



SHELTER

Small Group Facilitator Guide

Set up:

- Ensure that all technology is in place and ready to view the video. If your church does not have adequate WiFi, this may mean that the facilitator will need to download the video before arriving for the session. Facilitators will also need to ensure that everyone will be able to hear and see the video as it is being played. Facilitators may wish to turn on closed captioning.
- Create a welcoming space to have a conversation.
- Place a table in the center or near the conversation space to create an “altarscape” of items that will help set the tone and keep the conversation focused on each Sign of Life.

What you need:

- *Video viewing capabilities*
- *Small Group Facilitator Guide for the facilitator*
- *Signs of Life Practice Sheet and worship handouts for each participant*
- *A table for the altarscape*
- *Specific items to create altarscape. For shelter, you will need the “barn” part of a crèche. You will not need the figurines from the nativity scene, just the shelter itself.*

Learning Outcomes

- *For participants to be able to link shelter to liturgy, their own life, and experience of God.*
- *For participants to gain a better awareness of the presence of the holy in everyday life.*
- *For participants to deepen relationships through spiritual conversation.*

Small Group Session for Shelter

Gathering Prayer/Setting the Altarscape: (5 minutes)

Gather participants into the conversation circle. Invite a few moments of stillness, and then pray this collect:

Beloved God, who, in your mercy, shelters us with your tender embrace; grant that we may know you as our one true refuge from the world of suffering, and help us to offer compassionate sanctuary to our neighbors in need; even as you dwell within and among us, one holy and undivided Trinity, forever and ever. Amen.

After the prayer, place the shelter of the crèche on the table. Take a few moments to pause and think about shelter.

Check-In (15 minutes):

Orient participants to the rhythm of this session. Let them know that you will do check-in, watch the video, have a conversation, and then close with worship.

Invite participants to answer the following question:

Last week we discussed food. How did you notice the presence of food this week?

Facilitators may wish to practice mutual invitation (see Small Group Facilitator Guide, above) or they may wish to simply go around in the circle. Participants who pass should be invited to share after the other participants have shared.

Watch Video (15 minutes):

Before you start the video, read this script:

“As you watch this video, pay attention to the various ways shelter is explored, and think about how shelter is present in the life and liturgies of your worshipping community.”

Play video to the end. Invite the group to come back together for conversation.

Small Group Conversation (40 minutes):

Open the small group conversation with the following question:

“Where is shelter present in the life and liturgies of your own worshipping community? How are these symbols and practices similar or dissimilar to what you heard and saw in the video?”

After the opening question has been discussed, choose any of the following questions to discuss with your small group. The facilitator should use their best judgment to select the questions that they believe will elicit meaningful conversation for your context. The small group may spend the entire time on one question, or do several. How many questions the group moves through is less important than fruitful conversation for the group.

- How has your experience of shelter influenced your spiritual journey?
- Br. Geoffrey describes his experience of finding home at the monastery, a place he had never been. Have you ever come home to a place you’ve never been before?
- When have you found shelter in God?
- Shelter doesn’t necessarily imply a physical space. Br. Nicholas shares the story of a time when someone offered shelter to him through silent presence. When have you provided shelter for another, or been sheltered by another?
- How has the knowledge that are always sheltered by God enabled you to take difficult journeys?
- Is your church truly a place of sanctuary for all? Why or why not?

When there are about five minutes left for conversation, ask the following question:

“What do you understand differently about shelter because of this conversation?”

Wrap Up/Weekly Practice (5 minutes):

Remind the participants of the weekly practice. Distribute the Signs of Life Practice Sheet for Shelter. Reiterate the instructions from the video:

“Here is a reminder of the practice for this Sign of Life. This week, when you return to the place you feel most at home, pay attention to what you set down or let go.”

This is also the time when the facilitator should remind participants of housekeeping details for the next session.

Worship (10 minutes):

Pass out the worship handouts to each participant. The facilitator may wish to lead worship, or may invite another participant to lead worship. Groups may wish to use the altarscape as a focal point during their worship time.

After worship, the small group session has ended.



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Small Group Worship

Leader prays the collect: Beloved God, who, in your mercy, shelters us with your tender embrace; grant that we may know you as our one true refuge from the world of suffering, and help us to offer compassionate sanctuary to our neighbors in need; even as you dwell within and among us, one holy and undivided Trinity, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 31

Read antiphonally by half verse.

In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame: *
deliver me in your righteousness.

Incline your ear to me; *
make haste to deliver me.

Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold; *
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.

Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *
for you are my tower of strength.

Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
**for you have redeemed me,
O LORD, O God of truth.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Leader: Without silence, words have no meaning. Listen to this poem about shelter.

[Here we suggest reading from "The Shelter" by Emily Dickinson.]

In the silence that follows, let God welcome you in. *[Silence for two minutes.]*

Prayers of the Gathered Community:

Leader: Even as we are gathered here in a place that is safe and dry, there are those who live without shelter and protection. Pray for those who lack shelter and security, either silently, or aloud.

We give God thanks for all the ways God has protected us and brought us home. Give thanks for the places you call home, either silently or aloud.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Now let us pray the words that Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**



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Practice Sheet

This week we invite you to reflect on the sign of Shelter

Question:

Where do you feel most at home?

Scripture:

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.
For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

Psalm 27:4-5

Collect:

Beloved God, who, in your mercy, shelters us with your tender embrace; grant that we may know you as our one true refuge from the world of suffering, and help us to offer compassionate sanctuary to our neighbors in need; even as you dwell within and among us, one holy and undivided Trinity, forever and ever. Amen.

Practice:

When you return to the place you feel most at home, pay attention to how you settle in. Remember that God hides us under the shadow of God's wings; in God we always find shelter.



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