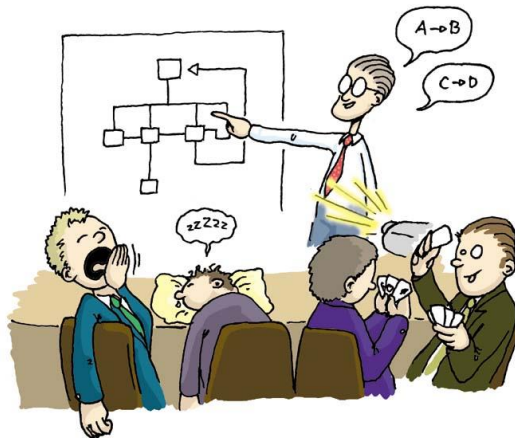


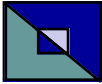


# Christian Life Community

*praying our life  
and living our prayer*

## *Guidelines for running a CLC Information Session*



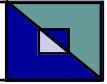


## INTRODUCTION

This leaflet has been devised to help CLC members run an information session about CLC. The outline given below is the 'bones' of a session. This outline has been tried on a number of groups and has worked well. However, if you wish to change it in any way feel free to do so\*. It is best to work with someone else or a small team. This means that responsibility is shared: you can each do different inputs, the audience will hear a variety of voices, and you can help each other out if you forget to say something. Here are some points to consider as you prepare to put the 'flesh on to the bones'. Good luck!

- Think about the group to whom you are giving the session; match your approach to the experience of the group e.g. if most people present have knowledge and experience of Ignatian prayer it would not be helpful to explain it in depth.
- It is essential that you prepare well, but don't be too over rehearsed!
- Talk from your own experience, particularly those sharing their experience of CLC and what it has meant to them (page 6: CLC Witness)
- Be focussed e.g. when talking about your group don't go into great detail about its history; if someone is interested you could talk to them informally at the end of the session.
- Try to make the session as interactive as possible.
- Avoid jargon words e.g. formation, discernment, Examen, consolation and desolation.
- Don't worry about being flexible, according to the group
- Don't forget to take some CLC literature (see Page 7) and a bible (page 4) with you.

**\* Since this booklet was written, some extra information had been added (pages 8-12) to show how another CLC adapted this material to suit their own particular circumstances.**



## **OUTLINE FOR AN INFORMATION SESSION**

### **1. WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER**

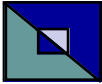
It is important that everyone is welcomed to the session. The person who has invited you to talk to the group will probably welcome everyone, but you can welcome them too. Use an opening prayer of your choice.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

Give a brief outline of what will happen during the session and the anticipated finish time. Also check if anyone needs to leave early. It is important to stress that coming to this session does not mean any sort of commitment to CLC and there is no pressure to 'sign up'. CLC is one way of meeting the needs of some people. Invite people to ask questions at any time during the session.

Get everyone to introduce themselves in whatever way you wish. Here are two examples (remember to introduce yourselves)

1. Ask everyone to say their name, how they heard about this session, and if they have heard of CLC before, where they come from—two or three additional questions is better than just getting people to say their names.
2. Ask people to get in pairs. Each person will find out something about the other person, then ask the pairs to introduce each other (not themselves) to the larger group.



### **3. SETTING THE SCENE**

Use John 1 35-39 'Come and see' to set the scene. Read the passage aloud. When Jesus turned to ask the two disciples, 'What do you want?' they could only reply in a confused way, 'Where do you live?'. Ask the people present to reflect, for a few minutes on Jesus asking them the question, 'What do you want?'

Divide the large group into small groups, no bigger than six, although the size of the group will depend upon how many are present—remember to adapt to the number present. Ask them to reflect on the following questions for a couple of minutes

Why have you come here?

What are you looking for?

What attracted you to CLC?

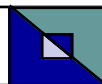
Then move into the small groups and ask people to share their answers to the questions and to listen to others, without comment. Allow ten minutes for this. Form the large group again and ask for feedback, though not necessarily from everyone.

### **4. GUIDED IMAGINATIVE PRAYER**

Using the same text, 'Come and see' John 1 35-39, guide the group through an imaginative contemplation. Allow fifteen/twenty minutes for this, with silent prayer at the end, and a few minutes wriggle time before you go on.

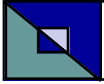
### **5. THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF CLC: COMMUNITY, SPIRITUALITY, MISSION**

Here is some essential information to include under the three characteristics or 'hallmarks' of CLC. However, it is important to talk about these from your own experience e.g. what community in CLC has meant to you, what you value of Ignatian spirituality, how CLC helps you in your service to others.



## Community

- Most local groups meet at least once a month, usually every fortnight on the same day of the week.
- The number of people in a local community or group can vary but the ideal number is six to eight. Certainly, ten would be too many.
- The meeting is a priority. However, if a member has a valid reason for not attending, e.g. illness, home crises, they would send their apologies.
- The group is a listening group--active listening without interruption or comment.
- Group members share on their life and prayer since the last meeting (faith sharing).
- The enormous support of being listened to. Trust is built up through confidentiality—what is shared at the meeting is not repeated outside the meeting.
- The group affirms but also gently leads us to growth. This leads to groups that help each other discern where God is leading them-Gods dream for us (decision making)
- Members take it in turn to lead the meetings.
- At the beginning, a group would commit themselves to seven meetings, but this is not rigid. If someone wished to leave the group before the seventh meeting they are free to do so, but it is important that they say so rather than leave without comment.
- Ideally a new group will have an Accompanier, who will be a CLC member from another group. S/he will help the group become accustomed to the format of the meetings and generally help them find their feet as they are introduced to the various aspects of the CLC way of life and Ignatian spirituality.



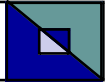
- Some groups have another member, a Group Guide, who has a specific role in the group. They accompany the group on their journey, helping the group to grow. A guide could be another member of CLC from a different group, a religious sister, or a priest. It is important that they have an understanding and experience of CLC and Ignatian spirituality.

## **Spirituality**

- God is active in our lives, guiding us on our journey no matter where we are.
- Ignatian prayer—uses imagination to get to know Christ as the disciples did and to see him in our life.
- Helps us to get to know Christ as a friend.
- Integrates prayer and life. Life helps prayer; prayer helps life.
- Becoming aware of God's action in our lives; becoming aware of how God is gently leading us/me.
- 'Come and see' - our journey is one of searching and growing.

## **Mission**

- The mission of CLC comes from Christ who invites us to join him preparing the world to become the complete Kingdom of God.
- Ignatian spirituality leads us to be people for others. Putting the command to love into action in practical ways.
- Tony de Mello SJ tells the story of the man who has so much wood to chop that he didn't have time to sharpen the axe. CLC sharpens the axe for already busy people; it helps us to prioritise. Some groups do things together e.g. Bearwood's annual Craft Fair to raise money for a Charity. But this is not a 'must' for groups.
- For many, our ministry is mainly part of our everyday lives-in our homes, at work, in the community and wherever there is a need.



## **6. CLC WITNESS**

Two or three members share their own experience of CLC and what that experience has meant for them. This is probably the most important and significant part of the whole evening!

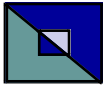
## **7. A WORLD COMMUNITY**

CLC at various levels gives support to members: at the local, regional, national and world levels.

## **8. CONCLUSION AND FINAL PRAYER**

- Check out if any one has any questions.
- Invite those present to go away and pray about what they have heard and come to the follow up meeting if they feel drawn to explore CLC.
- Make the arrangements for the follow up meeting—the date, time, venue, someone to lead. Suggest using the first set of meeting plans, 'First Steps Towards Community', you will have copies for sale or they can be photocopied or printed.
- Closing prayer of your choice. REFRESHMENTS

If you plan to have refreshments it's usually better to end with them as this gives an opportunity for people to informally ask questions.



## RESOURCES

Literature (Obtainable from [literature@clcew.org.uk](mailto:literature@clcew.org.uk)):

Introductory leaflet

The local CLC meeting

How to join CLC or subscribe to Focus

Recent copies of Focus

*First steps towards community* meeting plans set 1

Publications List and Order Form

Flip Chart

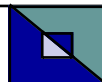
Display Board

These resources are available from CLC at

114 Mount Street, London, W1K 3AH Email [info@clcew.org.uk](mailto:info@clcew.org.uk)

---





## OTHER ALTERNATIVES

### **1. Our Information Evening**

#### **Background**

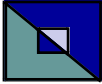
We had been waiting for some time for the Parish Priest to help us initiate a new group, but despite his assurances that he would invite people to a series of meetings, nothing happened! Therefore, we decided that we would have to invite people to a meeting ourselves. However, we had tried to do this in the past and the take-up had been relatively small. So we devised the approach of inviting specific people to come and giving them an invitation card \*, as well as advertising it in the parish, including announcements by the PP. We also reminded them immediately before the meeting was due to take place. This approach proved very successful, since we had over 30 at the meeting.

We wanted the evening to be about CLC and we did not want to conceal the fact that we were hoping for a second group to form. However, we also wanted it to be an evening of value in its own right for those who might not be interested in taking it any further. We therefore devised the following format:

#### **The Information Evening**

##### **1. Welcome**

As people arrived, we gave them a drink and light refreshments (in the style of Alpha course meetings), talked to them and generally made them feel at home.



## 2. Introduction

- Welcome and a brief introduction to the format for the evening
- Why? :
  - We want to tell you about ourselves
  - We want to tell others about CLC
  - We want to form a new group
- We are going to involve you - we don't want to talk at you

## 3. What CLC means to me - each member of the existing group speaks in turn, introduces themselves and explains why CLC is important to them

## 4. An experience of reflective prayer

Explain imaginative contemplation and tell them that we want them to identify with one of the people in the gospel passage or to imagine that they are at the scene looking on.

Reading of a chosen Gospel Passage suitable for Ignatian contemplation.

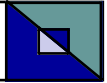
Divide into small groups, with an existing CLC member in each group

- invite people in group to introduce themselves
- read the Gospel Passage again, reminding them to identify with someone
- a time for reflection
- explain listening technique
- sharing
- invite prayer

Return to the main meeting

## 5. What CLC is about by two existing members.

- The purpose of CLC
- Regional, National and International aspects



## 6. Q & A session

People are invited to ask any questions that they might have

## 7. Invitation to a meeting

A time and a place (pre-arranged in advance) is announced for those interested in finding out more about a new CLC group.

### Follow-up

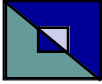
We originally envisaged that those who were interested would come to the arranged meeting. It did not work like that since only 2 came. We arranged a second meeting soon afterwards to which 2 others came. We also visited individuals who showed some interest and talked to them on a one-to-one basis. At each we advertised a new time and date for the 'first' meeting of a new group. When this took place, 10 people turned up, most of whom were still attending a year later! This first meeting, in reality, turned out to be an explanatory session about how a CLC meeting works, what material there was to be used, etc. Decisions were taken about the most appropriate time and place to meet on a regular basis.

When the CLC meetings subsequently began, the sets of *'Meeting Plans for New Communities'* were used and the meetings were led by a member of the existing CLC (An 'Accompanier'). Subsequently, it was arranged that two of their members were always present, one of whom was at the previous meeting. Later, the new group began to run their own meetings and finally only one 'old' member visited the new group each month for a time.

\* The Invitation referred to above can be obtained from CLC

*Leamington Spa CLC*

---



## 2. An alternative Information Evening for an existing non-CLC group

### Introduction

Some time ago my daughter asked me to talk to a Christian House Group in her village about Ignatian Spirituality and CLC. I worked out a meeting plan which I thought would give them an 'experience', rather than me giving a talk as such, based on a form of the CLC meeting. Although they did not subsequently show interest in becoming a CLC group, the meeting itself went extremely well and valued by those present. This gave me the idea that it might be a useful format for anyone else wanting to give an Information Evening to an already-established group who were used to meeting together regularly. I have therefore written out what I can remember of the evening, which you might find useful:

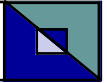
### The meeting

We started with The Grace, since it was an ecumenical group, mainly Anglican, but The Sign of the Cross might be more appropriate for a Catholic group.

I introduced myself and thanked them for inviting me. I invited them to introduce themselves and to say what their expectations were (if any). I explained that I was going to lead them through a CLC group meeting and that CLC used the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I very briefly told them who St. Ignatius was.

We then had a short period of silence to calm ourselves and leave behind the stresses of the day. I then asked them to welcome Jesus to join us, since "where 2 or 3 are gathered in My name, there I am with you".

We then said the Opening Prayer: I said it line by line and they repeated it after me.



Mark 6: 30-44 (miracle of the loaves) was used for an Ignatian Contemplation, but you can use any other suitable passage that you prefer. I explained that they would listen carefully to the passage when it is read and to imagine themselves present, identifying with one of the people present in the passage and to see how they felt.

One of the group was invited to read the passage.

There was then a period of prayerful silent meditation.

I then said they would be invited to share what the passage meant to them with the rest of the group, but there was no compulsion for them to say anything if they did not want to. They could include how they felt and what the passage said to them about their own lives. I explained we would listen to each person in turn without any interruption, so that we could hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the other person.

We then listened to each other in turn.

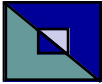
After the sharing, they were invited to add anything they wished to say about how they felt while others were speaking, or if they had anything to add, but we would not take issue with anything that anyone said.

They were then invited to pray together, especially if anything came out of the meditation. The group was used to doing this, but another group may require some help, perhaps by asking for Bidding Prayers about their own concerns or to give thanks and praise.

The prayer was ended with the Our Father; an all-Catholic Group might prefer the Hail Mary. An alternative might be Glory Be.

The CLC Introductory Leaflet was then given out and I asked them to read it. They were given sufficient time to do this. At the end, I asked if anyone had any questions about what they had read.

This gave the opportunity to say what CLC meant to me, how it was valuable in my life. I also told them briefly how CLC operated at group, national and international levels and the availability of publications, the Regional Rep., etc.



We then finished with the Closing Prayer, again by reading it line by line and the group repeating it.

### **Summary**

The Grace  
Introductions  
Quiet time  
Opening Prayer  
Scripture and Ignatian Contemplation  
Meditative silence  
Sharing / listening  
Prayer together  
Introduction to CLC  
Questions  
Closing Prayer

I hope you find this useful.

*B.A.*



