# Dwelling in the Word

Leader's Guide and Readings for 2025-26

## Readings for 2025-26

- **Sept. 1-Nov. 29 (Time after Pentecost):** Colossians 1:3-14
- **Nov. 30-Jan. 6 (Advent-Epiphany):** Jeremiah 31:10-14
- **Jan. 7-Feb. 17 (Time after Epiphany):** 3 John 2-8
- **Feb. 18-April 4 (Lent):** Philippians 2:19-30
- **April 5-May 30 (Easter-Pentecost):** 2 Corinthians 8:1-9
- **May 31-Aug. 31 (Time after Pentecost):** Romans 14:13-22

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 process for becoming aware of God's presence and the Spirit's movement by listening and reflecting on Scripture as a gathered community. Dwelling in the Word forms faith and trust within a group by sharing responses to three questions: what do I notice, what do I wonder, and where might God's Spirit be nudging us?

The word "dwell" or "abide" is used frequently in Scripture. It means to live or remain somewhere or with someone for a time. The practice of Dwelling in the Word invites communities to live together with a text for a period so that the reflections, wonderings, and promptings of God's Word form and shape our faith and living. The purpose of Dwelling in the Word is not about answering questions or getting to particular results but allowing ourselves to be present with God's living Word. Dwelling in the Word does not require a leader steeped in biblical scholarship.

All synod meetings include a time of Dwelling in the Word, and communities of disciples are encouraged to engage in Dwelling in the Word at their council meetings, committee meetings, Bible studies, and any other gatherings.

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

# How to Lead Dwelling in the Word

## Preparing for the Gathering

This practice is meant to be flexible for use with small and large groups; you are free to adapt the amount of time for sharing, as well as whether to spend time with partners, small groups, or the whole group. Dwelling in the Word can be done in person or through video conference. The "Acting" section would be more applicable to council and committee meetings than a Bible study or quilting group.

Depending on your group, you may want to provide a handout or screen share with the Scripture passage and/or the reflection questions. It is helpful for everyone to hear and/or read along with the same translation. Typically, the same text is read twice by two different readers, or you may read a second translation.

If you are Dwelling in the Word on Zoom, make sure the host has enabled the screen sharing and breakout rooms options in settings.

## Prepare to Listen

If the practice is new to any member of the group, the leader provides a brief introduction to Dwelling in the Word. For example:

"Dwelling in the Word is a time of prayerful and communal reflection on a passage of Scripture. We will hear God's Word read twice, allowing for silence between the readings. Are there two volunteers who would be our readers? I will let you know when to read. As we listen to the text, consider these questions; feel free to write down any reflections if you'd like.

- What captures my attention?
- What questions do I have? What do I wonder?
- Where might God's Spirit be nudging us?

"After we hear God's Word, you will have a few minutes to share your responses [with a partner]. These can be simply words or phrases that stand out for you, with or without explanation."

## Listening

The leader opens with a prayer asking God to open our hearts and speak to us. Ask the first reader to read the text slowly.

Allow for silence.

Invite the second reader to read the text again.

Allow for silence.

## Reflecting

The leader instructs people to pair up and share responses, words or phrases, with or without explanation. “Listen carefully to your partner; after sharing with each other, you will be sharing some of your partner’s responses with the whole group (or a table group).” (On Zoom, the host selects breakout rooms and the amount of time desired (about five minutes); the number of rooms is your participants divided by two. The host will be able to join any room after activating the rooms. At the end of the allotted time, participants will return to the full group.)

After a few minutes, remind people to switch to let the other person share if they haven’t already.

After a few more minutes, ask people to gather with their partner at a table of 6-8 or in the full group. With their partner’s permission, let people share what their partner heard and wondered.

After a few more minutes, if not already gathered as the whole group, bring everyone together, ask for any other sharing. After hearing responses, ask “Where might God’s Spirit be nudging us?” (There may or may not be much response but allow time for people to process the question after everything they’ve heard.) The leader does not have to answer questions or respond directly to what is shared.

## Acting

The leader invites participants to keep the Scripture in mind throughout the meeting and encourages participants to share reflections from the text throughout the time together. What does the text say amid the meeting/gathering and making decisions?

You may decide to end your time together by reading the text one more time and invite reflections on how the passage influenced discussion and/or planning.

Close with a prayer, asking God to continue speaking to the group through the Scripture. Bring the Scripture text to the group in the same manner at the next meeting or gathering.