



Resources for Study Groups and individuals

**A brief summary of some of the
resources available**

Compiled by Durham and Deerness Valley Circuit

January 2015



The Methodist Church,

Durham and Deerness Valley Circuit

www.durhamdeernessmethodist.org.uk Charity registration number: 1132827

Resources for Study Groups and individuals

There are many courses, programmes and study materials available for use by groups and individuals within our churches, and you may well have already used some of these or seen them on Christian bookstalls or web pages. The Circuit Leadership Team thought that it would be a good idea to produce what we hope will be a useful snapshot of some of the ones we have come across or which have been used around the circuit over recent years.

For each of the items on the contents pages you will see a title and then, on the pages that follow, there is a brief or slightly fuller description of the particular resource including its area of interest; if it is intended for private or group study; how many sessions there are; a website address and/or where further details can be found.

This summary of resources is not meant to be totally comprehensive as there are already plenty around and many more being produced by different organisations. However, we hope that this will provide a start point for those who may be searching for materials, and sometimes a little more information about a particular resource is helpful.

We would also like to receive your comments on the resources, and please let us know if you have found any other really useful ones so that we can add them as appropriate.

Shaun Swithenbank & Sue Smith

On behalf of the Circuit Leadership Team

STUDY INFORMATION

Contents

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY - www.backtochurch.co.uk

FROM COFFEE MORNING TO SUNDAY MORNING – Methodist Church website (Discipleship/Market Place) – **5 sessions**

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT – WHAT’S YOUR EXPERIENCE – Methodist Church website – **2 and ½ hours**

THE BIG WELCOME – www.thebigwelcome.org

A CLASS of YOUR OWN – Methodist Church website – **4 weekly sessions after service**

JOURNEY OF FAITH – **5 sessions**
www.cofequilford.org.uk/lifeandfaith/module1-journey-of-faith

KNOW AND GROW – Methodist Publishing House – **6 weeks**

TALKING OF GOD – Methodist Church website – **4 sessions**

ASPECTS OF EVANGELISM – Methodist Church Website – **8 sessions**

BLOWING YOUR COVER – www.blowingyourcover.com – **covers 3 area of church life**

CHAPLAINCY EVERYWHERE – Methodist Church Website – **7 sessions**

COMPASS – Methodist Church Website and Methodist Publishing - **8 sessions**

DISCIPLE – Methodist Church website – **weekly over a year**

EMMAUS – Church House Publishing – **15 week basic course**

50 DAYS TO LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK – Methodist Church website – from Easter to Pentecost

MAKING CONNECTIONS – www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk – 6 studies

MISSION SHAPED INTRO - www.freshexpressions.or.uk/missionshapedintro - 6 sessions

PRESENCE – Methodist Church House – 10 checkpoints – 6 studies

STEP FORWARD – www.stepforward-training.org.uk – 8 x 4 week sessions

TIME TO TALK OF GOD – Sets of books available around the Circuit – 7 sections

INFORMATION ON ‘DEEPENING DISCIPLESHIP’ CAN BE FOUND ON - www.methodist.org.uk/deepeningdiscipleship

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

We all have a network of contacts - people we know well and acquaintances - that we can invite to Church events, but normally we don't! Some reasons are:

- We are embarrassed about speaking about God/Jesus/Church/faith: it's just not British
- We are worried that inviting people back to church might somehow damage our relationship with them
- We are worried that if we did invite them, they might come, and the service might be really bad quality or have a high 'cringe-factor'.
- *We are worried about being seen as 'Bible-bashers'.*

But Jesus tells us that 'all the world' needs to hear the good news of the kingdom. In the end it is up to the leadership of the Church to engender in its members the confidence that should be ours in Christ. What we have in Jesus is good - we should share it.

Back to Church Sunday is usually held on the last Sunday in September but there is no reason why you cannot hold it on any other Sunday in the year.

www.backtochurch.co.uk

FROM COFFEE MORNING TO SUNDAY MORNING

A five -session course designed to help churches move relationships forward from social encounter to spiritual engagement. It is specifically aimed at preparing churches for Back to Church Sunday.

Downloadable from Methodist Church website-Discipleship-Small groups-Market Place

- Course handbook
- Introduction
- Sessions 1-5
- Seven marks of healthy churches

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

The welcome that Christians offer visitors to church can have a huge impact on whether or not they choose to stay. Indeed, research suggests that a lack of welcome is a key reason why visitors don't return to church

Welcoming and invitation are also clear gospel values. God welcomes the outsider (1 Cor 1, 26-31), seeks the lost (Luke 15), and invites all into the community of the kingdom (1 Tim 2-4). Methodist theology particularly stresses the depth and breadth of God's welcome, teaching that no-one is beyond the reach of God's love.

First Impressions Count is a freely downloadable workshop designed to help churches reflect on the welcome that a visitor experiences when they first walk into a church. Designed for a two and a half hour training session, the workshop is divided into three sessions; creating a welcoming building, being a welcoming people, and welcoming through inclusion.

Methodist Church website

- Users' guide
- Facilitator's guide
- Participants' sheets
- PowerPoint presentation

WHAT'S YOUR WELCOME?

A downloadable set of ten questions to help your church become more welcoming – a range of thoughts and practical suggestions with a downloadable mp4 video file for showing where there is no internet connection.

Methodist Church website

THE BIG WELCOME

Inviting one person we know to something we love and giving them a warm welcome

Several hundred churches have taken part in The Big Welcome over the past three years. This will help you to get ready for the day, although most of what is written here is true for every Sunday and welcoming people in.

Resources include:-

Prayer cards, posters, invitations, banners and BIG Welcome booklets

Plus helpful ideas on how to be a welcoming church.

Further information is available on the BIG Welcome website

www.thebigwelcome.org

A CLASS OF YOUR OWN

This is an invitation to try out a class of your own for four Sundays or four times following an act of worship. Find 4 to 6 other people who will commit with you to meeting four times following the service for 30 – 45 minutes. The small group experience has special roots in Methodist tradition.

The basic idea for the class is simple. It is an opportunity to create some space to listen to each other, to put yourselves and your whole life concerns consciously in the presence of God, and to talk to God praying for each other and the things you are wrestling with and celebrating.

Please give commitment to your class over the four sessions a high priority, committing to attend each class meeting. It is an opportunity to get to know a group in more depth and to know your class is looking out for you and praying for you.

Guidelines for each session are available on the Methodist Church website.

A booklet 'God in the Everyday' is available from Methodist Publishing

JOURNEY OF FAITH

A series of 5 sessions entitled

- My Journey
- Your Journey
- God of the Journey
- Fruits of the Journey
- Where next?

All materials – Leaders' notes, Participants notes, Handouts, Powerpoint Presentation - are free to download and contain all you need to run a course/group

www.cofequilford.org.uk/lifeandfaith/module1-journey-of-faith

KNOW AND GROW

A 6 week support programme based on the 'Our Calling' document to help your church

- Identify strengths and areas of growth
- Plan appropriate action and support
- See development take place within 3 months

Worship – What does your church look like?

- Prayers, music, readings, sermon, sacrament
- Other activities e.g. drama, dance, art, poetry, flowers

Learning – How do we help people of all ages grow in faith?

- Junior church/Sunday school, youth fellowship, Alpha/Disciple/Emmaus
- House groups/ class meetings, retreats/weekends away

Caring – How do we care for each other?

- Pastoral visiting, healing, self-help groups, house groups, youth fellowship

Service – How do we in the church see our community and meet their needs?

- Parent and toddler, shell groups, youth club, uniformed organisations, homework club, Alpha, keep fit, midweek meetings, coffee mornings

Evangelism – How does the church help each of us to share the Christian faith?

- Friendly and attractive church, clear message, effective witness, planting congregations

Methodist Publishing - £5

TALKING OF GOD

Talking of God is a new faith sharing course. It will help individuals and congregations to talk about their faith journey.

Written by a group of evangelism and mission experts from across the country, the course will give people more confidence when it comes to sharing the stories of their faith in everyday life.

It does this by encouraging conversations about conversations, and rooting it all in the Gospels.

Talking of God follows from the 2005 report to the Methodist Conference 'Time to Talk of God', which featured on the Church Times list of best selling Christian books. The report encourages Methodists and other Christians to renew their ability to talk about God with each other.

Talking of God is made up of four sessions

- Starting the Conversation – each of us has a story to share
- Conversation Stoppers – conversations can be hard
- Conversations in Context – how our world can shape our conversations
- Living the Conversation – conversations are more than just words

These sessions (plus a preamble and concluding worship) can be held over consecutive weeks or even the course of a weekend or day. Each session includes opening and closing prayers, Bible study, discussion topics and practical ideas for getting conversations started.

All the material you need is free to download from the Methodist Church website

- Leader's Guide (pdf – 4MB)
- Group Member's Notes (pdf – 3MB)
- Powerpoint Slides to accompany the course (ppt – 27MB)

ASPECTS OF EVANGELISM

8 conversation starters which take up the 8 aspects of evangelism considered at the consultation held last November. These are designed for use at local church level in a small group, or church meeting context. E.g. Local preachers, church council or house group. They are downloadable free from the website.

Each conversation guide picks up on a theme crucial to our understanding and practice of evangelism:

- Desiring to share the gospel - What makes you want to share the gospel?
- What is the good news? - What is the good news and why does sharing it matter?
- Problems and obstacles - Why is evangelism so difficult/hard today?
- Making evangelism central - How do we make evangelism a central part of what we do?
- Images of evangelism (1) - What ways can help to make and nurture new disciples?
- Evangelism and ethnicity - How can we learn about evangelism for culturally diverse groups in the UK?
- Images of evangelism (2) - How can we change the image of evangelism so that everyone sees it as something they should be involved in?
- Giving reasons for your faith - How do we go about explaining the gospel in the 21st century?

Now is the opportunity for you to get a conversation going and to hear the perspectives of different people in your church, circuit and local community. Each guide can be used separately, or the whole set can be part of an extended group series. .

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/deepeningdiscipleship/evangelism/aspects-of-evangelism>

BLOWING YOUR COVER

Blowing Your Cover is a unique and fresh approach to evangelism, that is designed to equip and release Christians to confidently share their faith and impact their community in a way that fits their character and personality.

The course has already transformed the way many churches interact with their friends and community. It includes work books, leaders' guide with training DVD and a double DVD media pack with 21 short videos and all necessary slides.

This course develops three key areas of church life

- Christianity – Encouraging people to grow their faith
- Living it – Encouraging people to live the Christian life to the full
- Sharing it – Encouraging people to demonstrate through words and actions the difference Christ has made to their lives

Introductory Pack - £25 - www.Blowingyourcover.com

In association with God FIRST

CHAPLAINCY EVERYWHERE

A small group resource for nurturing engagement in God's mission through chaplaincy.

Local congregation led chaplaincy is one of the most effective ways to collaborate in God's mission in the world; local people responding to local needs over time can change the world.

This seven week course is designed to take a group from being interested in the ministry of chaplaincy to actually planning a chaplaincy ministry and doing it.

The resource is designed to be used in groups of three to eight people. Beginning with the mission of God and ending with the practical details of who is going to do what and where, this material mixes deep reflection, individual and group exercises as well as practical resources, to lead you to respond to your local community.

The course also includes resources for a commissioning service for volunteer chaplains.

Methodist Church website

COMPASS

Compass is an interactive guide and group resource that introduces the Christian faith to those wishing to explore its meaning in greater depth.

The course has eight sessions which cover the basics of the Christian faith and illustrate them with themes that have shaped our Methodist heritage and present expressions of church.

The eight sessions are

- Glimpses of God
- Meeting Jesus today
- The difference Jesus makes
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Life together
- Engaging with Scripture
- Following Jesus
- Called by Name

Sessions will offer an opportunity to ask questions and reflect collectively on different aspects of the Christian faith. The final session 'Called by Name' makes Compass suitable for those exploring membership.

Leader's Guide – free to download from the Methodist Church website

Participants' Workbook - £5 from Methodist Publishing

Image Pack - £5 from Methodist Publishing

DISCIPLE

Becoming disciples through Bible study

Disciple has transformed the lives of individuals and congregations in many parts of Great Britain and across the world. It has drawn people closer to God, deepened their discipleship and opens their eyes into the way that God is leading them.

The course moves through the biblical story from creation in Genesis to the New Jerusalem in Revelation. There are theme words and verses, key characters, events and topics which fix the sequence of the biblical story in the minds of the participants.

Disciple is studied in a group of up to ten, with two group leaders. It meets weekly over a year (with space for holidays etc). Each group meeting begins with a time of devotion and a short DVD presentation, before questions and activities applying the Bible reading to the context of the participants' daily lives.

As part of **Disciple** everyone commits to a daily personal Bible study of 30-45 minutes, which is then picked up in the weekly meetings.

Everyone receives a manual, with a reading framework, covering 70% of the Bible and space for writing notes. Leaders have a facilitation manual, but are also group participants.

Leaders Help - £10

Student Manual - £22

DVD Set - £75

You can download a leaflet about **Disciple** from the Methodist Church website

EMMAUS

Emmaus: The Way of Faith is a resource designed to help churches welcome people to the Christian faith and the life of the Church.

The **Emmaus** course progresses through three stages – contact, nurture and growth. The course material includes a 15 week nurture course that covers the basics of Christian life and 4 growth books that offer Christians an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Christian living and discipleship.

Emmaus: Contact – Stage 1 £6.95

- A practical, hands on booklet that helps churches make the most of their connections with those outside the church.

Emmaus: Leading an Emmaus Group £5.95

- Offers practical, well-researched advice on how to set up and lead effective Emmaus Nurture and Growth courses

Church House Publishing

50 DAYS TO LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK

A free downloadable resource for the season of Easter

This provides seven sessions of material for a whole church to have conversation in small groups all together around worship during the season of Easter.

In these small groups participants will

- Learn a little of each other
- Listen to God through different ways of praying
- Practise spiritual reading of scripture together
- Commit to a risky venture of love for others during the week, which they will have the opportunity to talk about the following week

Methodist Church website

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Rural churches are good at mission. That's not a starry eyed statement about the rural church but reflects the way Christian faith can really work in the countryside. The workbook is all about achieving the right conditions for that mission potential to get going. What have you got as resources: people, buildings, land, schools, communities? What's locked up in those resources that could be unlocked? What small changes could you start to make that would allow that potential to flourish?

- Working with Others
- Land and Buildings
- Including Young People
- Sharing Faith
- Working with Schools
- Creative Worship

Workbooks and further information are available from The Arthur Rank Centre

www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk

MISSION SHAPED INTRO

'Taking you on a creative and reflective journey looking at the need for new ways of being church.'

Six weeks to rediscover mission and re-imagine church using creative activities, film clips, discussion, worship and prayer.

The course sessions are

- Rediscovering mission and what that means for the church
- Changing world, changing church
- Re-imagining church: community
- Re-imagining church: worship
- Re-imagining church: discipleship and leadership
- Where do we go from here?

Download the course from

www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedintro

PRESENCE

Ten check points to review your church's profile of presence in the community:

Rural communities come in all shapes and sizes including market towns, hamlets and isolated farmsteads and there is no single formula that fits all situations. We need to remember that small can be beautiful and that a B-road is not a failed motorway. The economy of God's Kingdom has a special place for small groups! The following areas of exploration are meant to be used flexibly so that your local policy can be shaped and sharpened.

1. Façade

Does your church's 'face' look welcomingly open or closed?

If a stranger were driving past your church, would it be noticed at all? What would the initial impression be? Would there be signs of neglect or of loving care? Does it look a dead frontage or somehow alive? Is the main notice board bold and uncluttered and at a 45 to 80 degree angle to the road so that motorists can read it at a glance? Apart from naming the Church the only wording needs to be: SERVICE HERE EVERY SUNDAY AT 9.30 am ALL WELCOME. (Good example: Duddon Parish Church, Cheshire). Another board can carry the name of the Church, a contact telephone number/website unless these are included on the main board, leaving plenty of space to read the main welcome and time legend. Are the hedges trimmed? Are there colourful bedding plants or hanging baskets? Does the front door sometimes stand ajar (while a steward is present for security) or does the door have a glass panel to glimpse the interior of the church? Are the notices re local events (not all 'churchy') up to date and representing a community involvement and awareness?

2. Welcome

How well do you 'smile people in'?

In many rural settings newcomers know that if they have attended Church in the morning, it will be known around the village by lunch time! The welcome given them needs to be friendly but not too fussy to overcome this potential embarrassment. 'Smiling people in' is an important ministry to reassure newcomers that they are truly welcome and the village is not huddling together with 'its own'. The timing of

services needs to be thoughtfully considered and agreed to fit in with local bus services if there are any(!) – the routines of agricultural life and 21 st century pressures on family living. A regular time is more likely to attract people than perpetual changes on a rota with other churches though sometimes these are necessary and need to be made known in holiday cottages and public places through attractive leaflets. A key mark of a welcoming church is the way people linger to talk or drink coffee after a service and include newcomers rather than staying in familiar closed circles. The imaginative use of festival seasons to involve local people helps to keep the church on the map of local consciousness. The rhythm of the liturgical year is also to be respected and explored (including Plough Sunday, Farm Sunday and Rogationtide). Some churches provide a welcome pack that is delivered to newcomers telling them of local ‘services’ of all kinds.

3. Participation

How does your church help to bring the community together?

The church community is not sidelined as a ‘people apart’ if it participates in local interests and events entering a float in the carnival procession, providing members on the village cricket team, sharing in the best kept village competition or serving on the allotments committee (with a Gardeners’ Question Time in the Church or exhibits at the Harvest Festival). Carols in the local pub also provide a bridge. Taking part in the life of local schools through Assemblies, PTA’s, helping at sports days and with special projects maintains a vital link with the younger sector of the community. Some of the Church members need to be covered by safeguarding police checks to be available for this involvement with young people both inside and beyond the usual church family even though there may not be a regular ‘Sunday School’. Is your church a ‘social bridge’ helping to integrate the community?

4. Voice

How does your church help to give a ‘voice’ to the village/community?

While the Church will sometimes want to speak with a distinctive voice on local issues, most of the time it is possible, through friendly alliance, to cooperate with local interest groups and the Parish Council in pressing for better conditions. The Church can even give a lead by helping to discover what local needs really are (through a questionnaire and coffee time chats in the village hall). The Church with limited numbers cannot give the impression that it can alone respond to all perceived needs but can cooperate with others to respond to some urgent needs and be able to offer some help through its premises and

volunteers. The Church should be fully involved in the drawing up of the 'Parish Plan'. Parish Councillors can be invited to address the Church – they may already be Church members. Does your Church contribute to a local paper/magazine through the religious column or write in about local concerns? Does your Christian community collaborate with others to produce and maintain a community publication with general distribution? Any such publication needs to be well produced and show a lively interactive face.

5. Ecumenism

What clear signal of local unity is your church giving?

Where a church is the only place of worship in a village or rural area it has a special ecumenical role to play by welcoming and serving people of various denominational backgrounds. A special code of ecumenical hospitality applies (see your area ecumenical officer for details). This is a special privilege and opportunity – to be THE church for all in that place and can liberate the local church from wearing denominational blinkers. Confidence needs to be fostered in some Methodist congregations to fulfil these roles – either as the only place of worship (learning to be THE Church) or as a partner – discarding Free Church feelings of 'inferiority'. Where churches of different traditions serve villages, their credibility and joint survival depends upon imaginative cooperation and sharing of tasks so that there is more coverage of need and scarce resources are not squandered. This can be signalled on the notice boards: 'Dale Methodist Church serving you as part of Longdale Churches Together'.

6. Flexibility

How flexible is your building for public occasions and needs?

Often a church building is the only place suitable for public meetings in a scattered rural area. If the space available can be opened up (e.g. by the use of chairs rather than fixed pews, 2004 disability compliance and kitchen/toilets that meet health and safety regulations) it may be possible for a variety of local gatherings to use the church or hall and so identify with the church as a focus of local community life. This signifies the church's openness and involvement rather than exclusive attitudes which counteract mission. Some churches are being used as community Post Offices, nursery schools, basic shops, farmers' markets or drop-in centres. Community partnership is the keynote, building on Jesus' maxim, 'Whoever is not against us is for us'. Is your church open more than one hour on a Sunday for community purposes?

7. Prayer

Is your church perceived as a local prayer centre?

Many who do not come to church and resist organised religion still have an interest in prayer and spirituality. Many churches with a board for prayer requests at the back of the church or a post box outside find the option well used. This enables the congregation to pray for a wider constituency – especially when people know that prayer requests can be passed on or handed in to a known point or person. Anonymity needs to be respected to prevent any local gossip. Where the church is known as a

‘prayer centre’, community awareness of its relevance opens up.

Systems

of pastoral care through area wardens or church visitors is also a healthy part of this alertness to need – although we need to recognise that spontaneous and informal care will always be more effective and prominent in the countryside. Some areas are far more socially aware than others that preserve a more isolated and protected way of life. How alert and responsive to local need is your church? Remember the passing trade. Jim Cotter says that in every tourist there is a pilgrim waiting to be recognised!

8. Peace

Are you providing a haven of peace?

People often see the rural church as a place for peace and reflection in a madly racing world of change. The local church can offer this through a weekly time for prayer when someone is in the church and it is open for people to call in to pray or reflect, by making leaflets available at the back of the church to help people pray or placing a seat in a corner of the graveyard to provide for those who want to sit and remember (Crowe Hill Methodist Church in the New Forest near Ringwood, Hampshire, is a good example of this). Planting a Quiet Garden on the Church plot is another helpful provision. (Willaston Methodist Church near Nantwich, Cheshire has such a garden). Are you helping people to escape noise pollution and enjoy an oasis? The premises might be used as a retreat centre for town based churches to enjoy a Quiet Day. Low key tourism can be encouraged (Cf. www.hiddenbritain.co.uk).

An excellent example of this is Hollinsclough in the Peak District where an old farm building opposite the Church has been converted to offer hospitality to walking groups. Llandecwyn in Wales is another such example (cf. story in Country Way via www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk).

9. Assets

Have you maximised your assets?

Most churches have some assets to develop – often overlooked or taken for granted. Crendall Methodist Church (Wimborne Circuit) overlooks and owns a fine village green which it uses for band concerts combined with evening picnics/BBQ's and hoedowns, attended by people from a wide catchment area and visiting coach parties. Hymn sings are included in a way that keeps the Church on the spiritual map. Summer cream teas are also served to coach parties. Other local assets could be: proximity to a recreation ground to provide refreshments at sports days; near a canal to provide services and light snacks for holidaymakers on the barges (a sign on the canal bank is a good idea); on a tourist route to act as a stop off place for people exploring the district?

10. Audit

Are you keeping planned developments under regular review?

A Church engaged in any of these processes needs to pause once a year to answer the question: What have we done in the past year to improve the local community scene? In traditional terms this is about John Wesley's quest for 'social holiness' (wholeness). In all this we need to ensure that our first commitment is worship as a faith community and to know that we live by God's kindness and not by ticking boxes – useful though it is. Without such loving kindness the Church is but an empty shell, however well presented!

How well does your church score? 8 out of 10 maybe?

	Answer the following questions and tick those which you do well	√
1	Does your church's face look welcomingly open or closed?	
2	How well do you 'smile people in'?	
3	How does your church help to bring the community together?	
4	How does your church help to give a 'voice' to the village?	
5	What clear signal of local unity is your church giving?	
6	How flexible is your building for public occasions and needs?	
7	Is your church perceived as a local prayer centre?	
8	Are you providing a haven of peace?	
9	Have you maximised your assets?	
10	Are you keeping planned developments under regular review?	
	Your score	

Workbook available from Methodist Church House

STEP FORWARD

Step Forward

Step Forward is written by Mark Wakelin (President of The Methodist Conference 2012) and produced by Guy Chester Centre. The material explores the use of small groups as a way of encouraging people in their journey of discipleship and vocation in their own local setting.

Why small groups?

In encouraging small groups we believe we are 'remembering our future' as a denomination by rekindling the powerhouse of early Methodism – worship and class meetings. In this way not only do we hope that this approach will be helpful for supporting Methodism in becoming a discipleship movement shaped for mission but also in re-establishing small groups within Methodism and encouraging life-changing, world-changing disciples.

Step Forward Resources

- Discipleship material exploring some of the basic things we are expected to know and be able to do and yet don't always get to ask!
- A year's resource comprising of eight sections of material interspersed with time for social opportunities, joint worship events etc.
- Training for group facilitators
- Facilitator's manual, either in printed format or online
- Access to the handout material for each week in electronic format online
- Access to the Step Forward website
- Support for the groups through telephone and email and the website

Step Forward Groups

Important features of the groups are:

- Encouragement for 'all member ministry'
- 'God at the Centre' of the group with time for worship, prayer and response
- Creative learning and worship styles
- An emphasis on social opportunities for the group
- An invitation asking, 'what does God require of us?' a question set in the context of fellowship and prayer; discipleship and mission
- An emphasis on looking outward from the group to others, neighbours, family, work colleagues, who can be invited and welcomed to specific social events

Step Forward Structure

- Welcome – time to share together
- Worship – time to worship together
- Word – time to learn together
- Witness – time to look outwards together

Step Forward Sections

The eight four week sections are:

- Being in fellowship
- Praying
- Reading the Bible
- Worshipping God
- Knowing what God wants
- Being saved
- Following Jesus
- Living life in all its fullness

Step Forward

- Step Forward is designed to be delivered through small groups and run over a 12 month period meeting on a weekly basis.
- The material is divided into eight four week sections. Each of the eight sections will take just over a month to complete with the addition of social activities in between each of the sections, effectively providing a year's worth of material allowing time for social evenings and joint worship events.
- There are various features of Step Forward that make it distinctive from most house groups, and an outline of this approach is included in this leaflet.
- Step Forward is very much about enabling everyone in the group to lead and use the material in a faithful, gentle, encouraging and participative way.
- While each group will find its own flavour, style even theological emphasis and spirituality, it is our hope that they will have a facilitation style in common.
- The key to a good group is facilitation and the key to good facilitation is enabling the ministry of everyone in the group.
- Prospective group facilitators will be expected to attend a training session to learn how to use the material and facilitate a Step Forward Group.
- At the end of the 12 month period it is hoped that those who have been part of a Step Forward Group will feel more confident and challenged in their personal life, in their commitment to each other and in developing their own discipleship, ministry and mission.

www.stepforward-training.org.uk

*The Guy Chester Centre is a project of the Methodist Church in Great Britain
Registered charity no. 1132208*

TIME TO TALK OF GOD

A series of stimulating starting points for conversations about Christian discipleship based on a report to The Methodist Conference 2005.

Time to talk of God deliberately starts one stage back from evangelism, exploring what it may be about current church culture which makes us reluctant to speak about our faith, even to each other, thus denying ourselves and each other the resources to develop as mature disciples.

- What do we mean by discipleship?
- Talking about our faith
- Christian conversations in our contemporary culture
- Conversations with the Jesus of the Gospels
- Conversations with Methodist tradition
- Current blocks to conversations within the Church
- A restored conversation

Sets of books are available around the Circuit.