

AN EXPLANATION

What is it for?

Your SHAPE for God's Service is designed for Christians who want to grow and to serve God more fully in their everyday lives. It will help you to discover the unique *shape* of person that you have become, the gifts God has given you and how he might want to use you. It may confirm things you already know or have half expected. On the other hand, it may challenge or even change the way you see yourself.

We're not just doing this for selfish reasons, looking for self-fulfilment. This is so that God's kingdom may be built up as each person finds the ministry to which God is calling them in the Church and in the world. We want God's will to be done on earth, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer. As we find our role in this, it will enable each of us to live and serve with more joy, satisfaction and fruitfulness. This should build a healthy growing church. But we aren't just talking about *doing things in church*. It will also affect the way we engage with our family, friends, job, local community, voluntary and leisure activities



What will the sessions be like?

The group is deliberately fairly small so that we can all be involved and get to know each other. It's important that everyone is committed to **coming regularly and participating**, so we can create a friendly, relaxed atmosphere where people feel safe to share things at a personal level. However, nobody will be forced to talk about anything which they wish to keep private!

Yet if we really want to learn more about *our shape for God's service*, we'll need to be as open and honest as possible. So we'll want to be sure that nobody is going to repeat personal things about us, to anyone else outside this group. We must keep **confidentiality** about everything that other people say about themselves or about other people.

(Of course the printed handouts etc. aren't confidential and you are welcome to talk to anyone about those!) *Course Members' Notes* are available covering what's been said in each session, in case you want to look back at it later. So you needn't bother to take notes yourself, except of useful insights from other group members.

At each session the leaders will give some input on the topics and some Biblical teaching. There will be practical exercises, discussion and application to each person's life situation. We will pray and try to listen to God together.

Also, there will be about an hour's task or **personal reflection** to do at home between each session, in preparation for the next one. It's important to do this, other wise you won't be able to contribute to the discussion or exercise on it the following week. But don't spend more than an hour on it – unless you want to!



Do **pray that God will give you his discernment and wisdom** about your **SHAPE** and about how he wants you to serve him. Pray for this often, especially before you do your *personal reflections*, and before each session.

What will the course cover?

Session One will lay some foundations, helping us to clarify what we believe about ourselves; the gifts God has given us; God's special calling to each of us; and the vital importance of the role we each have to play in building God's Church and Kingdom on earth.

Sessions Two to Five will help us discern our **SHAPE** for God's service:

Spiritual gifts	(God's unique gifts to me as a member of Christ's Body)
Heart's desire	(what motivates and excites me; what I most long to do)
Abilities	(my strengths, knowledge and skills)
Personality	(my character, style, preferences, personal qualities)
Experiences	(my life experiences – both good and bad – and what have I learned and gained from them)

(However, we will start with *Experience* in Session Two because it is more obvious and easier to discuss, and we will work backwards to *Spiritual Gifts* by Session Five).

Session Six will pull it all together, enabling you to create an overall picture of your **SHAPE** for God's service and looking at some practical implications.

Individual Review

At the end, you will have the opportunity of arranging a one-to-one session with someone (probably one of the group leaders, and/or your Vicar or Minister). This will be to discuss practical ways in which your unique *shape* might enable you to serve God more fully through the Church or in your job, in the community, or through your other relationships and activities.