

Getting a Group Together

10 Hints & Tips for gathering a group to experience a Church of Scotland Learning module together

1. Have a clear focus

Having a clear focus for what you want to achieve in getting the group together will help you as you start. Perhaps you want to cover a specific session or module in order to move a group forward in their thinking about a topic, e.g. Talking About Your Faith or building a new discipling group e.g. Conversations in Discipleship. If you know what your focus is, it will help communicate it to potential group members clearly.

2. Be enthusiastic!

When choosing a session or module to work with, choose a topic you are interested in or passionate about, your enthusiasm will be noticed! The more enthusiastic we are about bringing people together around a topic, the more we encourage and enthuse others to join us. It's got the added benefit of making planning and preparing more enjoyable.

3. Investigate the topic

Before diving in, think about the potential depth of the material you choose. Some modules and sessions require a level of self-reflection which participants may not be used to or a commitment to take on ongoing development. Consider how deeply you want to take the material; some sessions could be run over 2 weeks as you grow in skills and confidence together e.g Exploring Discipleship – Session Two: Understanding Who We Are.

4. Consider the atmosphere

Think about what kind of atmosphere you want to create. Gathering people together in their spare time is different from attending a mandatory course or meeting. Creating a welcoming, relaxed and engaging environment, where people can learn and share together, will be beneficial to everyone. The size of the group and where you hold the group may impact how you create that environment.

5. Location, location, location!

Think about where you'll hold the group – will it be in someone's house, or in a church hall? Spending some time considering where you might hold a group will depend on a number of factors, like availability of space, size of group, timings etc.

6. Gather a core group

As you thought about the focus of the group, who came to mind? Invite 2 or 3 of these people to join you, once you have a core group, you can invite others to join. It's worth considering where a natural group occurs already e.g. a house group, this can have advantages as people already know and trust each other. Keep prayer at the heart of all your 'planning' – don't forget to pray for those who may join you either in helping or attending.

7. Think about numbers

Group sizes can vary across sessions and modules. Take time to consider how large a group you and/or your fellow facilitators want to lead., you may wish to place a limit on how many you can have in your group. If it turns out to be popular you can always have a waiting list for the next time! With larger groups, you will want to consider splitting into smaller groups for discussions.

8. Practice Hospitality

Could you allow time in your group for a social element? Even a cup of tea and a biscuit at the start can help people feel welcome and allow time for chat. You might even want to have an evening where you gather together to share a meal and hear more about the purpose of the group or celebrate all you've discovered together at the end of your module.

9. Time matters!

When choosing what material to use, consider the timings. Whichever session or module you choose to use, think about the time commitment for yourself and the participants. Generally, a session is designed to last 90 minutes which is short enough to fit into one evening. Consider whether a daytime or evening session is feasible. Not everyone will feel able to venture out of an evening.

A single session like Conversations in Discipleship can be a gentle ease into a longer module such as Exploring Discipleship which has 6 sessions. If you choose to run a whole module, consider if you'll ask for a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly time commitment from participants.

10. Keep it clear

When you come to advertise the group, ensure that you explain clearly the purpose, time commitments and aims. This will help people make decisions about their interest in the session or module material as well as their ability to commit to sessions.

We're here for you!

Get in touch with the team: learning@churchofscotland.org.uk