



For new CLC groups



Guides for starting the journey as a CLC group

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

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Guides for starting the journey as a CLC group

This booklet is a compilation of several leaflets that have been available as separate leaflets for some considerable time that give guidance to CLC groups in the early stages of their life together.

These are in addition to the essential booklet on **The CLC MEETING** itself, recently revised.

The leaflets included are:

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These are all still available as separate leaflets, but it was thought that it might be useful for people in newer CLC groups to have these available in a single booklet. So, here it is! The page numbers for each leaflet in this booklet are shown above.



There are also many more leaflets with a wealth of information and guidance and you are very much encouraged to explore them to understand more about the Christian Life Community and its way of life, based, as it is, on Ignatian Spirituality. This is, of course, explored in depth in the series of 40 meeting plans – our main formation programme - and a number of these extra leaflets are introduced in some of the meeting plan sets, but by no means all. All our resources can be accessed in the Publications List, which is available in the **RESOURCES** section on the CLC website www.clcew.org.uk Do have a look for yourself.

The purpose of CLC



"Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church.

“We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation.

“We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple life style, which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them.

“To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we assemble people in community who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism.

“We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live.”

CLC General Principle 4

At the Meeting

OPENING PRAYER

We begin, as usual, with a short time of stillness, putting ourselves in the presence of God and asking that everything that happens in our minds, hearts and imaginations may be directed purely to the praise and service of God. *Some communities use the CLC opening prayer, or some other formal prayer, to conclude this brief time of stillness. Others use a minute or two of suitable music.*

GRACE: Read the Grace from your Meeting Plan

SCRIPTURE: Ask someone to read aloud one of the scripture passages quoted in the Meeting Plan.

SILENCE: Ten minutes silent prayer remembering my life and prayer since the last meeting. How have I found the prayer this last fortnight? What events in my life and prayer do I wish to share with my community? Is there anything to share about mission?

SHARING AND LISTENING

- Remember that this is a listening and not a discussion group.
- Include a second round of sharing if there is time.
- It's good to conclude this time of reflection with a short period of silence while we pray for each other, ending with a formal prayer such as the Glory Be or the Lord's Prayer.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

PRACTICALITIES:

This is an opportunity for news or discussion about any work or mission in which members might be involved; for any reports, e.g. from members who have attended a CLC event or some event of concern to others; for questions; for discussion about any concerns; or for any business the group might need to sort out. Also, do we want to spend more time on this Meeting Plan or are we ready to move to the next?

REVIEW OF THE MEETING

- What was good for me in this meeting?
- What was not so good? What would I have liked to be different?
- What do I want to take away with me?

CLOSING PRAYER: *(Many communities use the CLC closing prayer opposite)*

*Most CLCs choose prayers to begin and end their meetings.
The following are those which many use and which we often say together at regional or national meetings.*

THE OPENING PRAYER

**Show us, Lord, what we should do,
and help us as we do it,
so that our prayers and works
may begin from you,
and through you meet with success,
through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.**

THE CLOSING PRAYER

**Dearest Jesus, teach us to be generous,
to serve you as you deserve to be served,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and to ask for no reward
except that of knowing that we do your holy will.
Amen**

*Below is a form of the **Review of the Day** or '**Examen**' which you may find helpful:*

Daily Awareness Examen

Place yourself in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity

I first turn to **God the Father**

I thank you Father for loving me into life - "It is good to be alive".

I thank you Father for today - another day of life and especially for.....

I ask you Father for Light to see my day as You see it.

Now I turn to **God the Son - Jesus**

Where did you walk with me today?

For what moment am I most grateful?

Where did I fail to walk with you today - when I tried to go it alone?

For what moment am I least grateful?

Now I turn to **God the Spirit**

Most Holy Spirit be with me tomorrow,
help me to be open to your guidance.

Glory be

Sharing on Our Mission

Sharing and Listening as an Apostolic Community

At our group meeting we are present to each other
in a spirit of friendship and trust,
as people seeking to deepen their relationship with God, and
to respond with generosity in accordance with God's desires for us,
as an apostolic community

During the meeting we share the fruits of our prayer and reflections, our experience of God at work in our lives and any other considerations which relate to our spiritual life and loving service (routine, extraordinary – highs and lows).

The daily practice of the 'The Review of the Day' helps us to be in touch with our deeper feelings and insights of God's presence (interior movements) as we experience life around us.

What do we share?

The sharing of our experiences is an extension of our prayer life and, as such, we ask the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us as to what we share. The Holy Spirit will speak to others through our sharing.

On some occasions the content of our sharing may largely consist of thoughts and reflections derived from periods of prayer, based on specific material decided by the group, e.g. the meeting plans, some other material. At other times, it may come from everyday experiences which in some way speak to us of God or make us aware of God's presence in daily events.



Photo by Adi Goldstein on Unsplash

We may frequently share experiences which relate to our loving service of God and neighbour, in whatever form it takes.

It is important that group members have a 'shared experience' of each other regarding their service and loving presence, as this generates a sense of apostolic community and enables the group collectively to discern, affirm and encourage each other.

Sharing experiences of our loving service does not merely consist of a descriptive account but rather consists of an account of **how the experience is affecting us** – how we are being moved. For example:

Possible examples:

- ✦ a sense of being in the right place at the right time
- ✦ a sense that one's service is in harmony with God's desire
- ✦ a sense of fulfilment, enrichment, joy
- ✦ awareness of being able to express knowledge, talents, skills, etc. in a way that works towards a greater good
- ✦ perhaps an occasional experience of tiredness, or stress, but not 'distress'
- ✦ a sense of encouragement and strength even in the midst of things not going quite right
- ✦ a sense of being 'drawn' (attracted, invited) to this service rather than 'driven' (pushed, compelled)

Alternatively:

- ✦ a sense of being 'out of synch' with oneself – feeling like a square peg in a round hole
- ✦ a sense of feeling involved out of obligation (e.g. no one else wants to do this)
- ✦ a sense of feeling one ought to be doing more – and more – and more!
- ✦ a sense of futility
- ✦ a sense that what one is doing is seemingly small and insignificant – not 'good enough' in God's eyes
- ✦ a feeling of being drawn to something else
- ✦ a feeling of having made a 'false start' by undertaking a role or task which, at the time seemed good and right but has led in some way to a negative experience or response – not life-giving

Preparing ourselves to share our experiences of service can sometimes help us get a clearer or new perspective on things and can help us to be more aware of, and in tune with, where God desires us to be

Why do we share these experiences?

This shared experience of ourselves as spiritual, apostolic people helps to develop the setting in which, as mature Christians, we can share the responsibility of evaluating and responding to God, not only as individuals, but as a group.

In our world where experiences constant change, we frequently ask ourselves how to remain in a living relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

A better response to the changing needs we encounter requires a permanent discerning attitude which belongs to the core of Ignatian spirituality.

The small community meeting helps us to live in this discerning attitude; it also allows each of us to support the way other members live out their mission.

The community can help each individual understand more deeply what the Lord is calling them to do. So, the community actively participates in making the mission of each one explicit and concrete. It can also share the responsibility for the mission and support the way it is carried out.

A previous CLC World Assembly (at Nairobi) encouraged us to think in terms of each CLC community becoming an 'apostolic community', rather than a 'community of apostles'.



One of our members suggested that this is rather like people with different skills going to work on a bus, but instead of getting off at different stops to work at different places, we all go to the same destination to work at the same firm but doing different functions within it.

We are all working in our different ways for the same Lord, Jesus Christ, to bring about his Kingdom here on earth, now and for evermore.

To be a truly apostolic community we need to develop and experience the way we listen and relate to each other. The Spirit will help us to discover that this is significantly deeper and richer than that of a superficial companionship. The Spirit will lead us into a much more profound unity than that.

These notes have been produced by the National Formation Team based from material prepared by the World Assembly Implementation Team (WAIT) following the Nairobi World Assembly.

The Naming of Groups

In England and Wales, local CLCs have tended to name themselves after their geographic location, e.g. Loyola Hall CLC, Oxford CLC etc. CLCs in other national communities show far more imagination! They tend to choose a name which expresses something of the character of the group or something about their hopes for the group.

The following article, from *The CLC Story in Europe*¹, illustrates how one local CLC in Luxembourg set about choosing their name.

“On 18th April our CLC group met as usual. As we were frequently being asked whether we were still without a name, we decided to settle it once and for all. Our search for a name was a lot of work, but great fun, too!

First, we reflected in silence, each individually. Then we wrote all the names we came up with on a blackboard. They were very different.

Gradually we wiped most of them off again, however, as we took into account the history of the group and our future plans.

With some names the decision was very quick, others we discussed at more length. Finally, we were left with eight:



Photo by Irfan Simsar on Unsplash

Together	Shalom	Nineveh	Maranatha
Jerusalem	Bethlehem	Ephphatha	On the Mountain

¹ *The CLC Story in Europe* is, unfortunately, no longer available.

For each of these names we tried to find the passages in Scripture or the situation in the group which fitted.

Thus, we found we could discard all but two, Nineveh and Ephphatha.

Why Nineveh?

Nineveh is the name of the city which was called to conversion. Nineveh reminds us that it was not only individuals who responded, but that all together were ready to turn over a new leaf.

The name Nineveh conjured up the aspects of communion and conversion, which were important for us.

Why Ephphatha?

Ephphatha refers to the cure of a deaf-mute (Mk 7: 31-37). Other people brought the deaf-mute to Jesus and others again spread the news of the cure Jesus did.

There again we see how very important communion is in our lives. Ephphatha, 'be open', expresses a seeking, a going further, an openness. Is it not the task of every CLC to be open and to be led further by God?

After we had posed all these questions and once again read the scripture texts, we chose **Ephphatha** as our name.

It is both a gift and at the same time a task; it contains a perspective for the future.

Today, a little more than a year later, we are still trying to live up to our name and be open.”

Welcoming Someone New

This leaflet is intended for someone who is joining an existing group rather than someone starting in a new group. Use it flexibly to suit your own situation.

We hope you find it useful.

At the Meeting

Opening Prayer

We begin the meeting with a short time of stillness, to remember that we are in the presence of God. Whoever is leading the meeting will let the group know when this time is over. We then use the CLC Opening Prayer:

*Show us Lord what we should do,
and help us as we do it,
so that our prayers and works may begin from You
and through You meet with success.
Through Christ our Lord, Amen*

On this occasion, we start by introducing ourselves, so that the new people know something of those with whom they will be sharing.

Asking for the Grace

This is a way to focus our time of prayer, by asking God for what we desire. Tonight, we ask for the grace to “open our hearts to God and one another”.

Scripture/Reading

Each CLC meeting will usually have a scripture passage or reading for reflection that has usually been used before coming to the meeting. A member of the group will read the text aloud once or twice. **For this meeting we will use Luke 24, 13-33, which is reproduced on the back page.**

Silence and Reflection (around 10 minutes)

This is the main time of prayer in the meeting. In silence reflect on the passage, how it speaks to us, and our life over the past few weeks. Allow God to speak in the silence. The leader will say when the silence is over and invite whoever is ready to begin sharing. There are some questions printed at the side to help, if you wish to use them.

Questions for your prayer time

During the silent prayer, you might like to reflect on the following.

For existing members:

- What has your journey in CLC been like so far?
- What have you given?
- What have you received?
- How has CLC helped you to recognise Jesus?

For new members

- What do you identify with in the story of the road to Emmaus?
- What do you hope for from CLC?

At the end of your prayer time

Think about what you might like to share with the Group.

Aids for Prayer

If you need help to pray try one of the following:

Imagine yourself in the story, what can you see and hear? How do you feel?

or,

read through the passage slowly when a word or phrase strikes you stay with it.

This is God speaking to you through the scripture. What is he saying?

Sharing and Listening

Each person in the group is invited to share something of their life and prayer with the others. We only need share what we are comfortable with. Everyone else listens without comment or discussion, hearing how God is at work in the lives of the group members. Someone begins when they feel ready to share something.

When everyone has had an opportunity to share the leader may suggest a second round of sharing. This is time to note what has moved us, or any further reflections. Again, this is a listening time, not a discussion. We end this time with a time of silence and a prayer such as the Glory Be.

Intercessory Prayer

This is the time to share any intentions or people we would like to pray for and usually end each with a response (Lord Hear us, *Lord Graciously Hear us*, or, Lord in Your mercy, *Hear our prayer*)

Review

The Leader will invite us to spend a minute or two reflecting:

What was good for me in this meeting? What would I like to be different?

What will I take away?

This is the time for a new member to say if they would like to continue exploring CLC

Closing Prayer

The Leader will end the meeting with a prayer. Many Groups end with the CLC closing prayer:

*Dearest Jesus, teach us to be generous,
to serve You as deserve to be served,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and to ask for no reward,
except that of knowing that we do Your holy will.
Amen*

Practicalities

A quick chat to sort out the next meeting, who will lead, and what material to use for prayer.

CLC – The Basics

- Groups choose a name usually something meaningful to their members.
- There are prayer materials (meeting plans) which groups pray with, between and at meetings.
- Most groups meet at least fortnightly, usually on the same night of the week.
- The meeting is a priority and so every member tries to attend or, if it's really not possible, to send their apologies.
- At each meeting Members share on their life and prayer since the last meeting.
- An essential part of their life is what they consider to be their 'mission', how they consider they are spreading Christ's message of love and service in the world.
- The group is a **listening group**. Members actively listen without interruption or comment.
- What is shared in the meeting is confidential and not repeated outside. This helps build trust in one another.
- Members take it in turns to lead the meetings.
- Some groups are fortunate in having a Group Guide, whose role is to help the group grow in their journey to God and deepen their Ignatian Spirituality.
- At the end of each set of meeting plans the group should have an evaluation to reflect on how they are doing and whether they want to continue together.
- CLC is not the path for everyone. If someone wishes to leave the group, they are free to do so, but it is important that they let the group know in person. (cf. 'Saying Goodbye' leaflet)
- If you find CLC a helpful part of your faith life you can become a member, receive CLC news and learn about the wider national and international community.

Scripture/Reading²

The Road to Emmaus: Luke 24, 13-33

(‘The Message’ Translation)



That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

He said, "What has happened?"

They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision

of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

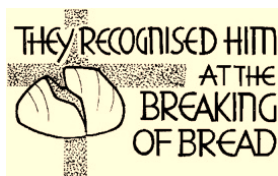
Back and forth they talked.

"Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed

with us on the road, as he

opened up the Scriptures for us?"

They didn't waste a minute. They were up and, on their way, back to Jerusalem



² Scripture from *The Message*; used with permission ©[Eugene H. Peterson](#) and NavPress Publishing Group
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Saying Goodbye

There will be certain situations within the life of a group when a member feels that he/she may need to leave for a short time, longer or permanently e.g. illness, time out, family commitments, bereavement, moving home, or called to another ministry that will make it impossible for that person to be part of the group.

What becomes important to both the members of the group and the individual concerned is to mark this leaving appropriately, recognising the contribution they have made to the life of the community.

The process:

1

Discerning - It is important for the group to discern as a whole, the effect on the group members of the person leaving. What has the member given to the group? What does s/he take with him/her?

2

Supporting - To be supported in this discernment the group may wish to call on the skills and experience of a group guide, or regional chaplain, or depend on their own expertise.

3

Evaluating - the group is able to identify what has happened through the member leaving and affirm the decision when he/she leaves.

4

Sending / Celebrating - it is important for the group to think about having a **liturgy** and a **social** to mark the departure of that member, to **celebrate** the time he/she has been with the group and prayerfully **commission** him/her for the situation they are being called to or moving to.

A Celebration Liturgy

What can you do?

You might find the following useful as a starting point but **do adapt it** to suit yourselves and your own circumstances.

In the Name of the Father

Opening Prayer

God our Father,
Your Son promised to be with all who gather in his name.
Make us aware of this presence among us and fill us with his grace, mercy and peace, so that we may live in truth and love.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Reading Mt 6:31-34

So, do not worry; do not say, "What are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?" It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. Set your hearts on his Kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



Photo by Renee Fisher on Unsplash

After a few moments silence, please offer your intercessions for [name], then each marking [name] with the sign of the cross name a gift that she takes from this group.

Presentation of the Lighted Candle

Father of holiness.
Your Son is the Light of the World.
Bless this light that [name] takes with him/her to his/her newly founded life and grant that s/he will be transformed into His image.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. **Amen**

Hand over the lighted candle

Continued

Prayer and Blessing

We bless you. O God, and we praise your name.

In your merciful providence you sent your Son into the world to free us from the bondage of sin by his own blood and to enrich us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Before he returned, triumphant over death, to you, Father, he sent his apostles, the bearers of his love and power to proclaim the Gospel of life to all peoples and in the waters of baptism to cleanse those who believe.

Lord, look kindly on [name], your servant [NAME]:

We send him/her forth to this new phase in his/her life marked with the sign of the cross.

Guide his/her steps with your mighty arm and with the power of your grace strengthen her in spirit.

May God bless you [name] in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Final Hymn



*I will be with you wherever you go.
Go now throughout the world!
I will be with you in all that you say
Go now and spread my word*

Come; walk with me on stormy waters.
Why fear? Reach out, and be there

And you, my friend, will you now leave me,
Or do you know me as your Lord?

Your life will be transformed with power
By living truly in my name.

And if you say: 'Yes, Lord, I love you.'
Then feed my lambs and feed my sheep.

Reflecting on the way God is leading us

This is a simple way for a new group to reflect on its beginnings and to evaluate their journey together so far. The enclosed prayer guidelines and memory joggers are provided to help you to do this. Please try to spend a couple of prayer times on this material.

If possible, do invite someone from CLC to visit when you have your meeting; perhaps the person who has been walking with you, your local chaplain, regional representative, group guide or someone else that you trust.

Preparatory Prayer

Begin as usual with a short time of stillness, putting yourself in the presence of God and asking for grace that everything that happens in your mind, heart and imagination may be directed purely to the praise and service of God.

Setting the scene

A word of scripture to help you focus

‘Do not take fright, do not be afraid. Yahweh your God goes in front of you and will be on your side. In the wilderness you saw God: how Yahweh carried you, as a parent carries their child, all along the road you travelled on the way to this place.’



Deuteronomy 1, 30-31

Asking for what you want

Pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to recognise the significant moments of your group's history, and to see how God has led you through them.

Entering into the picture

Take time to remember your local Christian Life Community. Imagine yourself with all the people, events, feelings and patterns which have been there for you, as it is in your memory. Don't worry about what you can't remember or about accuracy.

Going deeper

Ask the Lord to be with you as you go further along memory lane, and each time notice how you are feeling.

- ✦ Remember how you came to join this group and what you were looking for.
- ✦ Recall anything you heard about the group's history before you joined, if you joined after it first formed.
- ✦ Remember the times when you were especially enthusiastic about belonging to this group.
- ✦ Bring to mind the hard times, when you wondered why you bothered to come to the meetings.
- ✦ Notice anything else which comes to mind.

To conclude your prayer

Put this paper to one side and spend some time talking to the Lord about what has come up for you in your reflection. You may like to end with an *Our Father*.

Review after prayer

After the prayer take some time to look back over your prayer time and jot down a few things which moved you or which you particularly remember. Don't try to remember everything but do try to note those events which were important to you in the life of your CLC.

Note: *When you review the prayer, if you have a sense that there is more, go back in your next prayer time to those places where you were most moved, whether it was consoling or desolate.*

MEETING PLANS FOR NEW COMMUNITIES

A series of leaflets designed for use at CLC meetings, including a wealth of reflections and helps about CLC, Ignatian spirituality and living our lives in a more Christian way is available from CLC. Order the first set of meeting plans from literature@clcew.org.uk or the online form on our website at www.clcew.org.uk in the **RESOURCES** page.

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