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As part of our on-going work to help churches develop healthy church meetings, we offer the following responsive reading, which might be used at the beginning of a meeting. It could be adapted to simply be used by a single reader or a series of voices. The aim is that by regularly sharing and repeating these words, members will be reminded of the true nature of our gatherings.

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Leader: We come together to seek the Mind of Christ.

Response: *We are His Church, belonging to Him and each other
We are the Body of which He is Head.*

Leader: We are a people in Covenant together

Response: *Committed to live in loving community
Preferring each other's needs to our own*

Leader: We are the people of God

Response: *We desire to know God's purpose;
We seek God's face together;*

Leader: We are called to reflect God's likeness,
To reveal God's nature through our shared deliberations
To mirror God's image in the community that we forge
To pursue God's Kingdom in initiatives we develop
To sense God's presence in the discourse we share.

Response: *We come. Believing that through his Spirit, the living Christ will speak
To influence and shape every plan and idea that we might devise
To equip us in carrying them out,
To be glorified in our shared endeavours*

Leader: This is not a seat of human democracy
Where every voice demands its hearing
Every opinion its right to be aired
And every proposition needs to withstand human challenge

This is not a chamber of debate
Where polished argument takes precedent
Over faltering thoughts and ideas which are still being formed.

Where those for whom speech comes quickly and easily
Have any greater right to be heard
Than those who struggle to express in words
The yearnings and concerns of their heart.

This is a place where the well-rehearsed proposition
Sits, side by side, with that intuitive shadow of an idea
Whose form eludes definition in words and reason alone
And yet whose outline might be traced by the Spirit's hand

Response: *This is a place of divine encounter
Where discovering God's presence
Matters more than proving our point*

*Where the whisper of the Divine
Meets searching hearts and attentive spirits*

*A place of listening to the Spirit
Rather than voicing human opinion*

Leader: How does God speak?

Response: *God speaks through his people, the Body of Christ on earth*

Leader: God speaks through the considered and well-made presentation

Response: *God speaks through the chance thought of a sister or brother*

Leader: God speaks through those things that lie heavy on our hearts

Response: *God speaks through the gathering pace of a shared idea*

Leader: God speaks through the coincidence of a common ideal
God speaks through the silence when no-one has a view to share
The stillness in which we plumb the depths of new realisation

Response: *God speaks through His Word
God speaks through our prayers
God speaks through our mistakes and disappointments
God speaks through our laughter
God speaks through our tears*

Leader: Loving God
Eternal Word
Our concern is not the mouthpiece that you choose
Or the means by which You express it
But that we might encounter You afresh
And be conscious not of having made decisions
So much as having discovered that which you have chosen to reveal

May we be more content to decide nothing
Than to substitute Your silence
With thoughts of our own making

AMEN