

# Radical Welcome Session 2

## Remembering exclusion



**Purpose:** To enable the individuals in the congregation or group to use their own memories of exclusion as a basis for reflecting on “what does it mean to be welcomed?”

**Note:** The session comprises two guided visualisations, followed by brief discussion in pairs; it should occur in a quiet space where people can hear clearly and where they are more likely to be at ease.

This is a delicate session so it would be much better not to work in a “corridor” room. It is not appropriate for small children as the silences can be long in this session.

Leaders and those who exercise pastoral oversight should be available to give support to individuals over the ensuing week.

### Session Outline and Timings: Session Total 1 ½ hrs

Up to 30 minutes	<b>Setting up the space.</b> Ensure that the room you are using is thoroughly prepared. Place some boxes of tissues discretely around the space.
10 minutes	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>
10 minutes	Worship
40 minutes	Visualisations
20 minutes	Whole Group response
10 minutes	Closing prayer

## ❖ Preparation (30 minutes practical and 1 hour to go through the exercise)

For this session you will need:

1. The congregation or group
2. The facilitator
3. The washing-line from Session 1.
4. Boxes of tissues

It is recommended that you ask a trusted friend or colleague to go through this exercised with you beforehand. This will allow you to understand how powerful the experience can be – and to feel fully at ease with the ideas (and the potential emotions) it contains.

## ❖ Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome everyone back to the second session of Radical Welcome.

Give an opportunity for people to catch-up with each other, ensure that people are beginning to know each other.

Explain the structure of this session – that it has 2 guided visualisations, with time to share after each.

Some of this session may raise issues that are difficult.

Let the group know that team leaders will be available to give support over the coming week.

Ensure that people are clear about the need for confidentiality, and that they are not compelled to share things that they would rather not.

Give time for people to ask questions.

## ❖ Opening Worship (10 minutes)

Use a format that is appropriate to your group and tradition.

Use silence and either sing or listen to a piece of music. Song suggestions are on the Inclusive Church website in the resources section.

Include: **Reading:** Luke 10:25-37.

**Prayer:** Searching God, finding faith in unexpected places: free us from the contempt of what is familiar and the horror of what remains foreign that we might celebrate your presence intimate and other and wholly alive; through Jesus Christ, friend of strangers.

**Amen.**

❖ **Guided visualisation – (10 minutes per script plus 10 minutes discussion in pairs 40 minutes in total)**

**The suggested script (please adapt it to “own” it)**

First I would ask you to move into pairs. It may be appropriate to be with someone you know less well.

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Move at some distance from other pairs as you will need to be private when you speak

You may well find yourself remembering and feeling some quite profound things during this session and you will be sharing them with the other person in your pair. They might be quite powerful memories; so you need to understand now, before we start, that you will not repeat any part of what the two of you talk about and that it is also up to you to honour confidences

You need to treat each other’s precious information as privileged confidence. We will be treading on another person’s “holy ground”, so listen carefully to what you are told; exactly as you will be doing when you welcome strangers into your church.

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It will be up to you to decide how much you want to share of your own memories.

Now, please get comfortable and close your eyes.

❖ **Part One (20 minutes)**

I’m going to ask you to remember a series of situations in your own life. There are no trick questions or traps. Your memories will have no less – and no more – value than other people’s.

Neither will your memories be the same as those of others. That’s fine. Your job is only to recall them.

If what you remember seems to come from a long, long way back, you can trust that. Our feelings are good filing systems. If you remember something which feels odd or silly, trust that too. You will see the reasons later.

Try to remember without changing what you see. Just feel the situation again.

Let the noises of the room recede ... let your day-to-day thoughts recede...

Now, begin to remember a time when you made a negative judgement about a person or ignored their attempts to make contact with you without knowing anything about them.

Maybe it was someone passing on the street or at a social situation ...

Remember the sights and sounds of the place where you were ...

Now, visualise that person and what they looked like ...

What judgements did you make about them ...?

What reasons did you give, then, for thinking about them in that way...?

Looking back, do you understand why you thought the way you did...?

Open your eyes and for the next few minutes, talk in your pairs about your memories and the feelings they brought up. Make sure your partner gets a chance to speak.

**Let the pairs have about six or seven minutes and do not allow talking past 10 minutes. Otherwise you won't have enough time for a group discussion at the end. Keep people in their pairs for part two.**

❖ **Part two (20 minutes)**

**(Remember, keep it very slow and steady, with good pauses)**

OK. Eyes closed again now please. And this time you are going to remember a time when no-one understood what you were trying to say. You felt you were being clear, but the person you were speaking to didn't get it.

Remember the sights and sounds of the place where you were ...

Visualise the people who were there with you .. and their reactions to what you were trying to say ...

What was it that you needed to tell them?

Why couldn't you make yourself understood?

How did it feel?

Now, with your eyes still closed, please try to recall a time when you felt that you were different from everyone around you ...

Remember the sights and sounds of the place where you were ...

Visualise the people you were with ...

Did they make you feel like an outsider?

Were they aware of how you were feeling?

Were you different from those people?

Before you open your eyes, say goodbye to those sad, bad memories...As you open your eyes, know that you are no longer in that time. We are in (insert name of place) surrounded by people who want to understand each other.

Now talk in your pairs about what you recalled.

We have been remembering times that can put us in touch with experiences that people outside may have had.

They may have been judged...

They may have been misunderstood...

They may have felt unable to belong ...

And you have a sense of how that feels.

How do you prevent that outside – and inside – your church?

**After ten minutes (at most) ask people to come back into the full group.**

❖ **Part three Whole Group Response (20 minutes)**

Now guide the whole group into sharing, using prompt questions such as those below:

- ❖ What came out of that exercise for you?
- ❖ Did you think such feelings would be present in your congregation?
- ❖ What are the times when rejection could most easily happen?
- ❖ How might you use this kind of knowledge to become more welcoming?

❖ **Closing the session (10 minutes)**

Bring the session to a close by thanking everyone for their contributions and participation.

Remind them of the need for confidentiality about what has been shared.

Ensure the group members are aware of appropriate routes for pastoral support in the week after this session.

Encourage group members to be praying for one another during the week.

End with the reading again (Luke 10:25-37)

Because the passage may be familiar – it may be helpful to use a different translation than the one you usually use, for example Word on the Street or The Message

### **Closing blessing.**

We have populated this space for a short while  
with those whom we have trespassed against.

And with those who trespassed against us –

We have learned.

We have grieved.

We have grown.

In our true regret at those memories, we are assured of God's forgiveness...

Now let us go in peace to love and serve our neighbours. **Amen.**

Radical Welcome is a programme devised and produced originally for the United Reformed Church (UK).

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