

## AT THE MEETING

### OPENING PRAYER

We begin, as usual, with a short time of stillness, putting ourselves in the presence of God and asking for grace that everything that happens in our mind, heart and imagination may be directed purely to the praise and service of God. *Some communities use the CLC opening prayer, or some other formal prayer, to conclude this brief time of stillness. Others use a minute or two of suitable music.*

**GRACE** We ask for help to explore the vision of Christian Life Community and to listen to our deepest feelings about it.

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 18: 19-20. (Ask someone to read this aloud.)

### SILENCE

Ten minutes silent prayer remembering my life and prayer since the last meeting. How have I found the prayer this last fortnight? What events in my life and prayer do I wish to share with my community?

### SHARING AND LISTENING

- Remember that this is a listening, not a discussion, group.
  - Include a second round if there is time.
- It's good to conclude this time of reflection with a short time of silence, praying for each other, and with a formal prayer, such as the *Glory Be* or the *Lord's Prayer*.

**INTERCESSORY PRAYER**, if wanted.

**PRACTICALITIES:** This is an opportunity for any reports, eg from members who have attended a CLC event, for questions, for discussion about any concerns, for news about any work or mission in which members might be involved, or for any business the group might need to sort out.

### REVIEW OF THE MEETING

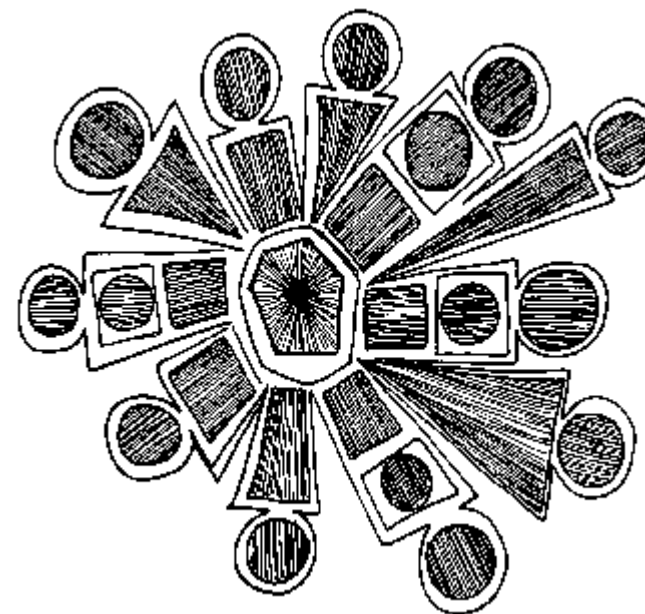
What was good for me in this meeting?  
What was not so good? What would I have liked to be different?  
What do I want to take away with me?

**CLOSING PRAYER** (Many communities use the CLC closing prayer.)



## MEETING PLANS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

# COMMUNITY



**TOWARDS  
MEETING THREE**

## PERSONAL PRAYER BEFORE THE MEETING

*A reminder of the suggested stages of prayer . . .*

**PREPARATORY PRAYER** Begin in the usual way.

**ASKING FOR WHAT I WANT** I ask for help to explore the vision of Christian community and to listen to my deepest feelings about it.

**MATERIAL FOR PRAYER** Use the following suggestions, one at a time, staying with each one until you are ready to move on. Don't worry if you don't manage to get through all four. It would also be good to pray the article and to notice what attracts you or challenges you about it.

\* **Matthew 18: 19-20** \* **Acts 4: 23-31** \* **Acts 4: 32-35** \* **Romans 12: 3-13**

**TALKING WITH THE LORD**

Ensure that at the end of your prayer, you spend some time talking directly with the Lord. You may like to end the prayer with a *Glory Be* or the *Lord's Prayer*.

**REVIEW OF PRAYER**

Afterwards, look back over your prayer and make some notes.

## CLC - A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Christ founded a community, which is Church, and he prayed for unity for it as a sign that he was sent by the Father (John 17: 21-23). We worship, not as individuals, but as a community, when we celebrate the Eucharist. Nonetheless many worshipping Christians do not have an experience of community in the Church. They miss a sense of real closeness, and of relaxed acceptance from their fellow worshippers. They have also never learnt to talk about their faith and their relationship with God. God isn't a word for conversation.

Members of Christian Life Community do experience support and relaxed acceptance and they learn to talk about their faith. It

makes a colossal difference to them. You don't have to live in the same house or even live near one another to be community. We all know people who live in the same house and hardly talk. Community simply needs openness.

CLC members meet regularly in small groups, usually once a fortnight, though some meet weekly. The communities are small (usually four to eight people) to allow time for each one to talk about their life and prayer since the last meeting. At first it may be difficult to share and new members may say very little. When they say more, it shows that trust is beginning to grow.

For trust to grow and for the sharing to have value, there needs to be a special sort of listening; one that is non-judgemental and accepting. When I share I need to know that what I say will remain sacred to the group. No-one present will talk about it, even to me, outside the group meeting. What I say is mine and remains mine. While others share, I try to put aside what I have to say to give the speaker my full attention. We all want to hear how God has been dealing with this person since we last met. Of course life has its ups and downs and I find it hard to share the valleys, the things I blame myself for. But gradually, as confidence grows in the group, more and more is able to be shared. It is amazing when others understand what I found so hard to share: I feel accepted and loved unconditionally. Sometimes I set out for a meeting not looking forward to sharing the messiness of my life - I return uplifted and glad I shared.

To help intimacy to grow and out of respect for the depth of the sharing, a key agreement is that everyone will make the meeting a priority in their lives and not allow non-urgent things to stop them attending. If I have shared something intimate and difficult at the previous meeting, or if I have decided to share something new and intimate about my life at this one, I can almost feel betrayed or my sharing cheapened if someone misses a meeting without good reason. It is even worse if they simply just don't turn up. Community grows through openness, trust and commitment to each other. It is important to ask new members, or the members of a beginning group, to commit themselves to a definite number of meetings, usually about six.

Obviously, if someone decides the group is not for them, then they don't have to stay for the six meetings. But do agree that anyone leaving will tell the group at a meeting. (Sending a message isn't the same.) Community is undermined if someone just stops coming - and it is important to say 'goodbye' well!

The local Christian Life community is the place where we listen to each other's reflection on where God has been in our life and prayer since we last met. We try to help each other to discover God in that experience and to notice where God is leading. Together we discern God's Spirit active in our lives. To listen means that we are privileged to notice God at work in our companions; to share is to be helped to find God in the ordinary events of our own lives.

*Tony Horan sj*

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## PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

Before your meeting it is good to REVIEW the time since the last meeting to **prepare** what you are going to share.

- \* Ask the Lord for light.
  - \* Let the places and situations you have been in come back to mind, noticing how they moved you. Don't judge what happened. Where did the Lord seem to be in them?
  - \* Notice how your prayer and your life interacted, how one helped the other.
  - \* Decide how much of this you want to share.
  - \* Make some notes to help you remember
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