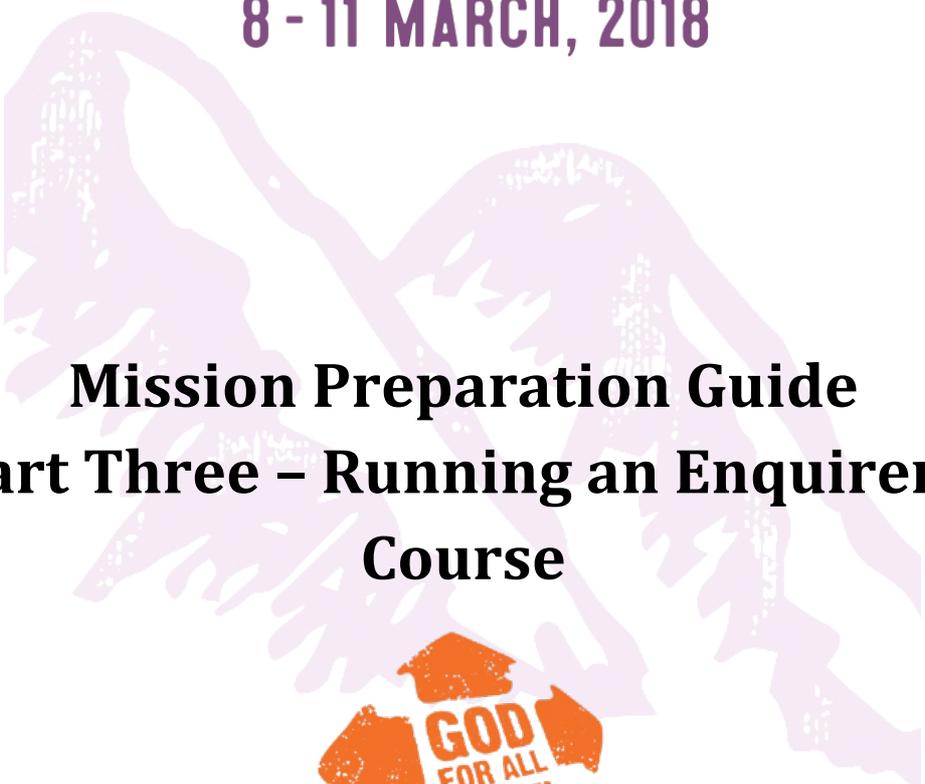




MOVING MOUNTAINS

8 - 11 MARCH, 2018



**Mission Preparation Guide
Part Three – Running an Enquirers’
Course**



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Introduction

Dear friends,

Welcome to this third guide booklet, which we are making available in preparation for the ***Moving Mountains*** mission 2018.

It's exciting to see churches all over Cumbria starting to develop plans for on-going mission, not least between 8-11 March 2018. Momentum is building now as contact is being made with visiting church leaders and more people are getting involved in each community.

This booklet aims to provide support to churches and church groupings as they plan to run an enquirers' course between April and December 2018. We hope that you will find it useful.

Thank you for all you are doing to spread the Gospel in the run up to, during and after ***Moving Mountains***.

+James, Richard, Sarah and Drew

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God for All Evangelism Enabler

More information about ***Moving Mountains*** is available on the God for All website www.godforall.org.uk under the ***Moving Mountains 2018*** tab.

Planning to Run an Enquirers' Course

In Part One – 'The Launch' we gave recommendations for how your church can pray for Moving Mountains. We hope prayer for mission is at the centre of the life of your church. In Part Two – 'Planning' we provided lots of ideas for mission and outlined a process and timeline for planning your part in the mission.

In Part Three we focus on Running an Enquirers' Course. We'll consider choosing a course, running one successfully and also how the course fits into the wider plan for mission.

Please start planning how and when you will run an enquirers' course in your church or church grouping. It will be an important step in turning the energy and activity of 8-11 March into a longer term impact of deepening discipleship and church growth.

In Part Four (the final booklet), we will explore wider aspects of building on the experience of Moving Mountains and shifting the focus of the church further towards outreach.

What will help get the church ready for Moving Mountains? Ideas that you may wish to consider include:

- Making prayer for Moving Mountains and outreach as individuals a feature of services and other church activities.
- Encouraging people to invest in relationships with people outside the life of the church.
- Encouraging people to invite guests to social events that the church is running before March 2018.
- Developing a culture of invitation - it's not just about social events. The three 'mission' steps are pray, invite, bring.

Are We Ready for Outreach?

A number of broader factors will contribute to the success of an enquirers' course.

A Culture of Invitation

Invitation will be vital. This is a chance for everyone to be involved. The simplest form of invitation is 'I'm going, it's going to be good, would you like to come too?' Take the opportunities between now and March 2018 to invite people, perhaps to social events and special services.

A Culture of Welcome

Are we genuinely welcoming to newcomers? Do we work hard to build relationships and friendships? Have a look at the Welcome leaflet on the Hints & Tips section of the God for All website and consider if there is anything you could do to improve the welcome you offer.

Telling Your Story

Can members of the church talk about their own faith in simple and personal terms – telling their own faith story?

The 6 week course **Faith Pictures** is one way for small groups to get together and explore telling their story in a new way (see the website: www.churcharmy.org – it's on their Resources page under Get Involved).

Running Small Groups

An enquirers' course is just one example of a small group in the life of the church. It may be useful to draw on any local experience of small groups as you plan.

We'll consider small groups further as we think about how to run and follow up an enquirers' course.

Why an Enquirers' Course?

Being intentional about prioritising growth and being intentional in nurturing disciples are two factors associated with growing churches.

Regularly running an enquirers' course is a valuable part of a focus on growth. They provide an opportunity to explore questions in a safe environment. Participants can help each other along their faith journeys.

By planning to run a course after Moving Mountains 2018 a church or church grouping provides an excellent way to follow up their missional activities between 8-11 March. Everyone has a clear next step to offer.

Whilst many have found a course to be very helpful, that is not necessarily true for everyone. Take time to consider whether a course (with its structure that shapes conversation) is right in your context. It maybe that it is more appropriate to start with an open evening in a local pub (or similar venue) where people are encouraged to come along and raise the questions that they have, rather than have a series of questions given to them. Once those have been aired, then suggest that the most popular ones form the basis of discussion over the coming weeks (depending on how long you plan to meet for). The likelihood is that the questions raised will cover topics that you are already aware of – if you want help in finding resources to use, have a word with Mike Talbot or Nicki Pennington (nicki.pennington@cumbriachristianlearning.org.uk)

Are We Ready to Run the Enquirers' Course?

We now focus on the core issues of choosing which enquirers' course to use and running it successfully.

Which Course?

The advantage of a course is that it is relatively easy to use, and can be led by people who are used to running small groups, but may well not have specialist theological knowledge. There are a lot of courses to consider. The Cumbria Christian Learning web site (www.cumbriachristianlearning.org.uk) has a range of information on options (see the section on Learning & Growing as disciples). The Disciplekit web site (www.disciplekit.org) is also a useful source of information.

We will consider **Alpha**, **Start** and **Pilgrim** in this booklet. If you have good experience of another course in your church grouping you may well want to consider that as an alternative option.

Alpha

Alpha is probably the best known enquirers' course and it has been run very successfully over many years. New materials (DVDs etc) have been released recently but the course remains largely the same.

Alpha says 'we believe that everyone should have the chance to explore Christian faith, ask questions and share their point of view'.

Each session starts with a meal, or at least food of some sort. There is then a talk of 20-25 minutes followed by a discussion. Most groups will use the DVDs for the talks. You should allow 2-2.5 hours for a session.

A lot of information, including a participants' guide, a leaders' guide and training for leaders is available free on the Alpha web site (www.uk.alpha.org).

There are 11 weekly sessions and also an away day / away weekend.

The sessions are:

1. Is there more to life than this?
2. Who is Jesus?
3. Why did Jesus die?
4. How can I have faith?
5. Why and how do I pray?
6. Why and how should I read the Bible?
7. How does God guide us?
8. How can I resist evil?
9. Why and how should I tell others?
10. How does God heal today?
11. What about the church?

The time away can be a very valuable part of the course. For the away day/weekend the sessions are:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does the Holy Spirit do?
- How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- How can I make the most of the rest of my life?

Critics of Alpha say that it is best for people some way along the journey to faith and also that it can come across as middle class and big city.

Start

Start is an enquirers' course that runs over 6 sessions and comes as a DVD and leaders guide. A participants' guide is on the DVD and can be printed.

The material says 'the Start course makes no assumptions about participants' background or experience or knowledge of Christianity or the church.'

Each session has a variety of elements: talks from the video; short activities; discussion. Overall a session lasts about 90 minutes.

The 6 sessions are:

1. What is life really about?
2. Does God exist – how can we know?
3. Who was Jesus and why does it matter?
4. Why is the world as it is?
5. Why did Jesus die on the cross?
6. What might it mean to become a follower of Jesus?

See: www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk/start

Start is more interactive than Alpha as it doesn't have the extended talk, but that also means it doesn't have the clear teaching. Critics of Start might say it is 'light weight'.

Pilgrim

Pilgrim is a new programme from the Church of England. Largely written by the same team that produced Emmaus.

In outline: 'Pilgrim will help enquirers and new Christians explore what it means to travel through life with Jesus Christ. It offers an approach of participation, not persuasion. Enquirers are encouraged to practice the ancient disciplines of biblical reflection and prayer, exploring key texts that have helped people since the earliest days of the Christian faith.'

The initial, 'Follow' stage comprises four courses each of 6 sessions:

1. What do Christians believe? *Based on the baptism promises.*
2. How do Christians know and worship God? *Based on the Lord's Prayer.*
3. How do Christians behave? *Based on the Ten Commandments.*
4. What is the Christian vision of the world? *Based on the Beatitudes.*

Enquirers would be asked along to the first six sessions (the first course) and then further courses could be offered as next steps.

The participation approach is seen in various ways. For example each session of Pilgrim includes *lectio divina*, in which participants are invited to read a passage from the Bible three times before discussing it. Steven Croft (one of the authors) emphasises that Pilgrim teaches people about the Holy Spirit "from the very beginning. . . And the sense of encounter with God is nurtured constantly through framing each session in prayer

and quiet together, and also by encouraging people to explore what they feel God is doing in their lives in different ways."

Critics of Pilgrim might say that whilst the design of the course around key texts and practices is a real strength of Pilgrim, this also means that enquirers are asked to engage in sessions based around prayer and Bible study from a very early stage. The reflections on the Bible passages are fairly extensive, so the sessions feel less interactive than Start and more like Alpha.

Pilgrim material is available from: www.pilgrimcourse.org

Comparison of Alpha, Start and Pilgrim

In summary key features of the three courses are as follows:

	Alpha	Start	Pilgrim
Number of sessions	11 plus weekend	6	4x6
Length of session	2 hrs.	90 mins	90 mins
Cost	Free (can buy booklets)	£55	Books £5.99per person (for 6 sessions)
Hospitality	Core	Optional	Optional
A session in outline	Food – Talk - Discussion	Variety of discussions / activities	Bible readings and reflections
Resources	Videos of talks Participants & leaders notes Online training resources	Videos of talks Participants & leaders notes	Based on the books. A short video (optional) for each session (free to download or DVD at £10.99 covering all 4 courses).

The choice is yours. Alpha and Start have both proved to be very effective. Pilgrim is a major new Church of England resource. What's most important is that you run an enquirers' course and focus on the wider aspects of running one successfully.

Start has fewer sessions so it is easier to get a commitment to attend. It may also fit better with people with no experience or contact with Christianity.

Alpha is well known, the hospitality element is very successful in helping relationships develop. The greater number of sessions and especially the weekend are important in building relationships.

Pilgrim takes a new approach, emphasising participation and engagement with the Bible and prayer.

If you begin with Start you might add in some element of hospitality, copying Alpha. You can always move onto Alpha or Pilgrim as a possible next step for people to learn more about their faith.

Other Options

As well as the courses already available you might consider putting together your own. It can be very successful. The Cumbria Christian Learning website has a helpful list of other options including:

- **Christianity Explored:** 15 sessions over a 10 week course with a day away. Based on Mark's gospel.
- **The Y course:** 8 sessions based on exploring questions people ask.
- **Soul:** Christianity Explored. Soul from 'Christianity Explored' is designed to introduce Jesus to older teenagers and young adults (15+). It features a range of activities, talks and Bible studies to communicate the gospel in an accessible and relevant way.
- **Youth Alpha:** same approach as Alpha but for a younger age group.

Running the Course

How you run the course is almost certainly more important than which course you run. Important factors relate to preparation, running sessions and follow up.

- **Invitation:** advertising a course is important. Make sure there is a flyer at all the events during Moving Mountains. Use newsletters, and noticeboards. Most important is personal invitation. Just ask people to come along with you to the first session; if they don't like it they don't have to come back. Most will carry on.
- **Building the team:** you are best to have 2 or 3 people leading as a team. Who is responsible for: welcome and hospitality; the content of the session including leading discussion; and prayer? At least split leading the sessions from hospitality.
- **Developing leaders:** who will these leaders be? If you need to build experience why not run one of the courses as a pilot for church members this autumn or in early 2018. They can develop their leadership skills and also be better placed to invite others in 2018. If you have good leaders already, think about how you might use this opportunity to identify and nurture new leaders.
- **Follow up:** start to think about 'what next' early on. What will participants do after attending the course? Is there a small group they might attend? Will the group from the enquirers' course keep meeting and move onto new material?
- **Focus on the enquirers:** don't overwhelm enquirers with church members at sessions of the course. Numbers of 'non-enquirers' can grow very quickly: the leaders, those learning to be leaders, people who have invited others. If you're not careful participants will be overwhelmed by leaders and observers. Why not have the first meeting as a taster/welcome evening that church members can bring people to, then run the rest of the sessions just for the enquirers themselves?

How do you Lead a Session on a Course?

Group leaders need to be good leaders not expert theologians. Your role is to facilitate conversations, create a space where others can talk, often about very personal and important things. We need to be open to many questions, to different views and perspectives. The aim is not to get the right answer: always having to say the 'right thing'. Questions and doubt are vital for learning and change.

The leader(s) should be genuine about their faith. It's about developing relationships not a sales job. Be authentic about your journey and the challenges you've faced.

The Alpha leader's guide highlights 3 aims as important:

- **Love** – the participants. Seek to build friendships.
- **Listen** – this is a chance for a guest to ask anything and say what they think. Try and remember to ask 'open questions' that enable a variety of responses.
- **Laugh** – try and keep the sessions low key, relaxed and fun.

Early on in the course you might talk about a shared agreement, a *contract* for how to run the course. For example you might come up with:

- **Participation:** there should be space for everyone to participate.
- **Respect:** different contributions.
- **Silence:** don't rush to fill every space. Be content with pauses and quiet.
- **Understanding:** seek to understand and work with the various contributions and perspectives of different people. Listen carefully, take time to check out your understanding, consider why their views might be as they are.
- **Brevity:** keep your contributions short. Others can always ask for clarification or more details.

Why not create a simple contract for your group with the participants?

More generally, good habits of effective small group leaders include:

1. Pray for group members daily
2. Contact group members regularly
3. Prepare carefully for the group meeting
4. Mentor an apprentice leader
5. Plan group fellowship activities
6. Emphasise growth in whole-life discipleship.

Time keeping is also important. Start on time. End on time. Allocate time during a session flexibly but wisely. Sticking exactly to plan is not necessarily the right thing to do. Ending on time is always right. If one or two want to talk further do that after the session is brought to a close.

Why not get existing and potential small group leaders together to share their experience and develop plans to run an enquirers' course? Why not run a short 'action learning' course on how to run a small group? In this leaders and future leaders learn as

a group by taking part in actually running small group sessions. Careful planning and review drive the learning.

Youth Enquirers' Course

Start and Alpha can be run with young people. There are also a number of courses aimed directly at young people. Why not run a course for young people? Even better support your young people in running a course.

Finding Those Enquirers

We've already emphasised the importance of invitation and of following up Moving Mountains events to invite people to your enquirers' course. Having 'feedback cards' widely available at events that you are running is an effective way of building up a pool of people who are potentially interested. We will be producing large quantities of these centrally, which you can use, or you could design your own to fit your context. A further possibility is to plan one or more events that provide a direct starting point for an enquirers' course. One idea might be to run an evening in a pub exploring 'life's big questions'

It is also valuable to reflect on how you might develop the contacts you have through occasional offices such as baptisms, weddings and funerals. Also explore offering enquirers' courses to adults whose children attend Messy Church or Holiday Clubs.

Different Starting Points

The focus of this booklet is on running an enquirers' course as a way of helping people make the most of Moving Mountains 2018. We're not making the case it is the only approach to outreach and growth.

You might also look at opportunities for Fresh Expressions, such as Messy Church, Café Church or many others. Perhaps making a start with a fresh expression can be another follow up to Moving Mountains.

Is an Enquirers' Course Too Big a Step?

You might want to offer a preliminary step before an enquirers' course. One option is 'Happiness Lab' which is a pre-evangelism course that begins to engage with some of the core concepts of our faith without being explicitly faith focused. It helps folks to begin a conversation in which they can explore their 'How to live my life,' questions. More details at www.theuglyducklingcompany.com

Bigger Picture

Alongside planning for the enquirers' course we want to highlight a few other aspects of planning for Moving Mountains.

Involving many people in a variety of ways in planning, delivering and following up Moving Mountains events can be a great opportunity to build capabilities and confidence. One of the major outcomes may be for many church members to take a next step in their journey of faith.

It will be exciting if lots of people get the chance to tell their faith story before, during or after the mission. Hopefully there will be opportunities for many to tell their story for the first time.

From Running a Course to Growing Disciples

We are all on a journey of learning and growth as disciples of Jesus. Remember to keep this perspective and not slip into roles of teacher and taught or in and out.

Think about how Moving Mountains enables you to further develop the culture and practice of discipleship. Not least that disciples help others in their journey: disciples help grow other disciples.

Remember that for all of us, including your enquirers, the real aim is to live out our faith day by day playing our part in God's mission in the world. A lot of this is learning by doing, not knowing theology.

Timeline

You might use the following broad timeline in your planning.

When	Focus
Autumn	Planning: which course? Who will lead?
Jan / Feb	Prepare: flyers; confirm venue & leaders
Moving Mountains	Feedback forms and flyers at events. Leaders present to talk with possible participants
Summer term	Run course

Are We Ready for Change?

New people will want to be involved in decision -making and leadership. Watch out – they may want to do things differently. Are you open to change?

Looking for Help?

We hope we have provided information to encourage and support you as you plan and prepare for running an enquirers' course.

To keep it as simple as possible, why not pick either Start or Alpha and have a go?

If you want further advice or support please contact
Rev Mike Talbot or Rev Nicki Pennington:
nicki.pennington@cumbriachristianlearning.org.uk

And Finally

Thank you!

It is very exciting to see the way in which so many people are engaging in Moving Mountains because they want those around them to discover Jesus, and come to follow him within a Christian community.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation
(Isaiah 52:7)

The God for All Prayer

God for all, you reached out to the world
in your Son Jesus Christ.

Help us to reach out in faith and love and witness to all.

God for all, you send your Holy Spirit
to empower and gift your Church.

By your Spirit help us grow in unity,
grow as followers of Jesus Christ,
and grow your kingdom in Cumbria and in this world.

Amen.

