformative for both individuals and churches. Group members can then use the on-line commentary to explore context, history and significance further if they wish.

## Sections B and C

After refreshments, everyone has a choice of two options (except in Session 1): a practical task (Section B) or case studies (Section C). Groups can divide and tackle both sections or they can choose the option that suits them best. They may choose different options in different sessions. Flexibility is key.

Practical tasks relate to the theme of the session and may involve work alone, in twos and threes, or as a whole group.

Case studies are based on real churches, which have been renamed to protect anonymity. These give participants the opportunity to consider familiar scenarios in an objective way.

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## Inter-sessional sections

These have been designed to:

- Help participants to absorb and process the material in the session they have just finished
- Provide extra material to develop thinking further if participants have time or inclination
- Give concrete preparation tasks for the following session

## Managing people

Everyone wants to be part of an encouraging group that gets on well together. Despite setting out the ground rules above, we may find one or two of the following characters within a group. These are deliberately exaggerated caricatures. As a group facilitator, it is well worth thinking through different strategies for managing such people so that they don't dominate or inhibit the whole group.

- *Argumentative Annie* is inclined to play devil's advocate. She is what we might call a stalwart of the C of E, a traditionalist through and through, who will fight against anything she considers 'modern' or 'trendy' on principle.
- *Cheeky Charlie* is the joker in the pack, always playing for laughs. He can help others to relax and enjoy themselves. This can be fun for a while, but patience soon may wear thin.
- *Domineering Derek* likes things done his way. He finds it difficult to listen to the opinions of others especially when they differ from his and he is inclined to steam-roller his ideas and agenda through at the expense of others.
- *Expert Edna* has always been there, done that, and got the T-shirt. She appears to have been a worshipper within every denomination at some point. She gives the impression that she should be leading this course rather than the facilitator.
- *Insecure Izzy* sits in the group and rarely contributes anything. Even if asked a direct question, she is reluctant to respond in case she says something wrong. She is equally terrified of reading in front of other people.
- *Judgmental Jeremy* can come out with sweeping generalisations or pointed remarks, which often serve as put-downs for others. He seems blissfully unaware of how blunt and potentially hurtful his comments can be.
- *Quiet Quentin* is shy and retiring. He finds it difficult to communicate in a group setting, yet if he can be drawn out, he has some real pearls of wisdom and profound insights to contribute.
- *Talkative Trisha* is a natural chatterbox. Her friendliness can really help to draw others out. However, at times, others cannot get a word in edgeways and her inclination to talk can often waste precious time in the limited time available.

A good facilitator will encourage the shy and reticent to participate, occasionally rein in the talkative so that others have a chance to contribute, and gently challenge the domineering and judgmental so that they become more sensitive and respectful toward different but equally valid viewpoints.

## Final words

- Be positive
- Enthuse and encourage
- Affirm and build trust
- And (most importantly) enjoy!