**Sample opening meeting content (1a)**

**Welcome**

### Introductions 2 mins

### Opening prayer 1 min

### Purpose of the meeting 1 min

* The purpose of this opening meeting is mainly to say a little more about the nature of the retreat and to offer some advice on ways of approaching the suggested daily prayer time. In particular, in a practical way, we'll introduce some ways of praying with scripture. There will also be opportunity for you to ask any questions you might have.
* The retreat is, of course, your own personal retreat, encouraged by your weekly meetings with your prayer companion. However, one added advantage of gathering together at the start of the retreat is to give everyone a sense that they are part of a 'community of prayer' that is going on during these five weeks.

### Sharing exercise 5 mins

* Retreatants: what one thing would you most like to come from this retreat?
* Prayer companions: mention one valuable thing you have received from this kind of retreat/prayer.
* Write on sheet of paper. Then each draw out one of the sheets and read what is on it.
* Any comments or observations? What struck you about what we shared?

### About this kind of retreat 2 mins

* There may be many reasons why we are here. But mainly that God has drawn us.
* We come to the retreat just as we are, with our hopes and fears; no special holy mode.
* We shall talk about particular ways of praying, but there is no correct way to pray. Each of us is different.
* Good advice for all of us, especially if we find we are struggling in our prayer, is “Pray as you can, not as you can't!”
* Be open to God. Magnanimity/generosity to God.
* Prayer is a gift from God, more something He does for us than we do for Him.
* Prayer is sometimes described as keeping company with God, maybe in silence, maybe in conversation.
* Above all, the risen Jesus is your companion during the retreat, and these weeks may be thought of as prayer journey with him.

### Practical information: how to go about the retreat 3 mins

* Pray on your own for 30 minutes (or at least 15) each day with a piece of Scripture. Find the best place and time - really try to keep to the time you decide.
* Meet your prayer companion once a week for up to 30 minutes, to share, in confidence, as much or as little as you want to of what you have thought and *felt*during and after your times of prayer.
* Meeting with your prayer companion should not cause anxiety. They are Christians like you and me, but have had some training and are not there to judge your prayer in any way, but to accompany you on your journey through these five weeks. They are there to listen and perhaps to make suggestions that may be useful. **Everything you say to them is confidential**
* Things you will need include a Bible and a note book. After your prayer times it can be useful to have a short time of reflection to jot down thoughts and feelings from the prayer time. These notes can be useful for when you see your prayer companion.
* Are there any questions?

**Introducing various ways of praying**  **1 min**

* We shall introduce some of the ways of praying that we think are important in a retreat like this.
* In practice, you will find ways of adapting them, and making them work for you.

### Stilling prayer 5 mins

### Prayer with scripture – letting the words sink in 12 mins

* Isaiah 55:1-3a

### Imaginative prayer – putting yourself into the story 12 mins

* John 1:35-39

### Sharing following the prayer 10 mins

* Share with a neighbour. What was that like? What touched you? What was helpful? What didn't work for you?
* Anything to share in the whole group?

### Questions? 5 mins

### Meet with your prayer companion 5 mins

### Note: closing meeting (time, date and place)

### Final prayer 1 min [Total 65]