

STARTING

**PUT A SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY ALONGSIDE
WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING**



Many Christians are involved in brilliant outreach activities with children and families, craft groups, social action projects and more. But it has never crossed their minds to add explicitly a spiritual dimension.

One church in Lincolnshire, England, had a weekly lunch club for older people, most of whom didn't go to church. After a while, they invited people to stay behind and gather round a table.

They lit a candle, played some Christian music, read a short Bible passage, had time for silent prayer, and included some spoken prayers – no more than 15 minutes.

They assured people that the lunch club would continue to meet as normal. Three quarters of the group stayed on afterwards.

You can imagine how bit by bit this gathering might evolve. Maybe someone asks if they can discuss the Bible passage, and so they extend the time to half an hour. Gradually, perhaps over many months, a new Christian community emerges.

Discovering shows how easy it is to discuss the Bible with people who don't go to church, while *Deepening* and *Enriching* suggest some further steps.

Much Christian outreach stops short of what people often long for (and may be expecting to find when they attend a church-organised activity). So why not put a spiritual component alongside the initiative? Those who want to could explore a fuller life.

LOTS OF POSSIBILITIES

Imagine you're involved in a bereavement group, and you don't think people are ready for a reading from the Bible. You could write verses and spiritual sayings on a collection of cards. Invite each person to select a card, reflect on it, and share what they think.

Or you could cut out photos from a magazine or download some from the internet. The photos might include a range of scenes from daily life, nature and the news. People could choose a picture, share why they have chosen it, and then turn it into silent or spoken prayer.

Go to this website for some beautiful *Gazing Prayer* cards designed for this purpose: [St Clare's](#)

Maybe your church holds an annual service for people who have been bereaved. Through a personal invitation, you could follow it up with a fortnightly *Renew Life* group in someone's home.

The group might 'explore spiritual resources to help us fill the gap in our lives,' using one of the approaches in *Discovering*.

Perhaps only two or three people attend. But when appropriate, during funeral visits or after the funeral service, the minister mentions the group. Slowly the group grows, and gradually a new Christian community is born.

WHAT ABOUT YOUNGER PEOPLE?

Or imagine you lead a uniformed organisation such as the Scouts and Guides, or an open youth group for teenagers beyond the church. Could you invite the young people to pizza and chat on a Sunday afternoon? (Make sure you sort the safeguarding issues!)

The young people eat and hang out together. Then, as one youth worker did, you could invite the teenagers to take it in turns to describe a high or low moment from the previous week.

After each person's contribution, ask two others in the group to join you in laying hands over the one who spoke, while you say a short prayer. After a



few weeks, maybe the young people could start saying the prayers?

A Messy Church or an inter-generational gathering could introduce a Zoom spiritual mindfulness session for 20 minutes one evening a week – either for adults or on an all-age basis. This video, prepared during the Covid lockdown, might be helpful: [Messy Mindfulness](#)

Or the leader could read or tell a Bible story on Zoom. Families at home build a Lego model to illustrate it, show off their models on Zoom, share what they've learnt about the story, and join in a final prayer. Church at home!

You can do something similar with Minecraft. For some examples, including how to pray using Minecraft, go here: [Messy Church](#)

Here's a way to encourage family devotions alongside an inter-generational church.

A WAY FORWARD

When the suggestion was made to add a spiritual dimension alongside an existing activity, one minister replied, 'Thank you. I can now see a way forward.'

Instead of hoping people would find their way to church on Sunday, here was an opportunity to bring the church to people where they were.

Maybe you too can see a way forward, but you lack the courage to do it. Well, don't start on your own. Discuss the possibility with another Christian.

Then float the idea with one or two people in the group who don't attend church. If they think it might work, ask the group whether you could try this as an experiment – but only with those who want.

Remember: listening to people is a powerful form of love. So don't leap ahead without asking others first. Then go prayerfully step by step. Each step will give you the confidence to take the next.

So why not take the first step? Which Christian friend could you consult? Who knows: the Spirit may surprise you!

