**Sample opening meeting content (1b – adapted from 1a)**

**Welcome (2 minutes)**

Including which churches are represented, plus how far and wide the guides are drawn from.

Brief outline of the content and purpose of the meeting.

**Introductions (7 minutes)**

Retreatants asked to give their name and to say very briefly what they would most like from the retreat. Prayer guides to introduce themselves as such and say very briefly what they are hoping for in the retreat. This can be done while each lighting a candle and placing it in the centre of the group. *(Check fire regs!)*

**Stilling prayer/exercise (5 minutes)**

**Why retreat? (2 minutes)**

The gift of time and space. It’s a prayer journey. It’s intensely purposeful.

We gather together at the start and end of the retreat to acknowledge that we are part of a particular 'community of prayer' that is going on during these six weeks. But the retreat as you experience it is your own personal retreat, encouraged by your weekly meetings with your prayer companion.

**Listening (2 minutes)**

Voices on prayer (2 guides to slowly read alternate points)

* 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 talk about particular ways of praying, but there is no correct way to pray. Each of us is different.
* The invitation for all of us, especially if we are struggling in our prayer, is to “Pray as you can, not as you can't.”
* Be open to God. Trust Him. Give yourself generously to Him.
* 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 (6 minutes)**

* Pray on your own for 30 minutes (or at least 15) each day with a piece of Scripture. In a few moments, we’ll be demonstrating two possible ways of doing that. Your prayer companion will suggest passages for you as the retreat goes on.
* Find the best place and time for you – and 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.
* Your prayer companion is not there to judge your prayer in any way, but to walk with you on your journey through these six weeks. They are there to listen and perhaps to make suggestions to help you. They will also offer Bible passages and maybe other helps for you to use in your prayer times for the following week. Everything you say to them is confidential.
* You’ll need a Bible and a note book. After your prayer times it would be good 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 ways of praying**

* Lectio Divina – praying with Scripture **(10 minutes)**
* Imaginative prayer – putting yourself in the scene **(10 minutes)**

**Sharing following the prayer (10 minutes)**

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? (*only if time*)

**Any questions about the retreat or ways of praying? (5 minutes)**

Give out the first week’s readings.

Meet with your prayer companion after the closing prayer if you haven’t already done so.

**Closing prayer (1 minute)**

**Total: 60 minutes**