



Discovering God is a resource offering practical ideas for informal services and events. With a theme-based approach, this series can help create community and a sense of belonging.

Guidance on using Discovering God can be found at: www.rootsontheweb.com/DG-introNote for leaders

Out of control

Considering how we live with uncertainty

Note to leaders

The purpose of these resources is to create a space in which we can acknowledge and recognise that feeling a loss of control on aspects of our lives and the emotions that go alongside it, are part of daily life experience. For some people, feelings of uncertainty and loss of control can become overwhelming and turn into a permanent way of being. These materials do not attempt to go into these situations. Be sensitive to people in your gathering who might be or have been in this situation. There is a list of sources of information and services on the [WEB](#).

Somewhere to start

Here's a way to introduce the theme.

- Show some items we connect with protecting ourselves against Covid-19, e.g. a face covering, anti-bac gel, a lateral flow test, vaccine sticker or card. Ask everyone to think about how they have felt at different times during the pandemic. Did their feelings change over time at all?
- Using material, wool, coloured paper, etc., create a rainbow together. Ask: What does a rainbow mean to you?

Loving God,
 when our lives feel all over the place,
 may we feel calm and still. (*fold hands*)
 When we feel cross and angry, (*make fists*)
 may we feel peaceful. (*cup hands*)
 When we want to shut everybody out, (*wrap arms tightly around your body*)
 may we open our hearts in love. (*spread arms wide*)
Amen.

Somewhere to finish

Before you end, come together to gather your thoughts and, if appropriate, to pray.

- Make paper boats and invite everyone to take them home as a reminder that Jesus can bring calm in a storm. Close with the Breton fisherman's prayer:

Dear God,
 be good to me,
 the sea is so wide,
 and my boat is so small.
Amen.

Explore

Choose from these ideas and activities to help people of all ages explore the theme together. Use the spiritual styles indicated by the coloured letters to help you plan and cater for the different ways in which people connect with God. Spiritual styles (as defined by Dave Csinos) key: **W**ord, **E**motion, **S**ymbol, **A**ction. Find out more [WEB](#) in Worship and learning support.

Human feelings **WE**

Ask people to shout out as many different feelings as they can think of. Write them down. Tell everyone that scientists agree on six basic human emotions: sadness, happiness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust. In small groups, create simple dialogues or sketches to show typical situations when people express these emotions. Use the sketches to explore why we experience such a wide range of emotions, e.g. we worry because we care about ourselves and others; we can be angry because we feel something is unfair.

Body protection **WE**

Gather around a large paper or card body shape. Introduce the topic of how our bodies respond when we feel fear or worry. You could refer to the situations created in *Human feelings* above, or play TV/film clips/music that evoke these feelings. Ask what parts of our bodies react and how, and mark them on the body shape (breathing becomes faster, butterflies in your tummy, fast heartbeat, difficulty focusing, etc.). Talk together about how these are natural reactions because our body wants to protect us, and help us to be ready for 'fight or flight'. The body doesn't know if we really do need to be ready to run, so sometimes it creates this energy, but we know we don't really need it. You can find a link to a scientific explanation on the [WEB](#).



Calm yourself ES

Invite everyone to join in a simple breathing exercise: sit still and breathe in to a count of four, and breathe out to a count of eight. This action will reduce the effect of how our bodies react when we are worried or nervous, and will help steady ourselves.

Boat game WES

Spread out pieces of paper/card around your space. Everyone circles the 'boats' until you shout 'storm!' They must all jump onto a boat – anyone who can't find one is out. After each round, remove a boat or tear off some paper/card so they get smaller. The winner is the person who gets to the last remaining boat or 'piece' of boat. Afterwards, ask: Where do we find comfort in the storms of life? Allow some time or talk quietly in small groups. If you don't want to play the game, ask the question, and provide craft materials for people to make something that connects them to this place or situation.

Sensory spaces WE

Set up different sensory experiences for people to explore during a time of quiet and stillness.

- A bowl of water and stones. Invite people to choose a stone to hold and examine carefully, enjoying all its details, then to put it in the water.
- Make glitter jars with biodegradable glitter and clear oil. What worries could the different colours represent? Shake up the jars and watch and wait while the glitter gradually settles.
- Play calm music, and invite people to enjoy the scent of essential oils on their hands. They could massage it into each other's hands.
- Show a picture which offers a sensory experience, that people can use to reflect and feel calm, like the forest landscape above, available at Piotr Krzeslak/Shutterstock.com

Something from the Bible

Mark 4.35-41

We have picked this passage to help illustrate and explore the theme from a biblical or Christian context. Read and share is a way to engage everyone with the Bible story. The notes that follow are designed to help the leader.

Read and share

Show Eularia Clark's oil painting 'Storm over the lake', from the Methodist Modern Art Collection (link on [WEB](#)). The Sea of Galilee is low lying and its weather is always changing. Sudden violent storms can blow up. Ask people what they see in the picture. Ask people, as they listen to the reading, to imagine what feelings the disciples in the boat might have had. They could perhaps think about something that they've experienced. Recall the feelings of fear, the thoughts, the questions they had. Was one of the questions 'Don't you care, God'? Now read the passage.

Summary of passage

Huge crowds of people come to listen to Jesus' teaching, so he talks to people from a boat, at the edge of the Sea of Galilee. Now it is the end of the day, and Jesus is exhausted. He and his disciples sail to the other side of the lake to escape the crowd, though other boats follow. A violent storm blows up. The disciples are terrified, but Jesus is asleep. They wake him and he calms the storm.

What could we learn from it?

Even hardened fishermen like the disciples are terrified in the storm and are horrified that Jesus does not seem to care, but can sleep through it. We can often struggle to cope with suffering and God's lack of immediate response. When the disciples call on him to save them from drowning, Jesus rises up with authority, and stops the waves in a display of divine power. The writer of this Gospel, Mark, was writing for a small persecuted community, and he wants them to understand that Jesus was with the disciples in their fear, and longed for them to have faith in him. His power to calm the storm reflects how much he loved the disciples, and loves us, and is always there for us.

Follow-up ideas

Watch this YouTube film of a sunset over the Sea of Galilee: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJTvFMtWh98>



Think about your own well-being and create a space you can go to when you're feeling worried. Look for local groups that organise walks, yoga, coffee and chat, etc., that can offer times of calm and support.

Be aware of those around you who would value some company when they're feeling that some things are out of control, and offer to spend time with them.

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