

THE COMMUNITY OF ST CUTHBERT



**ST CUTHBERT**

**Study Guide for  
Spiritual Growth  
Groups**

NOVEMBER 2021

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## Welcome

Welcome to our resource booklet for November 2021. Here you will find

- a reminder of how we are developing the rhythms of our SGG groups
- four sessions to use through November

Our theme this month addresses **Light in the Darkness**, to tie in with the build up towards Advent, and also Durham's LUMIERE festival on 18-21 Nov, where St Nics will be involved in many and various ways.

Our studies this month have been prepared for us by Jenny Rankin, a Cranmer Hall ordinand who is on placement with us at St Nic's over the coming year.

Richard Briggs  
Prior of the Community of St Cuthbert  
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## The Community of St Cuthbert based at St Nic's Church, Durham

–loving God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength–

–living our lives in step with the **rhythms of God's grace**–

Walk with me and work with me—watch  
how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms  
of grace.

Words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (11:29)  
*the Message* translation

We follow in the steps of St Cuthbert, the 7<sup>th</sup> century Bishop of Lindisfarne, who lived a life deeply rooted in God, both personally and with others, and sought a life of service that embodied God's life-giving justice for all.

So we meet in Spiritual Growth Groups (SGGs)  
and seek to keep in step with  
**7 key rhythms of God's grace**, in:

**prayer** and **Bible study**

**worship** and **hospitality**

service through **justice** and **witness**

and celebrating God's regular gift of **rest**

## Developing our Life Together as a SGG

*(For a longer version of this note see the September 2021 guide)*

We encourage groups to meet weekly, but not necessarily to do the same thing every week. We aim to keep meeting time to around 60–75 minutes. One practical suggestion for a monthly pattern is this:

Week 1	focus on Bible study – using the CSC notes in this book
Week 2	focus on worship and prayer
Week 3	focus on Bible study
Week 4	use the time together to engage in acts of service
(Week 5	be creative – perhaps make this a social time together)

Groups are welcome to develop their own outward-looking ideas for ‘acts of service’, but there are lots of ideas also being suggested in and around the church. As well as LUMIERE this month, these include (but are not limited to):

- *join with one of our St Nics justice initiatives*
- *support one of our St Nics ministries in practical ways*
- *join with a local project – e.g. foodbank, homeless ministry, ...*
- *use group time to offer hospitality to those in need, or new arrivals in Durham (students, newcomers, refugees ...)*
- *visit those who are alone, and offer practical help*
- *support an established charity through active involvement*
- *set up zoom links with a mission partner and use the time to learn about and encourage their ministry*
- *help to staff our open church ‘prayer times’*
- *serve tea and coffee after a service, as a SGG group*
- *offer to steward a Sunday service as a SGG group ...*

Our prior, Richard Briggs, is gradually meeting with all the SGG leaders and talking about these ideas, and encouraging others. Do join in the conversation in your group!

## November 2021

This booklet offers resources for the 4 weeks of November 2021.

Theme: **Light in the Darkness**

Week beginning:

1 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Session 1 – focusing on Bible study
8 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Session 2 – focusing on prayer and worship
15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Session 3 – focusing on Bible study
22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov	Session 4 – focusing on acts of service

There is no problem with taking longer than 4 weeks to work through the studies, and no pressure to ‘catch up’ if you end up taking longer, ***but do note that LUMIERE will be on 18-21 Nov, and may be an appropriate focus for an outward-looking group activity this month,***

### ***Introduction to the Studies***

Light in the Darkness

As we enter November, with the nights drawing in and plans being made for Bonfire Night and Durham’s forthcoming Lumiere celebrations, use this time as a group to reflect on the biblical theme of *Light in the Darkness*. We will be focussing on Jesus’ self-professed claim to being the Light of the World, and will consider what implications this has for our own discipleship as we seek to reflect His light to others.

## **Session 1 - 'I am the Light of the World' (study)**

Read John 8:12-20

*'When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"*

What do you think Jesus meant by his claim 'I am the light of the world'?

Look at verses 13 and 19. What do you make of the Pharisees' response? Why do you think they found Jesus' words here so provocative/offensive?

Read Isaiah 9:1-7

*'The people walking in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness  
a light has dawned.'*

These may be very familiar words to us as they are often read in Carol Services at Christmas time. It's worth considering that these words would also have been very familiar to Jesus' Jewish listeners (Jesus even directly quotes this passage in Matthew 4:15-16).

What connections do you draw between the John 8 reading and the Isaiah 9 reading?

Are there particular situations in the world that God has laid on your heart where you long to see His light shine into deep darkness? Take time to pray about them together.

*You may like to use this song while spending some time in reflective prayer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Of5lcFWiEpg> (King of Kings, Hillsong)*

## ***Session 2 - 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (prayer and worship)***

Read John 1

Use this session as a chance to reflect on these incredible words, and to spend time together worshipping Jesus. Is there anything in the passage that particularly strikes you afresh about the person of Jesus? What does this mean for you as an individual and for us as a church?

You may like to use one or more of these songs to guide your time of worship and reflection:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLcTLCCpI5A>  
(Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, Marcy Priest)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlyTYiQX2pY>  
(Light of the World, Tim Hughes)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9O6qpO2zZg>  
(Day by Day, Will and Mim Johnson)

Have one person read the passage aloud again, very slowly. Let the words wash over you and really listen to what God might be saying to you today.

Use this time as an opportunity to pray for one another, perhaps sharing an area of life or a situation in your workplace/family/community where you long to see the light of Christ shine into darkness.

### ***Session 3 - 'You are the Light of the World' (study)***

Read Matthew 5:13-16

*'You are the salt of the earth.'*

What does this image conjure up for you?

As writer Andrew Wilson points out in his book *God of All Things*, Jesus' metaphor is a complex one as salt had multiple uses in the ancient world ('flavouring, preserving, sacrificing, destroying, and fertilizing.')

<sup>1</sup> We might think of salt primarily as used in cooking, but biblically it also had cultural functions in both temple sacrifices and farming. In what other ways could this nuanced metaphor have implications for our discipleship, our relationship with God and our work in the world?

Turn your attention to verses 14-16.

*'You are the light of the world.'*

As we have looked at in previous sessions, Jesus describes himself as the light of the world. And yet here he is talking to the disciples, he says to them YOU are the light of the world. What is your response to this? As a follower of Jesus, how do you feel about the idea that you are to be the light of the world too?

In what practical ways could you 'let your light shine before others' this week?

Leave some time at the end of this session to discuss and plan for next week. As the final SGG of the month, next week's session will be

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Wilson, *God of All Things: Rediscovering the Sacred in an Everyday World*, 109.



focussed around practical acts of service, fellowship and hospitality. How might you like to use your time together to live out Jesus' call to be 'salt and light'? Some ideas are included in the notes for next week, but feel free to be as creative as you like and do whatever works for you as a group. This weekend is the Lumiere festival in Durham. Is there some way your group could get involved in St Nics' contribution to the festival? Or perhaps you could arrange to attend Lumiere together as a group, enjoying fellowship with one another as you marvel at the illuminated city together.

### ***Session 4 - Being Salt and Light (service)***

As you discussed last week, use this time together in practical acts of service.

Perhaps you already made plans to either serve at or enjoy the Lumiere festival together.

As Christmas gets ever closer, there may be particular Durham-based charities that you feel led to support as a group in some practical way.

Or maybe you could use this session to share a meal together reflecting on all that has been discussed and prayed about this month. If the weather is good, you could wrap up warm and spend some time outdoors perhaps with sparklers and marshmallows around a bonfire. Consider together how your routines and rhythms through this Advent season will point to Christ, the light of the world, and pray that He would enable and equip you to share this light with others.

*'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'*  
*John 1:5 5*