Dwelling in the Word

LEADER'S GUIDE AND READINGS FOR 2026-27

Dates/Season	Scripture Reading
Sept. 1-Nov. 28 *(Time after Pentecost)*	2 Peter 1:2-11
Nov. 29-Jan. 6 *(Advent-Epiphany)*	1 Samuel 1:9-18
Jan. 7-Feb. 9 *(Time after Epiphany)*	Philippians 4:10-20
Feb. 10-March 27 *(Lent)*	1 Timothy 4:1-10
March 28-May 22 *(Easter-Pentecost)*	Colossians 1:24-2:3
May 23-Aug. 31 *(Time after Pentecost)*	Psalm 146

If you have regular meetings on a frequent basis (e.g. a weekly quilting group or staff meeting), you can add other readings to the rotation, such as from the previous or upcoming Sunday, daily lectionary, or the Psalms.

What is Dwelling in the Word?

Dwelling in the Word is a 20-30 minute practice designed to help us tune into God's presence and the Spirit's movement. By listening to Scripture and reflecting together as a gathered community, we build deeper faith and trust with one another.

Rather than driving toward specific answers or requiring expert biblical scholarship, this practice simply invites us to be present with God's living Word. As a group, we explore three simple questions:

- What do I notice?
- What do I wonder?
- Where might God's Spirit be nudging us?

The words "dwell" and "abide" in Scripture mean to live, remain, or stay present. As we dwell in the Word together, the reflections, wonderings, and nudgings shape our shared life and faith.

All synod meetings include time for Dwelling in the Word, and we encourage council meetings, committees, Bible studies, and other group gatherings to practice it as well.

How to Lead Dwelling in the Word

Getting Ready to Lead

This practice is flexible by design. Feel free to adapt the time you spend sharing to fit your gathering, whether in pairs, small groups, or with the whole room. It works in person as well as by video call.

A few helpful tips before you start:

- **Share the text:** Provide a physical handout or share your screen so everyone can read along in the same translation.
- **Choose two readers:** Plan to read the text twice using two different volunteers. You can use the same translation both times, or try two translations for a slightly different perspective.
- **Hosting on Zoom?** Check ahead of time that screen sharing and breakout rooms are enabled in your meeting settings if you plan to use those features.

Prepare

If anyone in the group is new to the practice, offer a brief, welcoming introduction.

> *"Dwelling in the Word is a time for prayerful, communal reflection on Scripture. We'll hear our text read twice, with a brief period of silence after each reading to let the words settle.*
>
> *As you listen, keep these three questions in mind, and feel free to write down any thoughts:*
>
> - *What do I notice? What captures my attention?*
> - *What questions do I have? What do I wonder?*
> - *Where might God's Spirit be nudging us?*
>
> *Afterward, you'll have a few minutes to share your thoughts with a partner. These can be simple words or phrases that stood out to you, with or without explanation."*

Listen

1. **Open in prayer:** Begin with a short prayer asking God to open your hearts and speak through the reading.
2. **First reading:** Invite your first volunteer to read the passage slowly.
3. **Pause:** Allow a moment of intentional silence.
4. **Second reading:** Invite your second volunteer to read the passage.
5. **Pause:** Allow another moment of quiet reflection.

Reflect

1. **Pair up:** Ask participants to turn to a partner and share the words or phrases that caught their attention.

   Leader note: Remind everyone to listen carefully to their partner, as they'll be sharing some of their partner's insights with the broader group later.

   If on Zoom: Set up breakout rooms with two people per room (divide your total headcount by two) for about 5 minutes.

2. **Switch speakers:** After a couple of minutes, gently remind pairs to switch so both people have equal time to share.
3. **Gather in larger groups:** Transition into groups of six to eight at physical tables (or return to the full group on Zoom). Ask participants to share what their partner heard and wondered (with their permission).
4. **Listen for nudgings:** Bring everyone back into the full room and open the floor for any final reflections. Ask, "Where might God's Spirit be nudging us?"

   Leader note: Give people room to process. There may be a lot of sharing or just a little, and as the leader, you don't need to answer questions or respond to every comment.

Act

1. **Carry the Word forward:** Invite participants to hold the passage in mind throughout the rest of your meeting. How might this text speak to the work, discussions, or decisions ahead?
2. **Optional rereading:** Before adjourning, you may choose to read the text one last time to reflect on how it influenced your time together.
3. **Close in prayer:** Wrap up by thanking God for speaking to the group through Scripture, and invite them to bring the text with them into their next gathering.

Learn more about this practice in the book "Dwelling in the Word: A Pocket Handbook" (Church Innovations, 2011) by Pat Taylor Ellison and Patrick Keifert.