Facilitating Small Groups

THE HOME GROUP

THE HOME GROUP (OR HOUSE GROUP, OR CELL GROUP, OR SMALL GROUP) MEETS ON A MID-WEEK EVENING TO UNDERTAKE BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION. THESE ARE THE PEOPLE YOU WILL FIND THERE

THE KNOW-IT-ALL: ALWAYS HAS THE ANSWER. EQUIPPED WITH HEAVY DUTY STUDY BIBLE

THE APPEASER: CALMS THE WARRING FACTIONS

THE CONVERSATION MONOPOLISER: GIVES THE FIRST ANSWER AND HAS THE LAST WORD

THE LIBERAL EXTREMIST: WILL NOT TOLERATE ANYONE WITH INTOLERANT VIEWS

THE OVER-GENEROUS HOST: PLIES EVERYONE WITH COPIOUS QUANTITIES OF FOOD, COFFEE, WINE ETC

THE LEADER: INSISTS THAT THE STUDY NOTES ARE FOLLOWED RELIGIOUSLY. INSISTS ON FINISHING THE MATERIAL NO MATTER HOW LATE IT GETS
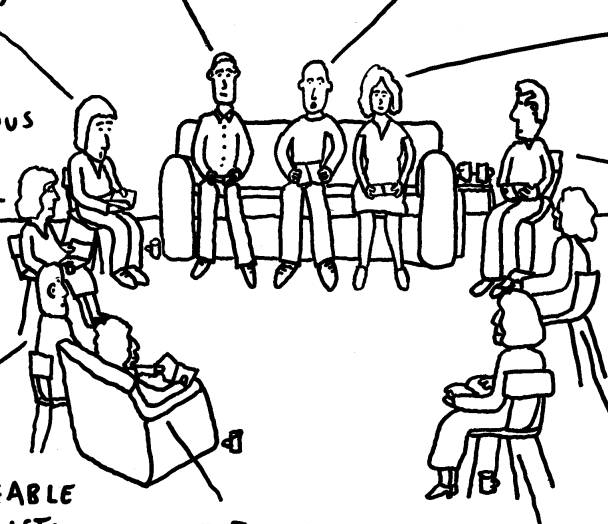
THE UNCHALLENGEABLE FUNDAMENTALIST: HOLDS EXTREME VIEWS AND BURSTS INTO TEARS IF CONFRONTED

THE JOKER: PROVIDER OF JOKES AND TRIVIAL ASIDES

THE DEVOUT: FROWNS AT JOKES AND TRIVIAL ASIDES

THE SILENT WITNESS: SAYS NOTHING FROM THE TIME THEY ARRIVE UNTIL THE TIME THEY LEAVE

A course in five sessions, compiled by Bob Hackett and Elizabeth Jordan for the Diocese of Chelmsford.

The Church of England in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

Contents

Symbols used to help you navigate your way through the material:

	Facilitator input
	Discussion
	Something for you to do!
	Indicates an activity
	Indicates working in small groups or as a whole group
	For study or further reading

Outline and aim of course:

Session topics:

Session One: Understanding groups and our own needs

Session Two: Understanding the variety of ways in which adults learn

Session Three: Jesus as the group facilitator

Session Four: Handling difficult situations

Session Five: Planning for different types of group activity.

The aim of this course is to prepare people to be facilitators of small groups. They may not be the person with the most knowledge in the group, or be the host of the group, or even the one who has decided to gather everyone together. But they will be the person who keeps the group on track, who enables people to learn from the other and who cares about the health of the group.

Small groups serve many functions. They may be evangelistic: Alpha, Emmaus or a baptism enquirer's group. They may be intended to develop discipleship: SHAPE or a Lent course, for example. They may be part of the governance of the church – the Church Council or one of its sub-groups. Or some other reason for gathering around 8-12 people together to live and work together. This course will help the facilitator of such a group to develop their skills and so contribute to the effectiveness of God's people in being a Transforming Presence.

Further resources:

○ Maggie and Michael Kindred, *Once upon a Group* Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011. This *contains many practical ideas*

○ Jenny Rogers, *Adults Learning,* OUP 2007 Superb book on helping adults to learn.

Session 1: Understanding Groups and our own needs

Purpose:
- To understand groups and the use of group behaviour.
- To discover and discuss our own roles, now and in the future, as group facilitators and group members.
- To find out about our individual learning and development requirements.

Tools used in this session: Ice Breakers, Flip chart use, Learning Log, Car Park, Sub groups, Facilitator input, Homework/Preparation

Pattern of activity:

Opening Prayer

Introduction of leaders and course, Prayer, safety and refreshment instructions (20 minutes)

Getting to know you (signature matrix) (10-15 minutes)

List types of group, church and non-church groups on a flip chart. – Bible study, planning, prayer, PCC subcommittee and so on. Participants add stickers (dots) to ones they belong to and/or have belonged to and/or will belong to. (10 minutes)

What can groups (and of what size) do that other communication means cannot? Discuss in triads. List items on flip chart. Plenary feedback. (15mins)

Introduce 'learning log' which should be completed after each session and hand out sheets (5mins)

What are your fears, anxieties and expectations? Write them on the reverse of the learning log (on a separate sheet) sheet). Begin to think about issues to raise for Session 4, 'Handling difficult situations.'

Introduce:
- 'rules:' e.g. it's OK to ask questions, share experiences, it's not OK to criticise others, break confidences …
- idea of 'car park': a sheet of flip chart paper or a notebook to record questions and topics that will be dealt with later. (5-10mins)
- group leadership roles: Introduce roles of Administrator, Instructor and Facilitator. Add 'agent provocateur'? (20mins)

Homework/Preparation: give small groups a task to identify the types of things that different roles would do in specific groups; i.e. what does Administrator, Instructor and Facilitator do in the following situations:

> The dairy group in a supermarket; an operating theatre support team; may be non-church or church groups. Refer to prior produced flip chart list (item 2 above).

Recap on evening, drawing attention to contents and to tools which have been used during this session. (10 minutes)

Introduce next session's topic by referring to the overall timetable.

Close with prayer. (5-10 minutes)

Notes to Facilitator of this session.

- ○ There has been no attempt to define a group. It is a much looser term than 'team.' Discussion of the groups people have been in might be an opportunity to find out what people mean or understand by group and 'small group.'

- ○ If you are interested, large group processes are tackled in a Grove booklet by Nigel Pimlott, 'Participative Processes.'

- ○ Timings have been suggested – but part of the role of the facilitator is to decide on priorities and timing, bearing in mind the aims of the session as a guide.

Material for Session 1

Getting to know you
See how quickly you can fill the boxes by talking to others and getting a different signature for each space.

Been to at least two countries in the Southern hemisphere	Can greet someone in at least four languages	Has a pet with no fur or hair.
Has won something in the last year	Loves marmite	Has two middle names
Has lived in more than one diocese	Knows the value of pi to at least three decimal points	Can say "llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrn drobwllllantysiliogogogoch'.

Material for Session 1 –

Three Roles of a Trainer:

As Administrator:
- o Prepared and ready for participants, stays organized in the room
- o Warmly conducts welcoming activities
- o Engages participants formally and informally
- o Provides clear and complete instructions
- o Effectively manages sub-group activities
- o Stays within time frames
- o Writes clearly and legibly
- o Reinforces learning by listing, re-capping, etc.
- o Sets up and troubleshoots equipment in advance
- o Is responsible for any finances

As Instructor
- o Understands and uses appropriate learning processes
- o Models new tools
- o Acknowledges all response
- o Provides balanced and speedy feedback, including assessment if required

As Facilitator
- o Allows all participants to contribute as desirable and appropriate
- o Helps links new skills to organizational issues and/or existing jobs.

Adapted from: www.achieveglobal.com/marketing/

Session 2: Understanding the variety of ways in which groups learn

Purpose:

- To understand how adults learn and develop.
- To be able use this knowledge to strengthen the role of facilitator in small groups.
- To identify your own preferred learning style and its consequence in facilitating small groups.

Tools used in this session: Review of past work, teaching iput, flip chart use, learning log, 'car park', individual activity, task-group activity,

Pattern of Activity:

Opening Prayer

Review of 'homework' what examples of administration, instruction and facilitation were observed?

Input: Facilitator to talk through the handout on 'Learning and unlearning - the submerged nine tenths.'

Activity: The variety of Learning Styles. Look at 'Four styles of learning together.' Each group member to complete the questionnaire and assess their learning style

Suggest learning tools that will suit each style – e.g. projects, books, role play, lists, ice breakers, meditation, small group discussion, etc. and record on flip chart.

Group work:
4-6 people plan a piece of learning that will appeal to a group of mixed learning styles, activists, theorists, pragmatists and reflectors.

Suggested tasks: Learn to sing in a round,
                         Plan a meal for ten people,
                         Prepare prayer before a PCC, lasting 5-10 minutes.
Share ideas.

Preparation for next session: Read paper on the Learning Cycle

Close with prayer.

Material for Session 2

Learning and unlearning – the submerged nine tenths

When a group activity is being planned the facilitator needs to consider both *process* and *content.* We are used to thinking about the content of communication – what is said or done, the things that can be seen or heard. In a group activity this is what is on the programme for the session, in a meeting it is what is on the agenda. Content includes other words and activities planned during the time together.

But as well as what is observable the facilitator must consider *how* the content is to be delivered. This is the *process*. And much will be communicated through these non-verbal means. When there is a noticeable difference between what is said, for example and the messages given out by the speaker it appears careless or even hypocritical.
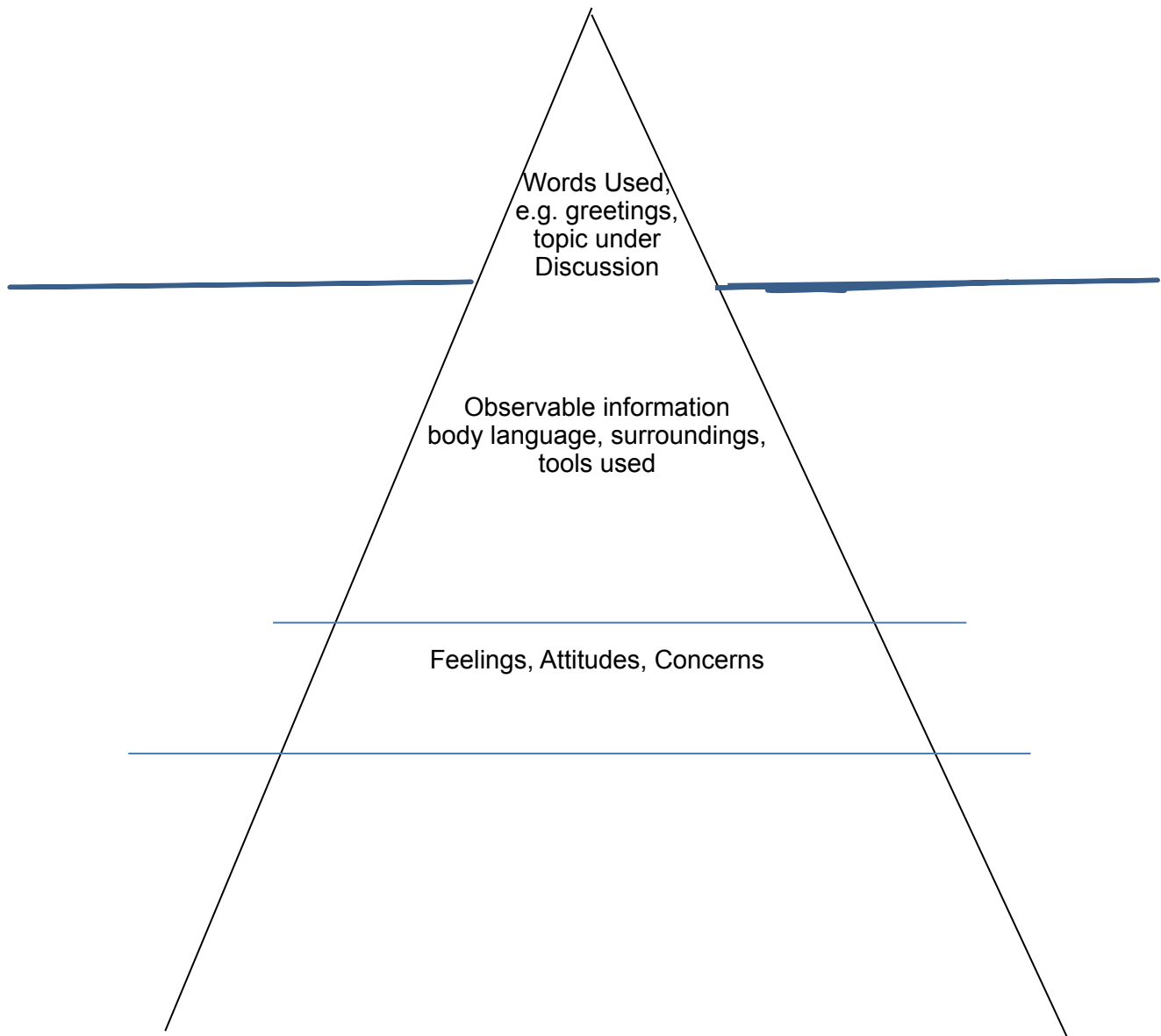
So it is worth spending time thinking about how the meeting is to be conducted. If the group leader wants to facilitate, for example, a discussion about how to be a welcoming church it is essential that the group is able to feel at home and relaxed during the session. If the session is about good listening skills, there must be space given for group members to listen to those who are presenting the ideas and to be able to listen to each other, without distraction.

Since the process level is concerned with interaction between people and patterns of life in a group it deals with what is going on under the surface of many people's consciousness. This can be divided between information which can be observed if one looks for it and information which can only be sensed intuitively and needs to be checked.

○ Observable data: e.g. gestures, tone of voice, choice of words, physical surroundings, tools used in presentation.

○ One can ask: who talks, for how long, who do people look at when they speak – indicates patterns of influence in a group.

○ The seating and refreshments – is the group treated as guests, residents or unwelcome visitors?

○ Tools used during the session; e.g. lecture, discussion, small group work – indicates whether the group members' contributions are desired.

○ Previous history of the group - indicates attitudes to the matter under discussion and willingness to change.

○ What can be sensed: Feelings, attitudes and concerns? Individuals are likely to be asking themselves such questions as

  - How do I fit into this group? What kind of behavior is acceptable here?

  - What do I want from this group?

  - Who is in control? What is expected of me?

  - Can we trust each other?

As new learning is presented many people will find that they are being challenged to un-learn some past attitudes and/or behaviours. This can be a struggle and some will resist it.

The group facilitator needs to bear the three levels of process and content in mind, remembering that the intended content of a session may only represent the tip of iceberg: observable information and feeling, attitudes and concerns forming nine-tenths of any group process.

Words Used,
e.g. greetings,
topic under
Discussion

Observable information
body language, surroundings,
tools used

Feelings, Attitudes, Concerns

Material for Session 2

Four styles of learning:

Observation of the way that people prefer to learn has shown that there are identifiable differences between individuals. Many people will find there are some ways of learning that are more relaxing, and come more easily, than others. There are several reasons not to treat this outline of learning styles in too prescriptive a way. We are all different mixtures of the four styles, which may mean that a description of any one style will not fit any individual neatly. Human beings are immensely adaptable and can work in a variety of ways, perhaps employing different styles as the subject and activity demands. Many activities require a mix of approaches. One can see how restrictive using only one style is when one remembers past language teaching methods. Many children left school with advanced certificates of competence in a foreign grammar, but with little ability to communicate in another country!

These ideas are based on the work of Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, building on the work of David Kolb. If you wish to examine these more closely you can go to the official website: www.peterhoney.com or look at Kolb: (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.*

There are other ways of looking at learning styles. For a survey based on modalities (Visual, Auditory, and Kinaesthetic) see www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/vak.html

---

The following survey, like any survey of this nature, it is not 100% accurate, but it should give you an indication of your preferred learning styles based on two continuums:

○ Processing Continuum: Our approach to a task — learn by doing or watching.

○ Perception Continuum: Our emotional response — learn by thinking or feeling.

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Answer honestly as there are no correct or incorrect answers. It is best if you do not think about each question too long, as this could lead you to the wrong conclusion.

✎ **SECTION 1 (Doing & Watching)**

Circle either "Doing" or "Watching" next to the statements below, depending upon the part of the statement you most closely relate to.

1	Doing	I often produce off-the-cuff ideas that at first might seem silly or half-baked
	Watching	I am thorough and methodical
2	Doing	I am normally the one who initiates conversations.
	Watching	I enjoy watching people.
3	Doing	I am flexible and open minded.
	Watching	I am careful and cautious.
4	Doing	I like to try new and different things without too much preparation.
	Watching	I investigate a new topic or process in depth before trying it
5	Doing	I am happy to have a go at new things.
	Watching	I draw up lists up possible courses of actions when starting a new project.
6	Doing	I like to get involved and to participate.
	Watching	I like to read and observe.
7	Doing	I am loud and outgoing.
	Watching	I am quiet and somewhat shy.
8	Doing	I make quick and bold decisions.
	Watching	I make cautious and logical decisions.
9	Doing	I speak fast, while thinking.
	Watching	I speak slowly, after thinking.

✎ SECTION 2 (Thinking & Feeling)

Circle either "Thinking" or "Feeling" next to the statement below, depending upon the part of the statement you most closely relate to.

1	Thinking	I ask probing questions when learning a new subject.
	Feeling	I am good at picking up hints and techniques from other people.
2	Thinking	I am rational and logical.
	Feeling	I am practical and down to earth.
3	Thinking	I plan events down to the last detail.
	Feeling	I like realistic, but flexible plans.
4	Thinking	I like to know the right answers before trying something new.
	Feeling	I try things out by practising to see if they work.
5	Thinking	I analyse reports to find the basic assumptions and inconsistencies.
	Feeling	I rely upon others to give me the basic gist of reports.
6	Thinking	I prefer working alone.
	Feeling	I enjoy working with others.
7	Thinking	Others would describe me as serious, reserved, and formal.
	Feeling	Others would describe me as verbal, expressive, and informal.
8	Thinking	I use facts to make decisions.
	Feeling	I use feelings to make decisions.
9	Thinking	I am difficult to get to know.
	Feeling	I am easy to get to know.

For scoring procedures and outcomes, please see next page . . .

✏️ **SCORING PROCEDURES**

Total up the two choices from Section 1 (Doing & Watching). The one that has the larger number is your task preference:			
Total number of Doing:		Total number of Watching:	
Total up the two choices from Section 2 (Thinking & Feeling). The one that has the larger number is your thought or emotional preference:			
Total number of Thinking:		Total number of Feeling:	

Each preference (high score) from the two above sections are used to determine your preferred learning style.

If you prefer Watching and Feeling then this puts you in the reflecting category:

- Prefers to learn from activities that allows watching, thinking, and to review what has happened, such as brainstorming and cooperative groups.
- Lectures may be helpful but only if they provide expert explanations and analysis.
- Likes innovative and imaginative approaches to doing things.
- Prefers to view situations from many perspectives.
- Interested in people and tends to be feeling-oriented.

If you prefer Watching and Thinking then you are in the reasoning category:

- Prefers to pull a number of different observations and thoughts into an integrated whole in a step-by-step manner (go from details to big-picture).
- Prefers to reason logically and design models, theories, and projects.
- Likes lectures, analogies, systems, and case studies.
- Talking with experts is normally not helpful.

If you prefer Doing and Thinking then you are in the analysing category:

- Prefers the practical application of ideas, solving problems, feedback, and decision-making (obvious links between the task-on-hand and a problem).
- Prefers technical problems over interpersonal issues.
- Prefers to apply new learnings to actual practice to see if they work.
- Likes laboratories, field work, observations, and coaching.
-

If you prefer Doing and Feeling then you are in the organizing category:

- Good at adapting to changing circumstances and solves problems in an intuitive, trial-and-error manner, such as discovery learning.
- Tends to be at ease with people.
- Prefers the challenges of new experiences, involvement with others, assimilation, and role-playing.
- Likes anything new, problem solving, and small group discussions.

From: www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/learn_style_survey.html

![icon] **Preparation for Session Three**

The Learning Cycle:

This understanding of the way that adults learn grew out of observation of people in groups. One cannot approach adults as though they are a blank sheet, waiting to be educated; there are always previous patterns of thought and response, based on their previous experiences. If people are to grow and learn from their experiences they have to integrate their emotional reactions and their intellectual understanding of what happened. Four stages were suggested, through which learners must progress: the experience, observation, new generalisations and testing concepts in new situations.

Theses stages can be expressed as a circle, or, better, as a spiral since the fourth stage leads directly to new experience:
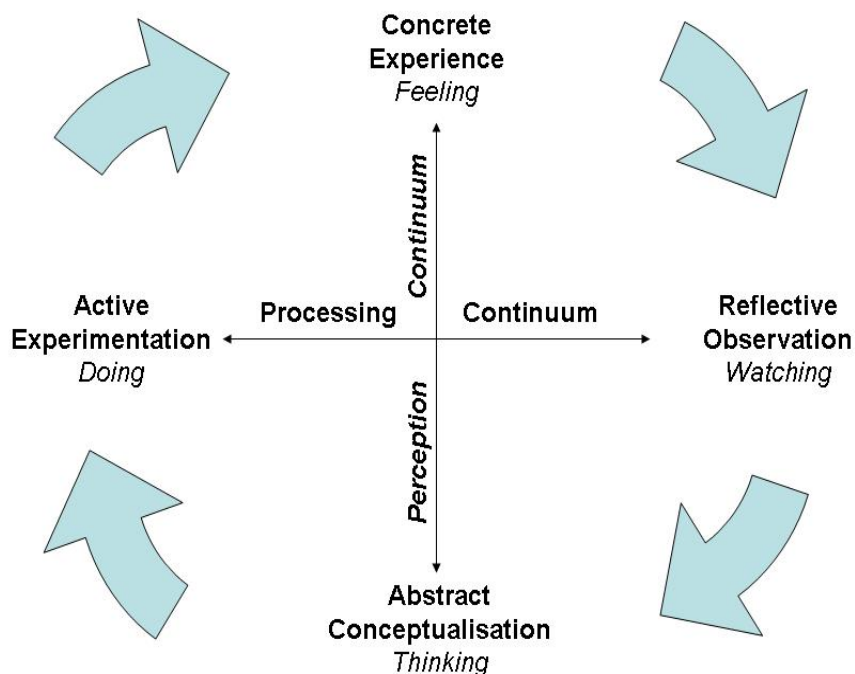
From D.A. Kolb and R. Fry
Experiential Learning

Concrete experience: The events which make up the actual experience:

Observations and reflections: Gathering information about what happened. This may be different from the memory of it! The learner may gather information about other examples of similar experiences and facts about them

Forming abstract concepts and generalisations: What new principles or ideas can be generalised from this experience and observation?

Testing Implications: Once a new idea is formed it will need to be tested before it can be confirmed, falsified or modified.

An example of this process might be the (probably fictional) story of Isaac Newton, sitting under the apple tree. After an apple fell on his head (Experience), he recalled that objects frequently fell towards the earth, rather than the opposite (Observation), and formed the theory of gravity in his mind. Doing the mathematics (Testing) demonstrated that the theory had validity, and further experiments followed. (Back to experience).

It is important that each stage is completed, for learning to take place and a real change of behaviour to happen. Since different stages are favoured by different learning styles, people will feel more at ease with some parts of the cycle than others. This is a good reason for learning to take place in groups, and for all people's contribution to be valued.

As you see, the learning style preferences are compatible with this understanding of adult learning.

The "activist" will be happy with new experiences, but may resist the movement to information gathering. This could result in a purely subjective, one-sided impression of what happened. Similarly, if general principles are not drawn from particular experiences it will be difficult, to use the experience in similar, but different circumstances. Hence the value of reflection and the need for the contribution of the "theorist." New ideas need to tested out, as in stage 4, so that they are not forgotten, and the whole experience lost. Without this stage, often prompted by "pragmatists" who want to try out the new ideas , the learning cycle will be broken. Learning is a collaborative task.

Session 3: Jesus the Group Facilitator

Purpose:

- ○ To learn from the Learning Cycle and the adult education methods of Jesus.
- ○ To apply this thinking to the task of facilitating small groups

Tools used in this session: Review of preparatory work, use of group members expertise, group discussion, Bible study, Facilitator input, Learning Log, Car Park, individual activity, task-group activity.

Pattern of Activity:

Opening Prayer

The Learning Cycle
Whole group to review the notes on the Learning Cycle and to discuss its use in adult education. (This way of thinking may be familiar to group members because of its use in many areas of education. Group members should be invited to say how it is used in their contexts).

Bible Study: Acts 10:1 to 11:18. Peter and Cornelius. This passage should be read out, preferably by at least two people taking alternate paragraphs, and group members record Peter's experience of learning through experience, reflection, theorizing and planning. (In a large group this may be better done in small groups.)

Facilitator input on Jesus' adult education methods. (see 'Jesus as an adult educator').
Home work/Preparation : In Learning Log, Identify examples of your own preferred style when helping others to learn. How can you broaden your approach to cater for a wider variety of learning styles?

Record own anxieties about group facilitation and questions for next week's session on difficult group situations.

Closing Prayer.

Material for Session Three:

Jesus as an adult educator:

Jesus was more concerned with discipling than schooling:

"In contrast to the schooling model, discipling has been shown to be an effective model for teaching attitudes, values, and behaviour as well as knowledge and beliefs in today's church. Its emphasis on commitment to learning relationships within a nurturing community and active involvement in the mission of Christ to the world, and its capacity to adapt to differences in age, culture, ability, and interests, make it a model of teaching worthy of much greater attention by the Christian faith community." Hind Report, Church of England, 2003.

What did Jesus want his followers to learn?
- ○ Changed behaviour
- ○ Trust in the Father
- ○ To understand their role in mission.

Jesus' words were not prescriptive: There were parables, stories, riddles, proverbs and allegories using language and imagery of daily life. Interpretation was open-ended and avoidance of strict moral edicts reveals something basic about Jesus' understanding of personal responsibility and motivation. Questions are directed back at the questioner, parables are without interpretation, and actions provoke questions: the listener is constantly challenged to re-examine their own assumptions.

Jesus wanted disciples to act in His name, not to pass on his learning.

The word disciple describes a relationship, rather than the method in the teaching process. Learning and discipleship usually took place within communal relationships, whether in the home and family or in new communities gathered around a teacher.

Jesus and learning styles:

Activist:	Assignments	Matthew 10:5f, Luke 10:1f, Mark 6:41,Mark 8:6, Acts 1:4
	'Tests'	Mark 8:29. John 6:67,Mark 4:35ff
Reflector:	Conversation:	Luke 21:5ff, Mark 8:16ff
	Questions:	Mark 2:25-26, Matthew 23:17, Matthew 22:45-46, Matthew 16:13, Mark 3:4, Mark 8:29, Mark 10:3
	Parables/homilies	many!
Theorist:	Reference to Jewish Scripture:	Matthew 5:21/Deuteronomy 5:17 Matthew 15:4/Deuteronomy 5:16 Matthew 11:10/Malachi 3:1 Matthew 13:14/Isaiah 6:9 Matthew 19:18f/Deuteronomy 5:16f Matthew 22:44/Psalm 110:1 Matthew 26:31/Zechariah 13:7
Pragmatist:	Problem solving	Mark 7:1-23, Mark 9:33-37
	Demonstrations	John 2:13-22, John 13:12, Luke 5:4-11, Luke 21:4-6, Mark 9:2

Session 4: Handling difficult situations

Purpose:

- ○ To learn techniques to effectively handle difficult group situations.
- ○ To practice some of these techniques.

Tools used in this session: Review of homework, whole group discussion, personal reflection, work in twos and threes, use of flip chart.

Pattern of Activity:

Opening Prayer

Whole group discussion: Record on flip chart the variety of small groups that participants may be facilitating in the future, e.g. Alpha, Emmaus or other enquirer's group, baptism or confirmation preparation, study group, prayer group, planning group, work-related group, volunteers group.

Review the car park chart/notebook. Is there anything not likely to be covered in remaining two sessions?

Review of home-work: Small group discussion about how to incorporate breadth of learning styles into the groups for which members will be responsible.

Record on flip chart any topics for anxiety that are volunteered.

Individual activity:

Complete 'What do you do?' in order to reflect on own emotions and reactions. Note that in different situations, different reactions might be appropriate.

In twos or threes: Discuss the different situations that could arise and what might be good practice in each.

Whole group facilitator led discussion: How to achieve positive outcomes with people who disrupt or do not engage in the group. Acknowledge that we each come to a group with our own needs.

Using a flip chart, record the groups' perception of the needs of the following:

The person who dominates?

The person who introduces many red herrings?

The person who is silent all the time?

The person who wants to be told he right answers?

Any other 'difficult' group member you can think of?

NB: There may be several different possible answers in each case. Very often similar looking behaviour results from a variety of different causes.

Think about how the group facilitator can listen out for signs of these needs. How can these people's needs be met in ways that minimize the disruption to the group?

Preparation for next week Read sheet on 'Stages of Group Life'

Prayer

Material for Session 4:

What do you do?

Reflect on the following situations. As group leader, what would be your most likely response? Circle your choice – there is often no 'right' answer – or add your own.

1. When there is silence in the group, I

A	allow it to continue
B	feel anxious and unsure what to do
C	move the group on
D	comment on it
E	(other)

2. When there is a heated argument in the group, I

A	encourage those involved to calm down
B	change the subject
C	keep well out of it
D	ask others for their opinions
E	(other)

3. If two people keep whispering, giggling or passing notes, I

A	tell them I find it distracting
B	ignore them
C	ask them to share their secret
D	separate them
E	(other)

4. If someone dissolves into tears, I

A	pretend not to notice
B	tell them it's OK to cry
C	ask them what's wrong
D	encourage them to leave
E	(other)

5. When someone talks too much and dominates the group, I

A	allow it to continue
B	ask them to say less, to give others a chance to speak
C	speak to them out of the group
D	don't know what to do
E	(other)

6. If someone becomes critical of my group leadership, I

A	walk out
B	listen carefully
C	get defensive
D	ignore it
E	(other)

7. If the energy level in the group seems low, I

A	ask what the problem is
B	move on to something new
C	suggest a break
D	lead some physical exercises
E	(other)

8. If someone tries to disrupt the group, I

A	confront them
B	get very angry
C	talk to them afterwards
D	don't know what to do
E	(other)

9. If someone asks a question I can't answer, I

A	say I don't know
B	make something up
C	say we'll come back to it
D	open the question to the group
E	(other)

10. If someone makes a sexist or racist remark, I

A	ignore it
B	challenge them immediately
C	encourage the group to comment
D	talk to them afterwards
E	(other)

11. If I know someone in the group has impaired hearing (or some other 'invisible' disability), I

A	don't draw attention to it
B	provide an opportunity for the person to tell the group
C	tell the group myself
D	ask everyone to share a little about themselves
E	(other)

12. If it becomes obvious that someone has not come to the group voluntarily, I

A	talk to whoever sent/dragged them
B	suggest they leave
C	point out what the group can offer
D	talk to them afterwards
E	(other)

13. When I'm feeling upset in the group, I

A	try not to show it
B	go rather quiet
C	share my feelings
D	become impatient and intolerant
E	(other)

Preparation for Session 5:

Stages of group life

1. Forming

- ○ the group meets; members are very polite and rather reserved; they feel anxious
- ○ gradually they get to know one another, wondering how they will work together and what the group will be like
- ○ there is high dependence on the leader
- ○ in order to progress to the next stage, members must be willing to risk some possible conflict.

2. Storming

- ○ conflicts emerge; relationships between members become more uncomfortable as they disagree and argue; sub-groups develop and criticise one another
- ○ there is rebellion against the leader and resistance to the task
- ○ in order to progress to the next stage, roles must be explored and established.

3. Norming

- ○ members become more open to one another; conflicts are sorted out and norms established
- ○ group identity develops and members begin to feel they belong, each having a particular role and contribution
- ○ the task is approached more positively and co-operatively
- ○ in order to progress to the next stage, members must be able to trust themselves and one another.

4. Performing

- ○ the task is now the focus: members work together enthusiastically and get results; they look for possible improvements
- ○ they feel good about themselves and trust one another; differences are acknowledged and valued; communication is good
- ○ task, group or individual problems are seen as a group responsibility, and are tackled jointly
- ○ the group can communicate and work effectively with other groups.

5. Mourning

- ○ as the task is completed the group's purpose is achieved, but there is resistance to a final parting
- ○ shared experiences are discussed, and there is both celebration of the group's life and sadness about its ending
- ○ members leave, often making arrangements to meet again
- ○ in order to complete this stage, members must accept that the group has ended and disengage themselves from it.

This life-cycle of the group seems to parallel the life-cycle of the individual, representing the five stages of childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, maturity and decline. But different groups

progress through the stages at different rates - and may get stuck at. any point, or even regress to earlier stages.

based on B.W. Tuckman's 'Developmental sequence in small groups' in Psychological Bulletin 63 (6) p.384-99 (1965)

Session 5: Planning for different types of group activity

Purpose:

- ○ To learn techniques for preparation and planning,
- ○ To consider a perspective on the life of a group,
- ○ Group sharing and mutual support for the future.

Tools used in this session: Use of planning technique and application to own circumstances, learning from experience groups, mutual prayer and support.

Pattern of Activity.

In small groups discuss how own experience of groups relates to sheet on stages of group life. Led by the facilitator, work through sheet on Principles of Planning : 'NAOMIE'.

Small groups of people who will be engaged in a similar activity: e.g. nurture/enquirer's groups, or governance groups, home groups and so on can then use NAOMIE to plan an activity, either real or imagined.

Evaluation It is worth allowing some time in this final session for participants to evaluate what they have learned. A suggested sheet is included, using the first four stages of NAOMIE.

Participants will probably need to take this home. *Completed forms can be sent to Rev Elizabeth Jordan, Guy Harlings, New St, Chelmsford. CM1 1AT ejordan@chelmsford.anglican.org*

Individuals share with whole group future commitments, whether to further learning or to facilitation of groups. Have an extended period of **prayer** for each other to close this session.

Material for Session 5:

Principles of planning

NAOMIE. - whether the group facilitator needs to create new material for study, to plan the content of individual meetings, or to consider how someone else's material will be discussed, it is useful to have an easily remembered process for planning. Without this it is all too easy to rush the planning and not consider the needs of the group and the reasons for bringing people together.

The letters NAOMIE represent the steps of a process which, in time become an automatic response to the need to plan a small group event.

NEEDS: Sometimes one is tempted to start with a ready prepared piece of work, a Bible study or Lent course, perhaps, which looks very good on the shelf of the bookshop.

What are the needs of the potential participants of the small group.
What do they, so far as you can find out, need to learn about?
Have they been asked?

People will always learn much better when they have become aware of a gap in their knowledge or skills and they want to find out how to fill it. It is a better use of time to do this than to prepare a course and then announce it, saying: "Anyone who is interested in X should come"

The needs of group members should be considered even when using material produced by other people. Much study material contains more ideas than can be tackled in the given time and it is part of the group leader's responsibility to discern, with the group, what is important for that group, at that time, to look at.

The group leader can try to be aware of his or her own needs as well. Most good group leaders enjoy the experience of facilitating a small group in its growth and development, so there is nothing wrong in finding some of your own needs satisfied by holding the group. But be aware of the temptation to make every detail of the group's content and organisation suit yourself! Leaders can only avoid this by being aware of their own needs.

Be aware, too of any other needs that are influential, e.g. the need to pay parish share, the pressure from the Bishop, the desire to complete the course in order to get on to something else! All of these will affect the group members as they meet together.

AIM: Now ask: "What is the aim, the overall purpose of the event?" Even when the event has been done many times before (the Christmas Fete, for example,) it is still important to be clear about its purpose, target audience and the desired outcome.

Aims should be simply expressed and it should be possible to assess whether or not they have been achieved. This description of valuable aims is often expressed by the mnemonic SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time limited.

OBJECTIVES: Once you have the overall aim of the event, each activity of the group can be designed to achieve that aim. These are the objectives; the ways in which the aim will be realised. The value of being clear about the aims and objectives of the group is to help you to decide what you are hoping to achieve at each session. They will enable you to assess each meeting and to make changes as you perceive the need.

METHOD: This is the practical stage, asking about the methods that you will use to achieve your aims and objectives. The methods you use will need to relate to the differing learning styles of the group members, and the resources of people and equipment that you have. The practicalities of the timetable of the event and the arrangements for accommodation and refreshment will be considered at this stage.

IMPLEMENTATION: The Group meets or the event happens! It might not all go to plan at first, but having made a plan, checked it and implemented it you can be much more confident than if no preparation had taken place.

> None of the experiences of this stage are wasted. Take note of what happens as soon as you can, to prepare for the final, important, stage.

EVALUATION: This is as much part of planning as the initial stages. The Learning Cycle shows us that learning takes place when we reflect on experiences and learn new ways of approaching situations. It is important to ask yourself whether the event achieved its aims and objectives, and whether the participants learned other things of value. Did the participants, and the leader, consider it worthwhile? Perhaps some form of evaluation, whether written or verbal, can be used with the group.

> It is valuable to discuss these things with other people as evaluation is best done with a group of people. And then begin to plan the next event!

Evaluation of Facilitating Small Groups

Needs:

Did this course meet your needs?
Was it enjoyable?
Has it equipped you for future tasks?
Any other comments or suggestions?

Evaluation of Facilitating Small Groups, continued . . .

Aim:

Was the aim of the course met?
Do you believe yourself equipped to facilitate a small group?

Learning Objectives:

How did the learning objectives contribute to the overall aim?
Were the learning objectives of each session achieved?

Methods:

Were the methods used appropriate to the aims?
Was there a broad enough mixture of methods to suit different learning styles?