

In Mary Sumner's footsteps
Listening Resource: notes and extra ideas

Purpose

A resource to help members listen to God as they consider the forthcoming elections for roles in the new triennium; whether God is calling them to stand and who they should vote for.

This listening resource should fit well into half an hour. If a longer time is available then these are extra suggestions that may be helpful.

Time to be still

Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.
¹⁰ The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'
1 Samuel 3:9-10

It was when Samuel was in a place of rest that God spoke to him. At the beginning of our time together let us take a moment to draw aside from the busyness of life and rest in God's presence.

A longer time of silence can be held here, perhaps accompanied by music.

**Almighty Lord,
we thank you that we can
dwell in your presence
through the love of Christ.**

Speak to us, Lord,
as we draw near to you.
Still our restless thoughts
and calm our active minds.

Quieten our spirits
to hear your gentle voice.
Open our ears to listen well;
open our hearts to sense your will.

Give us your grace to heed your words
and follow where you lead.
Speak to us, Lord,
for your servants are listening.

**Almighty Lord,
we thank you that you speak to us
as we are united in prayer. Amen**

Time to celebrate

We are many parts of one body,
and we all belong to each other.
In his grace, God has given us different gifts
for doing certain things well.

Romans 12:5-6

It is always good to celebrate what has been achieved together, through the grace of God. Take a few moments to remember and share highlights of the triennium.

This may be prepared beforehand and the time taken to share expanded.

**A prayer tree could be used to hang on the names/description of achievements. You may also wish to include things that you hoped would happen and didn't, or were less successful, for whatever reason.*

See below for suggestions for more creative prayer ideas.

Let us thank God for each other's gifts and work, used in his service.
May this give us confidence in God's continued provision as we listen to hear his plans for our future.

**We celebrate each other's gifts from God.
May our appreciation of them
bring praise to the Giver.**

With thanks we celebrate each other's gifts
and their significance to our lives.

We praise God for those whose skills meet a need;
those whose creativity enriches us;
those who impart compassion and hope.

As the body of Christ, we rejoice to combine our gifts;
our own enhanced through unity with another's.
We delight in working together for the kingdom of God.

**How lavish is our God!
We celebrate your generosity to us
with thankful hearts. Amen**

Time to listen to God through his Word

Isaiah 40:27-31 or Mark 6:34-44 or another passage you feel may be appropriate for your particular setting

One person reads the passage out loud, slowly. Then take time to read and reflect on the passage together in silence asking God to draw our attention to words that he wants to highlight and use to speak to us. If time allows these may be shared together so we are united in listening to each other and to God.

You may wish to reflect further together on any particular themes that may be emerging through your sharing, which are helpful in considering the next triennium.

Time to listen to God through prayer

Take a few minutes to pray and reflect in silence as individuals, asking God to continue to speak and guide our thoughts as we look to respond to his leading.
You may wish to play music quietly in the background

Time to give thanks

This may be expanded to include specific prayers of thanks for what has arisen through your time of listening.

**Lord, thank you for your words of life
which challenge and inspire us.
Thank you for speaking to us today.
Lead us forward in your will. Amen**

Suggestions for extra activities and creative prayer ideas

Give opportunity for people to write on cards or vocalise the skills, qualities and attributes desired for the various roles vacant for the new triennium. As each one is highlighted place a glass pebble on a large plate or bowl which contains unlit tea lights. When the pebbles have all been placed between the candles these may be lit as a symbol of God's light which enhances and shines through our human qualities and offerings.

There may then be a short time of silent prayer reflection focussed on the lit display.

Display a map of the diocese. Supply post it notes for people to write their prayers for the diocese and the needs that Mothers' Union may be able to address in any way. Encourage people to stick their notes on the map and use the display as a prayer focus for all.

***Prayer Tree**

Start with a bare tree skeleton and a supply of paper leaves.

In a time of quiet, think about all the things that have happened in the past three years.

- What has gone well?
- What has exceeded expectations?
- What didn't go as well as it might?

Write one thing on a leaf (each person can write on as many leaves as they want)

Bring the leaves to the tree.

Attach to the branches all those things which went well (blutack is the easiest thing to use).

Place at the bottom of the tree trunk the things that didn't flourish – as leaves that have fallen to the ground.

In a time of prayer, look at the leaves on the tree. Thank God and celebrate what has been achieved in the triennium.

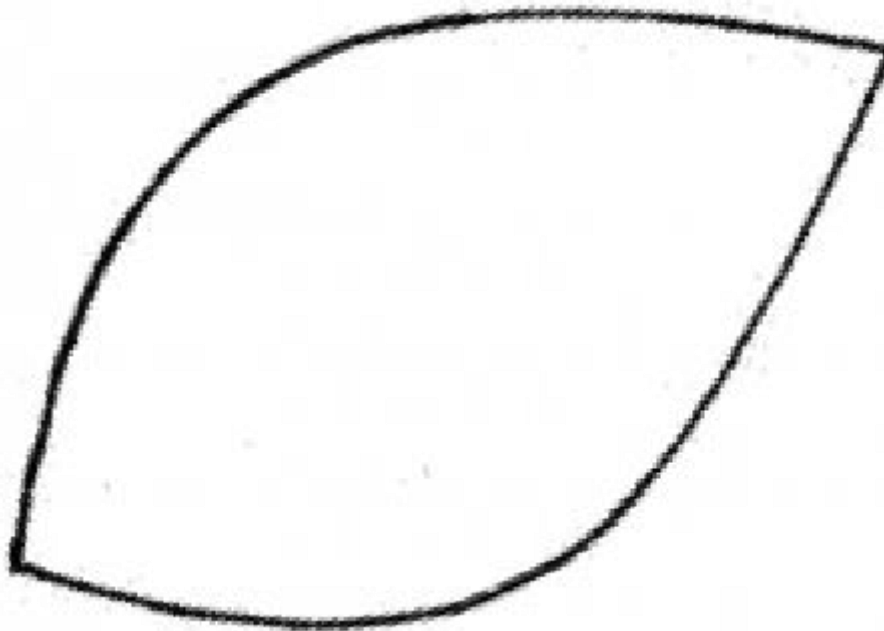
Then reflect on the leaves that have fallen to the ground.

- Why did these leaves not flourish?
- What is God saying to us about these things?
- Do we need to recognise that some ideas have not come to fruition for a purpose?
- Is God suggesting we try again – maybe using a different approach?

You might like to encourage members to take some leaves (both those attached to the tree and those that have fallen) to use as a focus in their personal prayers.

Alternatively, you could keep the tree as a focus, not only for prayer, but for action as you plan for the new triennial period.

Leaf template



Tree template – this will need to be at least doubled in size for the activity

