

Transforming Worship

A Simple Guide to Planning and Leading Worship

Facilitating a small group

This material has been designed primarily for use in a small group. A group could belong to one church or could come from different churches within a benefice or even a deanery. There may be merit in encouraging a more diverse group to do the course together, if only to help people recognize that they are not alone in facing the challenges of leading rural worship.

A small group will benefit from having an effective leader who can keep discussions on track and ensure that everyone has the chance to speak. A group could be facilitated by a vicar or reader. However, the vicar may not be the best person to lead the group, because this may inhibit discussion. As this course is designed for lay people, a trusted lay leader might be a better choice. Ideally, the leader needs to be a good facilitator and enabler of others.

“We tend to think of clergy as ‘experts’.”
“Sometimes clergy are intimidating and undermine lay people.”

Participants from Newcastle Diocese

Lay people sometimes talk about ‘helping the clergy’, but this should really be the other way round. Clergy exist to help the church to be the church.

Before the group meets

Email everyone the Slide Handout and the Questions for Reflection before the session, so they can print them and then write their own notes as they watch the video. The additional handouts can be sent out afterwards to promote further reflection.

The video can be watched together in person or together on Zoom. The material has been carefully designed in short sections with time to pause the video for reflection and discussion at the end of each section, using the questions provided as a guide.

Although the material is designed for use in a small group of peers, it is also possible to use it on your own as an individual.

“The material works well for an individual. It was really good to be able to pause when I liked, replay any section that I didn’t either understand first time or just wanted to hear again.”

Participant from Peterborough Diocese

Meeting face to face

Choose a venue which is comfortable and conducive with a large television or projector and screen. You will need a laptop and the appropriate connecting wires to play the videos. Make sure everyone can see and hear well before you begin.

Meeting online

This can be more realistic and pastorally sensitive in a wide flung rural benefice, especially in the heart of winter. It can also make the training accessible to more people. Indeed, some people may find it easier to focus without others in the actual room.

“I found it valuable to take time out. The Zoom aspect was helpful. It made training more accessible, in the familiar surroundings of my own home.”

Participant from Newcastle Diocese

The video can be played using the Share Screen option on Zoom. It is helpful for all participants to mute while the video is playing to avoid any distracting background noise. They can unmute when they come to the discussion and questions for reflection.

Give everyone time to reflect on the questions before pausing the video and moving into the discussion.

“It’s good that this can be used in person or online. People don’t seem to want to go out to meetings any more. Although, in truth, if several can be together in one room, the discussion might be more fulfilling.”

Participant from Exeter Diocese

Facilitating the sessions

Begin and end the session with prayer. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the video presentation, this is always helpful. It encourages everyone to be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and to focus on the task of learning together.

Session 1 gives an overview to get people thinking more broadly about worship.

Session 2 is meaty with a lot of material and detail within it. This is about planning and content. Don’t be afraid to take this session in two halves spread over two meetings, if you think this will be a better approach for your group.

Session 3 tackles the practicalities of leading up front, flagging up some of the skills needed and some of the pitfalls. It will be helpful to refer back to this session when reviewing services.