

CHRIST CHURCH COURSES

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

SESSION 0: Engaging well

Learning Aim: by the end of the session participants will have a good understanding of the issues that will be explored in this course, the sensitivities involved, the pastoral principles that will help create a safe space, the ground rules for engaging in discussion and how to listen well.

Pastoral aim: that the group leave believing that these workshops will be a safe space to explore the issues raised confidentially and gracefully.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction and welcome (5m)
2. Aims and structure of course (5m)
3. Story Time (5m)*
4. How to engage well (5m)
5. Pastoral principles (20m)
6. Good listening (15m)
7. Learning together (15m)*
- 8 The Bible (10m)*
9. Expectations and our own stories (10m)

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME (5m)

Welcome to the Christ Church *Living in Love and Faith (LLF)* workshops. You will be here for many reasons. Others here will be looking for something else. We all come with ideas, experiences, prejudices, hurts, hopes and fears.

The purpose of this session is to explore how to make the following weeks as safe and as fruitful as possible as we learn together. You will not always agree with everything

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

0. Engaging Well

1. What does the church believe?
2. The Beautiful story 1
3. The Beautiful Story 2
4. Living out the Beautiful Story
5. The case for change
6. Implications of change
7. Gender

that you hear. The purpose of our gathering is to explore, to share and to learn from one another. Not to “win”.

So, before we do anything else let us invite God in to our meeting.

Let us pray.....

We pray Come Holy Spirit. Grant us the openness to hear your voice. The wisdom to discern through your voice, your command and your heart. The humility to receive, to be challenged and to see things afresh as you lead us. In the name of your Son, our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The overall aims of the workshops and the structure are outlined above.

These are different to the LLF book and course upon which these workshops are based. The reason is that the LLF material aims to present all views under themes. It does not seek to critique, just present different ideas interwoven together.

The approach we will take is to outline the current teaching of the Church of England and its implications. That will then be compared to alternative views that are held by those that would seek change. In this way we hope to present the issues more clearly than in the LLF materials and help everyone both appreciate and discern the issues and help everyone clarify what you believe, and why, about these issues.

Most importantly we seek God’s will in these discussions.

The overall approach is to consider:

- being human
- relationships and marriage
- sex and sexuality
- gender

All of these are considered within the overall biblical narrative.

Our primary foundation is to seek God’s mind and will for these things as revealed to us through scripture. All the evidence forming the various views expressed are measured against what we find there. Please note that this does not mean that we discard scientific, sociological and historical standpoints. Just that these will be referenced back to what we find in scripture as the revelation of God’s will for us.

3. STORY TIME 1: Alan and Elaine

One of the features of the course will be the stories that people have willingly offered to help discussions be centered on people rather than just principles.

Alan and Elaine have been married for 52 years. Watch the video at <https://llf.churchofengland.org/mod/videotime/view.php?id=590>

4. HOW TO ENGAGE WELL

We will spend the rest of this session considering the first LLF Course video about how to engage well.

<https://llf.churchofengland.org/mod/videotime/view.php?id=594>

Please note that the video is the first of five covering all of the LLF materials. The introduction therefore takes us through the other videos. We will not be using those other videos in these workshops however you can watch them by registering with and logging into the **LLF Learning Hub** at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith/living-love-and-faith-learning-hub> . There you will be able to download a PDF version of the LLF Book and access all sorts of videos and podcasts to support your learning.

5. PASTORAL PRINCIPLES

Watch the video to **6:07**.

The Pastoral Advisory Group developed 6 Pastoral Principles to help us all engage well. They apply to all of us, whatever our current situation.

Consider the following case study:

An LLF workshop includes the following people:

Gerald (44) – the Vicar of the church who holds an orthodox view of sexuality and marriage

Arthur (79) – is a long time member of the church and does not see what all the fuss is about and thinks that this is all a great waste of time and money; the church has believed the same for 2000 years so why consider change now?

Andrew (24) – has a boyfriend but has not told anyone yet

Grace (30) – has had both boyfriends and girlfriends in the past but is currently single

Paul (34) – is getting married in 3 months' time

Kylie (22) – is considering whether she can stay in the church over this issue who while opposite sex attracted feels very strongly that the church seems to be homophobic and she has been outspoken on this issue in the past

Bob (55) – has struggled with questions over his gender for all his life and has only just recently revealed this to his house group

How might you assess the benefit of the Pastoral Principles for this group of people?

A) Acknowledging prejudice

What strongly held views do you hold against other people, against certain ideas, against certain behaviours? How can you use that knowledge to engage well and sensitively to the target of your prejudice?

B) Speak into silence

What has never been spoken of or raised which will make this sort of discussion awkward or even dangerous? How can we ensure that speaking now will make things better rather than worse?

C) Address ignorance

What do you **not** know about what other people believe and why they believe it? How can listening and learning help you engage with the discussion better?

D) Cast out fear

What are you afraid of in these discussions? How can acknowledging those fears help everyone engage well, to alleviate those fears rather than put fuel on these fires?

E) Admit Hypocrisy

In what ways has the church said one thing and done something else? How about you, what is your own hypocrisy? How will acknowledging these things help keep everyone accountable and ensure that this is a safe space?

F) Pay attention to power

Who holds the power in the room? Obvious and implied power? How can that be managed well so that all feel empowered to contribute to the discussion? How can all contributions be both heard and valued? (NB: to value an opinion you do not need to agree with it and we should not summarily dismiss it either).

Watch video to **6.45**

The course suggests **5 commitments**:

- *enable everyone to speak if they want to*
- *avoid interrupting someone to make your point*
- *keep confidential any information that is shared*
- *take care how we speak about people who are not in the room*
- *be sensitive to other people's feelings*

Are we able to sign up to these as house rules for our discussions?

6. GOOD LISTENING

Watch the video to **10:35**.

Now we will do a listening exercise together to help us put some of these principles and commitments into practice.

Allow **10 minutes** for this activity.

This activity is about having the opportunity to experience:

- being listened to, and
- being a good listener.

It's also an opportunity for the members of this group to get to know each other and to start building relationships that will help us to engage well with each other as the Course progresses.

ACTION: Form groups of 3.....

Person 1: chooses one of the following topics to **talk about for 3 minutes**:

Share something about your own life story, or

Share some of your hopes and fears about doing this course

Person 2: listens attentively and **reflects back what they heard in 1 or 2 minutes**

Person 3 : observes

After 5 minutes reflect on the following questions:

What did you notice about a) speaking b) listening c) good engagement?

7. LEARNING TOGETHER

Watch video to **16:22**.

Discuss for 10 minutes.

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:24-29)

- What do you think it tells us about learning and about life as a follower of Jesus?
- Can you remember a time when you were 'astounded' by Jesus' teaching?

8. THE BIBLE

Watch video to **21:36**.

How important is the bible to you in discerning the answers to some of these questions? How do you approach the bible? How do you use it? How do you find out more about what it might be saying, what it means?

9. EXPECTATIONS AND STORY

Watch video to end.

Any final reflections?

What questions do you have in the areas of being human, marriage, sexuality and gender that you look forward to exploring?

Next time we will be looking at what the Church of England believes by looking at the CEEC Statement of Faith. Please read through that statement before the session.