

MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL
Congregational Learning Review Group
Report
January 2013

'Equipping the Saints for Ministry and Mission'

"Jesus said, 'God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age'."

St Matthew 28: 18-20, quoted from The Message Bible

1 Introduction

1.1 The Council committed to intentional review of its operations as a result of major changes in its structure in 2009/10. Built into that commitment was an undertaking to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt its operations as circumstances demanded.

1.2 The Council is aware of swift and increasing changes in both the Church and society as it seeks to engage everyone in a holistic process of learning to serve. This is a time when the structures of the Church are rapidly evolving and more opportunities are opening up for individuals and congregations to contribute to the Church's mission.

1.3 Significant changes in staffing following the resignations of Fiona Fidgin (Team Leader), Pauline Steenbergen (Leadership Development Worker) and Iain Stewart (Interfaith Development Worker) have created the opportunity to extend the original remit of the review, which was agreed by the Council in August. The Council recognised the importance of this area and the need to support the development of congregations as they attempt to carry out their role of enabling the ministry of all God's people.

1.4 This has allowed the Council to recognise the wider scale and scope of Congregational Learning beyond the training and education of Session Clerks and some others through presentations at conferences.

1.5 It has also led them to recognize the urgent necessity of supporting and developing the current network of Presbytery Adult Trainers (who will become part of the new team of Congregational Learning Facilitators once this report is adopted by the Council) in a new and more comprehensive way, enabling trainers to employ their gifts more effectively and ensuring that congregations are adequately resourced in this area of discipleship development.

1.6 The Council also recognises the need to be intentional about seizing opportunities for ecumenical formation as a way of breaking down barriers and increasing understanding across denominations. There may be possibilities for running dedicated courses ecumenically, to the mutual enrichment of all participants, whether in the local area with other congregations and denominations or at presbytery level. Such an agreement is in place in the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale.

2 Congregational Learning

2.1 The primary purpose of Congregational Learning is to serve the ministry of those who have been baptised, as they advance on their journey of discipleship, and help them to fulfil the obligations placed on them by the promises made at Baptism and Admission to the Lord's Table. These are the saints as the Apostle Paul describes them in his letters. Baptism lays obligations of service upon all, so it is vital that Congregational Learning enables people to understand the implications of the vows that have been made (Appendix 1 – Vows of Baptism and Confirmation).

2.2 It is recognised that there would be advantages in having an arrangement that facilitates transfer from one form of Christian service to another, but this is not the primary aim of what may be called Continuing Christian Development, which is about growing in discipleship and responding to God's call intentionally and faithfully.

2.3 The Review recognises the need to create appropriate systems for accurate record keeping so that all who have undertaken courses as part of their experience of Continuing Christian Development

may subsequently be awarded credit if undertaking vocational training, for example, should they feel called to do so.

2.4 Looking to the future, the Council accepts that its total budget is likely to be greatly constrained, with the result that it will not be possible to support Congregational Learning at anything like the level of funding provided by the Board of Parish Education prior to the reorganisation of 2005.

2.5 Nevertheless, Congregational Learning must endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of the saints on their journey of discipleship as well as engaging their skills in the particular ministry, mission or service to which they believe themselves to be called. This means that priorities have to be agreed and work regularly reviewed and evaluated so that what is offered by Congregational Learning continues to match the needs and aspirations of the Church.

3 Process

3.1 The Congregational Learning Review Group determined to undertake its work with full and wide ranging consultation. This included the following:

- Each staff member's insights and perspectives were sought
- Each member of the Review Group contributed thoughts, perspectives, experiences and reflections
- Specific invitations were given to every Council and Committee of the Church so that the Review Group might benefit from their experience and their interest in congregations learning
- Discussion with Presbytery Adult Trainers took place to gain their views on an area that has relied on their work for a number of years
- Discussion with Place for Hope Mediators/Facilitators
- Discussion with representatives at the National Youth Consultations.

4 Biblical Basis

4.1 The conclusions of the review are based on a series of convictions regarding the biblical and theological background of congregational learning as the Review Group understands that concept. The particular references include the following:

- The Judaeo-Christian tradition of learning in the synagogue through conversation and on-going nurture
- Jesus and the disciples
- Jesus taught by using question and answer, 'on the way', through personal reflection, debate, observation and discussion, building on the experience of and exploration by the disciples and offering new insights of what it meant to be his disciples
- Jesus offered very few neat answers: the point appears to have been the lifelong learning process that they embarked upon with him
- The Book of Acts shows the disciples and apostles learning together and changing their minds through interaction, experience, argument and debate.
- The disciples learned after the Ascension of Jesus what becoming apostles meant through reflection on their experience
- Paul in his letters shows how, as the church developed and learned over the years, new issues stretched their understanding

4.2 Early in their work the Review Group reflected on several passages of Scripture, which are quoted below from *The Message* translation, which offers familiar passages in an unfamiliar way and is in keeping with the metrical psalms and Scottish paraphrases. These are:

Ephesians 4.1-7 and 11-16

In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay

together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness. But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ. No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

Colossians 2.2-7

I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery! I'm telling you this because I don't want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries, or the Secret'. I'm a long way off, true, and you may never lay eyes on me, but believe me, I'm on your side, right beside you. I am delighted to hear of the careful and orderly ways you conduct your affairs, and impressed with the solid substance of your faith in Christ. My counsel for you is simple and straightforward: Just go ahead with what you've been given. You received Christ Jesus, the Master; now live him. You're deeply rooted in him. You're well constructed upon him. You know your way around the faith. Now do what you've been taught. School's out; quit studying the subject and start living it! And let your living spill over into thanksgiving.

Colossians 3.12-17

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offence. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

I Peter 3.15

Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy

5 The Purpose and Nature of Congregational Learning

5.1 While acknowledging that all who are associated with the family of the Church in congregations are welcome participants in its life, it is the understanding of the Review Group that there are particular obligations and expectations conferred on individuals through baptism. The processes of learning are not confined to these alone, however, and should be flexible enough for anyone who comes to Church to feel welcome and have the opportunity to enter into an exploration of faith and its implications.

5.2 Congregational Learning aims to equip the saints (the membership) of the Church so that they can realize their potential and fulfill their calling as disciples. This will mean providing a range of services, support mechanisms and opportunities for the members of the Church.

5.3 Specifically Congregational Learning will undertake to provide signposts to courses of education, training and vocational development, as well as offering some specific training and education

opportunities for congregations, including Session Clerks, those providing pastoral care and those responsible for leading worship.

5.4 While its main focus will be on the ministry of the baptised, as affirmed by the Church of Scotland's agreement to support the World Council of Churches document *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), this will not preclude it from encouraging the exploration of gifts or affirming the call to other forms of ministry, whether the Diaconate, Readership, Ordained Local Ministry or Ministry of Word and Sacrament, and it may indeed contribute to the overall education of the latter. But this will not be the main focus or primary function of what Congregational Learning, on behalf of the Mission and Discipleship Council, will undertake in fulfillment of its remit from the General Assembly.

6 Structural Principles

6.1 Creating a structure to achieve the purposes of Congregational Learning requires the following:

- The appointment of a Team Leader with the gifts and skills to enable and develop this area of the Church's work
- Oversight by the Congregational Learning Council Group to ensure that what is on offer reflects the real needs and aspirations of the Church in this area
- Regular reporting to the General Assembly on what has been offered and what is planned
- Regular evaluation of courses and events with adaptation in the light of feedback
- Commitment by the Council to a process of regular review of its work in this area (as in all others).

7 Particular issues for consideration

7.1 There are many courses from a variety of sources on offer throughout the world. Many within the Church will require 'signposts' to direct them to the most appropriate provider of information or learning experience. This will involve the critical review of the range of learning resources in a particular area.

7.2 Internet access offers the Church enormous opportunities to participate in the design and delivery of learning resources that promote the development of discipleship and to encourage its members to engage with these. At the same time the Church and, in particular, the Mission and Discipleship Council, must be discerning about how fast-moving technological developments may be used effectively and appropriately, paying due regard to the warnings of the Safeguarding Office about internet safety. The extension of broadband across the country may also assist the Church in its efforts to maintain and meet its commitment to the Third Declaratory Article - the provision of the ordinances of religion in all geographic areas of Scotland.

7.3 Some courses may be particularly relevant to the membership of the Church of Scotland. Specific examples would include courses on the eldership, worship leadership in the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition, pastoral care in the Parish System, and the sustaining of young people in their discipleship journey within the community of the Church of Scotland. Some dedicated budget for resources and staff time must be committed to these areas.

7.4 In recognition of the gifts of all God's people (and of the pressure on Church budgets), the delivery of courses and support for education and vocational development may require the Council to enlist the help of a wide spectrum of volunteer enablers and facilitators. These volunteers will provide face to face interaction with learners, which builds confidence as well as understanding and knowledge, supplementing material delivered through electronic means. While there are great opportunities in technology, there are also substantial technical impediments to its good use for the purposes of learning,

7.5 The Review Group reaffirms the importance of the Council engaging with the Guardian Group of the resources created by the former Scottish Churches' Open College and the United Reformed Church (URC) regarding the use of materials that have been produced and are now in use by the URC. The Group believes, however, that no commitment should be entered into by the Council to participate in any development of this programme without carefully considering its budgetary implications as well as its likely contribution to the primary purpose of Congregational Learning.

7.6 The Review Group believes that the primary goal of Congregational Learning, as far as the Council is concerned, is to provide opportunities for Continuing Christian Development. These will be age appropriate in a person in the early years of discipleship. Early years of discipleship may be a person's age if he or she was baptised as an infant, but should someone have come to faith later in life, provision should be relevant to that person's life experience and journey of discipleship. Continuing Christian Development should offer interesting and appropriate opportunities which relate faith and life on the one hand and growth in grace on the other. This will be the aim of the Congregational Learning team, who will help provide such opportunities, information and resources, enabling the saints to explore not only *who* they believe but *what* they believe, as they reflect on what it means to live out their Christian belief in the context of the contemporary world.

7.7 Congregational Learning is a consequence of the Sacrament of Baptism. It has, therefore, a central role in encouraging and sustaining the developing gifts and skills of the baptised, which is part of the call to ministry for congregations and individual members alike.

7.8 It also contributes to the crucial process whereby individual members are encouraged and sustained in their own exploration of their journey of faith.

7.9 It is suggested that the Council might go ahead with the creation of new and essential Congregational Learning materials where there are no other appropriate courses that meet the distinctive needs of the Church of Scotland. An example of what might be included is outlined at Appendix 4.

8 Staffing

8.1. The Review Group acknowledges the importance of the recently appointed Children's and Young People's Development Worker and her contribution to the work of the team. Her job description demonstrates that her area of responsibility is congruent with the principles outlined in this report. Support for the learning and growth of young people in discipleship is seen as a critical part of the service that Congregational Learning provides to the Church as a whole

8.2 Also critical to any provision of Congregational Learning is the capacity to respond creatively to particular requests for material. In addition to the appointment of a Team Leader in Congregational Learning, it is recommended that another member of staff be appointed who would be at the heart of the delivery of this aspect of the Council's work. It is suggested that the title of this post is 'Learning Development Worker'.

8.3 The duties of this post would include the promotion, organisation and facilitation of a network of Congregational Learning Facilitators. The person appointed would work collaboratively with the Team Leader to provide the facilitators with support, education and development, and recruit people to design courses for the particular needs of congregations within the Church of Scotland. There is an expectation that, on occasion, he or she would also deliver materials.

8.4 The scope and importance of this post requires the appointment of a full time member of staff. The Review Group concluded that, while a regular turnover of personnel might be helpful, a four year renewable position might be the best way forward.

8.5 The Review Group recognises that Congregational Learning requires both educational and theological abilities, so attention should be paid to this when specifying the 'skills and qualities' in the job descriptions for these appointments.

8.6 As indicated in 8.2, the Team Leader will need to be assisted by a Learning Development Worker who will recruit writers to develop materials for the Church and arrange for their revision. This process should collaborative and clearly related to the Council's priorities.

8.7 The Learning Development Worker will also engage with the Councils of the Church to ensure that the experience, knowledge and particular insights of these may be appropriately engaged with or used to resource congregations and, just as importantly, bring the questions from congregations to the attention of Councils and Committees. By this means, the whole Church will become more responsible and responsive in clarifying and understanding the implications of the Gospel.

8.8 Implementing this model of Congregational Learning will require additional administrative support from someone with in the online delivery of material. This has been included in the current budget of Congregational Learning and has a strategic place in the diagram of operations.

8.8 The Mission and Discipleship Council, through the Congregation Learning Group, will offer support, guidance and educational opportunities to Presbyteries as they seek to recruit and sustain volunteers to support the Continuing Christian Development of the saints. This will include the drawing up of appropriate job descriptions and involvement in the recruitment process. It will also mean proving training and ongoing development opportunities for such volunteer facilitators, and the intentional sharing of such resources across Scotland where a Presbytery has no such resource. These support mechanisms will have to be incorporated into the Congregational Learning budget.

9 Support of Congregational Learning Facilitators

9.1 The Review Group is convinced that Presbyteries must be encouraged to take their role seriously in relation to both the recruitment and appointment of Congregational Learning Facilitators. It was agreed that the network needs to be developed intentionally and Presbyteries encouraged to appoint appropriate people to this role, so that the educational requirements of congregations might be appropriately met. Presbyteries ought also to be encouraged to work collaboratively with those nearby to ensure that a thorough and comprehensive network of facilitators is in place to support and develop this work efficiently and effectively.

9.2 It was recognised that the title 'Congregational Learning Facilitator' would be much more appropriate than any other suggested and that the introduction of any notion of 'mission and discipleship' in their title might distance them from Congregational Learning and its appeal. It is important that they are recognised as people who are there to serve congregations and engage them in various forms of education, with a clear focus on congregations, nurture, development and the growth of the individual.

9.3 The Review Group believes that the Council has to consider Congregational Learning as a vital part of the regeneration of the Church and its equipping for the challenge of mission. This is a biblical injunction and one that the Council must consider seriously.

9.4 The outcomes of the Eldership Working Group may increase the demand for the education of Elders about their role, function and exercise of gifts, something that needs to be anticipated in any proposals offered by the Review Group. Flexibility in the way support and development are provided is crucial to any structure, and it is hoped that the model illustrated by the diagram in appendix 5 will be effective in this regard.

9.5 It was also noted that the children's and youth work might benefit from partnership with other groups (for example, Scripture Union) and that this should be referred to the Congregational Learning Council Group for attention.

9.6 Other Councils and Committees of the Church may be invited to provide individuals with specific skills in the particular areas of their work to contribute to the proposed national network of Congregational Learning Facilitators. These would be invited to meetings of the facilitators to ensure that all are aware of the skills and information that each contributes to Congregational Learning.

9.7 It is suggested that the Ministries Council might consider inviting some of its ministry development staff to participate in the network of Congregational Learning Facilitators as part of their own learning and as a contribution to the wider Church. This would enable them to increase their knowledge by tapping into the experience of other congregations, while contributing to the development of further understanding amongst these congregations of the challenges of their own specialist areas of work.

10 Budget

10.1 There will be budget implications for the Council. The Review Group received an indication that an outline application for consideration of an increase in the Council's budget to meet this requirement had been submitted. It is hoped that this will be considered favourably by the Council of Assembly Finance Group and incorporated into the Council's budget from 2014 onwards.

10.2 The Council would be responsible for the travel costs of the Congregational Learning Facilitators to conferences and for the provision of conference facilities. The Review Group understands that Presbyteries will defray the travel costs of the Congregational Learning Facilitators when they are engaged on a particular project.

10.3 The Review Group believes the other areas of budgetary concern will be those arising from the importance of supporting personal and congregational growth and the recognition of the pressure on full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The support and development of effective Congregational Learning will lead, naturally and rightly, to further opportunities for members of the Church to participate more fully in the ministry of all God's people.

11 Recommendations to the Council

11.1 Endorse the understanding expressed in the report of the primary function of Congregational Learning and the way in which it is proposed that the Council should support this in future.

11.2 Instruct the Congregational Learning Council Group to find means of 'signposting' courses for congregations, promoting ecumenical co-operation in the provision of courses, and designing particular resources appropriate to the understanding of congregations within the Church of Scotland.

11.3 Instruct the Executive to pursue the staff appointments necessary to enable the structure and process of Congregational Learning outlined in the report to become a reality.

11.4 Instruct the Finance Group of the Council to pursue an increase in the overall budget of the Council to enable the Council to support the ongoing development of an effective network of Congregational Learning Facilitators.

11.5 Instruct the Finance Group of the Council to bring proposals for the adjustment of the budget already agreed for 2013 to enable this model of Congregational Learning to be introduced as quickly as possible.

11.6 Invite the Congregational Learning Council Group to engage with its staff members in reflection and agree upon the priorities necessary for the development of courses and the network of Congregational Learning Facilitators.

11.7 Instruct the Congregational Learning Council Group, with the staff in this area, to produce guidance and support materials for Presbyteries to encourage the recruitment of Congregational Learning Facilitators.

11.8 Extend invitations from the Congregational Learning Council Group to other Councils to integrate and involve them in the extension and development of the network of Congregational Learning Facilitators.

11.9 Encourage Presbyteries to appoint a number of Congregational Learning Facilitators, and where possible, form teams with other Presbyteries to meet the demands of supporting the work of Mission and Discipleship, and the learning and development that is at the heart of the Christian life.

11.10 The Executive may have to act once the Council of Assembly's decision regarding the location of the Inter-faith Officer post has been intimated and make appropriate arrangements in the light of that decision.

11.11 Thank and discharge the Congregational Learning Review Group.

Appendix 1**Vows of Baptism and Confirmation (Common Order 1994)****Parents/sponsors Confession**

In presenting this child for baptism, desiring that *she* may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body, the Church, do you receive the teaching of the Christian faith which we confess in the Apostles' Creed?

Parents' Promise Infant Baptism

This child belongs to God in Christ. From this day *she* will be at home in the Christian community, and there will always be a place for *her*. Tell *her* of *her* baptism, and unfold to *her* the treasure *she* has been given today, so that *she* may know *she* is baptised, and, as *she* grows, make *her* own response in faith and love, and come in due time to share in the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to teach this child the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer and example to bring *her* up in the life and worship of the Church?

Adult Baptism

In seeking baptism, do you reject sin and confess your need of God's forgiving grace; and, believing the Christian faith, do you pledge yourself to glorify God and to love your neighbour?

Admission to Lord's Table

Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to serve the Lord and to continue in the fellowship of the Church all the days of your life?

Believing in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and confessing Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, do you promise to join regularly with your fellow Christians in worship on the Lord's day?

Do you promise to be faithful in reading the Bible, and in prayer?

Do you promise to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents, and money for the Church's work in the world?

Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to profess publicly your loyalty to Jesus Christ,

Appendix 2**Membership of the Congregational Learning Review Group**

- Very Rev John Christie (Convener)
- Mr John Hawthorn
- Rev Jamie Milliken
- Mrs Lynne McEwen
- Mr Darren Philip
- Ms Rona Lannigan

In Attendance:

- Rev Nigel Robb (Acting Council Secretary/Acting Team Leader: Congregational Learning)
- Rev Alastair Cherry (Acting Team Leader: Faith Expression)
- Mrs Eva Elder (Acting Co-ordinator, Congregational Learning/Administration Manager)

MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP COUNCIL

Short Life Review Group on the operation of Congregational Learning In the life of the Council Remit

Purpose

To undertake a thorough review of the place and purpose of congregational learning in the life of the Church and, in particular, how the Mission and Discipleship Council may develop and support and encourage the education, training and exploration discovery of the ministry of the baptised.

Process

This will include:

- An evaluation of the current programmes, efforts and initiatives taken by the Council in this area, and to make recommendations at an early stage about where some of the work may require to be transferred.
- A series of consultations with other groups, individuals, and Councils including the Guild and the Ministries Council
- Reflection on the development of similar areas in other denominations in support of the ministry of the baptised.
- Consultation with the staff of the Council and Council members.

Outcome of the Review

- A clear statement of the theological basis of the Council's work in Congregational Learning.
- The principles of education and growth in knowledge which will guide the Council in provision of its services in this area
- Recommendations regarding the particular forms of the Council's work in this area
- Clear indications of the staffing and particular skills and gifts required of those involved in the undertaking of the work of the Council in Congregational Learning.
- Clear encouragement and specific indications of the type of innovation and development of the use of modern technology in the delivery of the courses and services supplied by the Council to congregations
- Indicative budgetary requirements to support Congregational Learning in the Council
- A process of review and evaluation of the work in this area to be instituted in the third three year of operation of the new model to allow it to grow and adapt in accordance with Gospel principles of change and growth and the future theological insights which may emerge.
- Putting in place a methodology for reviewing areas of work in order that they may evolve or be replaced to meet the needs of the Church.

Review Group

Very Rev John Christie (Convener of the Group), Mr Darren Philip, Mrs Lynne McEwen, Mr John Hawthorn, Rev Jamie Milliken, Mrs Rona Lannigan to be invited, Mrs Lynne McEwen, Mrs Eva Elder (Secretary to the Group)

Time Scale

While some recommendations will be brought to the Council in the autumn for immediate action, it is expected that the Review Group will report regularly to the Executive and the Council and bring its full proposals for Council approval in January 2013, and for implementation by the General Assembly of 2013.

Resourcing Discipleship - A sample one year course designed to enable members to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ

This is an example of what a course may look like. This course consists of six modules completed over a one year period designed to enable participants to grow in discipleship.

It is an entry level course supported by internet based resources (could also be produced on DVD), facilitated group meetings and local congregational support group.

The internet resource would consist of web pages for each subject area with pages containing both text and video. The text would introduce the subject and the video participants. The video participants would include specialists from different perspectives on the subject, clergy and church goers (ordinary theologians). The different voices are not to fuel controversy and disagreement, but to aid the participant to listen to others, and from that form their own considered opinion. It is important to include ordinary theologians as that encourages participants to see others like themselves engaging with the process.

The internet resource would have a taster session available to all but to access the course materials would require a user password. This allows Mission and Discipleship to know who is participating, ensure that materials are used correctly and provide support where appropriate.

Each of the six modules is six weeks long. The course can be completed in a year allowing for 36 weeks of participation and 16 weeks off during summer (10), Christmas (3), Easter (2) and October (1).

Each of the subjects to be considered is central to what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in the Church of Scotland and the course is designed to increase commitment in each area.

Subject areas:

Relationships
Prayer
The Bible
The Church of Scotland
Worship
Serving

The modules are intentionally placed in this order to enable natural growth and progression from the beginning of being in relationship with God and others to honing the marks of being a disciple in the community of faith and finally the outpouring of that discipleship in works of service.

Participants would be encouraged to keep a journal throughout the experience. It is not essential to have the whole course in place before the first module. Feedback from participants will influence future modules and the refining of existing ones.

Each module would begin with a regional gathering of participants. I have given examples of possible content for illustration purposes only:

Module 1 – relationships

Regional gathering to introduce participants, facilitator and material
God's relationship with humankind – broken, healed and healing
Self-reflection - the participants story (reflection of life journey leading to this point)
Listening to others stories (each participant shares electronically with others on their regional group what they want of their own story and reflects on their own story in the light of others)
Healing relationships and forgiving
Reflecting on relationships with people outside of the church and our Christian witness
Forming a congregational support group to travel with the participant through the rest of the course

Module 2 – prayer

Regional gathering to review the previous module and introduce new material

Why pray?

Practising the presence of God

Pathways into prayer

How to pray

Commitment to daily prayer

Module 3- the Bible

Regional gathering to review the previous module and introduce new material

Introduction to daily Bible reading notes or similar reading scheme

Commitment to daily Bible reading

Ways to read the Bible

Introduction to the Old Testament

Introduction to the New Testament

Focus on a Gospel

Module 4 – The Church of Scotland

Regional gathering to review the previous module and introduce new material

The early story of the Church of Scotland

Practice and Procedure today

Challenges to our future

Investing in today and tomorrow

Module 5 - worship

Regional gathering to review the previous module and introduce new material

Who is worship for?

What is going on in worship?

Commitment to regular worship

During this six week period the group would attend each other's churches for Sunday worship and thereafter reflect on the experience. This would also be an opportunity for course members to meet other support groups and encourage sharing stories and developing relationships across congregations

Module 6 – Service

Regional gathering to review the previous module and introduce new material

Six week period to devote time (spend in study in the previous modules) to acts of Christian service and reflect on this service

Commitment to continued Christian service

Evaluation and follow on

The modules would finish with another regional gathering where course participation certificates would be awarded and there would be an opportunity for reflection and feedback on the process.

The closing gathering would also provide the opportunity for signposting to further distance learning opportunities, areas of service, Enquirers Conferences etc.

Resources

This course is not expensive to resource or run. The equipment and software required are easily accessible, relatively cheap and simple to use.

The resources required for this course are as follows:

- Camcorder with clip or table mounted microphone
- Computer with video editing software installed
- Website to upload to and the ability to burn DVDs

Staff commitment:

- Working alongside others the co-ordinator will identify suitable participants, prepare text and questions to put to participants, ask the questions, shoot the video footage, edit the footage, upload the material to the web.

- Regional facilitators

Venues:

- As there are only seven, one day regional gatherings these could be held in local church halls or facilitators homes as appropriate.

**Church of Scotland
Mission and Discipleship Council
Congregational Learning Review**

Proposed structure

Serving the membership of the Church in collaboration with

