

Diocese of  St Albans

Local Ministry Scheme

**GROWING TOGETHER  
IN CHRIST**



An introduction from the  
diocesan local ministry officer  
to this one year Course

*A Vision for Action Resource*



### **The Vision for Action Prayer**

Almighty God and heavenly Father,  
Open our eyes to see you at work in our world:  
Grant us wisdom in using our gifts,  
Grace to enliven our churches,  
And courage to transform our communities.  
By your Holy Spirit,  
Equip us for the challenge ahead,  
Excite us to follow your vision and  
Empower us in witness and service.  
To you be the glory  
Through Jesus Christ our Saviour  
And mighty Redeemer. Amen

### **Preface**

This booklet is designed to be simply  
an introduction to the  
*Growing Together in Christ Course*.

There is a companion to this publication.  
Called  
“A Manual for Adult Christian Learning”  
it contains all the information required  
by those who are considering  
organizing or hosting the Course.

**for further information  
about anything in this booklet  
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## Introduction

Adult Christians today are very keen to learn more about the faith - hence the increasing popularity of nationally known courses like Alpha and Emmaus. Courses in Lent, Advent and during other times of the year are the norm in many parishes. A number are ecumenical.

*Learning Together* at Welwyn Garden City & Hatfield, BELIEF in Bedford and the *Christian Study Centre* at St Albans are established places of learning in the diocese. Life-long learning is now part of our society's vocabulary and the Bishop of St Albans hopes that all parishes will become 'places of learning *and* loving'.

In March 2000 the Government produced a white paper, *Lifelong Learning Partnerships*, in which David Blunkett wrote:

"Learning helps make ours a civilized society; it develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community."

All this was the seed-bed for the *Growing Together in Christ* Course which has been developed as part of the Local Ministry Scheme adopted by our Diocese in 1999. The Course has been well received and, using the responses in 200 evaluation forms, it was revised in September 2003.

Since then, work has been done nationally on learning and training—for clergy, Readers and members of congregations. The latter is now often called Education for Discipleship and is clearly concerned with helping all members of Christ's Body to grow in faith and to make connections between that faith and their daily lives.

This leaflet is produced to answer some of the questions most frequently asked and to help those parishes or groups considering running the *Growing Together in Christ* Course.

*Robin Brown, Local Ministry Officer  
May 2005*

### 7. How much will it cost?

The Course is subsidized through a grant from the diocese via the Local Ministry Officer. Those who are hosting the Course, and organizing it, can apply for this grant. Sometimes there is a small charge, about £10 per participant per term. Sometimes there is no cost to the individual. It is hoped that no-one will be put off the Course because of a financial concern.

### 8. I am interested in hosting and helping to organize the Course locally. How do I go about it?

Ring the Local Ministry Officer (see page 7) who will be delighted to meet you - typically over a pub lunch on the house! - and discuss it with you. You may also want to talk to others who have already organized and/or hosted the Course. A grant of up to £500 is available.

You will need a suitable venue. It is also a good idea to have help organizing those who will assist with the delivery of learning, arranging publicity, etc. Consider working with someone from a nearby parish who may be interested or someone from another denomination.

Experience shows you really need at least 10 participants for the Course to be viable. More than 30 is difficult to manage.

### 9. I am interested in being a participant. What do I do next?

You can ring the Ministry Development Department at Diocesan Office (see page 7) to find out if the Course is running near you.

If not, you could speak to your parish priest and see if she or he would be interested in helping to host and organize the Course for you and other members of the Church in your area.

## **1. What is Growing Together in Christ?**

It is a modular Course and is designed to: help adult Christians grow in their faith; help enquirers understand more of what it means to be a Christian; provide opportunities to link faith and daily living; be a foundation for those called to serve in a Local Ministry Team. The Course is either 18 or 24 sessions in length depending on which option is chosen.

## **2. Who can attend?**

The Course should be available to any adult living in the diocese. It can be used by ecumenical groups and enquirers. Experience shows that it works best if it is organized by two or more parishes or churches in co-operation, although if there were sufficient numbers to make it viable there is no reason why a single church should not run it.

## **3. What is the time commitment?**

The Course is modular over three terms of six or eight sessions, each lasting up to two hours. There is a half-day or day long Workshop each term and participants will also produce one assignment each term. However, participants can dip into the Course as much, or as little as they wish. Those who complete the whole Course will receive a Certificate signed by the Bishop. Those going on to do Reader Ministry Training will also gain credits for successfully completing the Course.

## **4. What subjects are covered?**

A Manual for Adult Christian Learning has been produced and it contains the aims of all the sessions which those who deliver the learning are expected to meet. The opening four sessions cover areas which affect most of us directly: Baptism; Marriage; Work and unemployment; Sex, God and the Bible. The revised edition contains alternative sessions and local churches are encouraged to adjust the sessions in order to make the Course more appropriate to their needs. (When this happens, please consult me first.)

There is a session on the Old Testament and others on the Gospels.

Further sessions include Paul's Letters, the Early Church, Jesus: Son of God, The Trinity. There are others on the Church today, including ecumenical and inter-faith relations. The last four subjects are about God's creation, suffering and death, worship and finally the Eucharist.

The Day Workshops cover complementary subjects: studying the Bible; Prayer and Spirituality and *either* 'a local saint' *or* an ethics related subject. Again, flexibility is encouraged. The revised Manual includes the option of having only Half-Day Workshops.

## **5. What does an Assignment involve?**

There is a choice of assignments and ways in which the assignments can be achieved. (A separate booklet gives full details).

Each assignment is linked with the subjects undertaken in the previous term and participants are asked to complete just three assignments during the year.

One subject after the first term is: "What Jesus says that helps me." Another after term two is: "What difference does prayer make?" One of those to be completed before the end of the third term is: "The place of the Church in the local community." There are five or six subjects to choose from in each term.

The method could be an essay of about 1,000 words; a presentation; a question and answer session; or a display.

## **6. Will I be able to do it?**

*Growing Together in Christ* is within the reach of most adults. It is purposely not academic and there are no examinations to sit. Several participants said they have not written an essay for several years but all have enjoyed the experience, found it challenging and their faith has grown as a result. To date about 500 people have taken part in the Course and as a result some have gone on to further studies.