

# *Reflections on running an online course:*

**Based on Alpha online (for other courses please see below)**

## **The prayer team**

- Dedicated and committed prayer team to underpin the sessions
  - Met as a group on Zoom or prayed individually

## **Leadership team**

- Designated leader for each section of the session
- Designated timekeeper for each section of the session
- Attentive listening – and watching
- Zoom host with good broadband
- Good communication

## **Logistics**

- timed schedule and framework with some flexibility
  - hour and a half max
- small group - ratio of leader/participant
  - max 6 total for the group including hosts – any more may need breakout room

## **Pre-session**

- send out the film and questions, in advance, for optional viewing and reflection
  - Helps introverts
  - Not everyone watched in advance allowing for spontaneous reactions during the session – new things came to light

## **During the session**

- Opening and closing prayers included from session 1
- Setting out protocol e.g.
  - confidentiality
  - hand raising to speak etc
- Icebreakers
  - Week 1 and 2 Introductions with 'easy' questions e.g. What is your favourite food
    - Any news
  - From week 2/3:
    - Any feedback from the last session
- Send out an optional Bible reading when appropriate for the group
  - May include opportunity to read and reflect during the session
  - May encourage participants to engage with the Bible
- Show the entire film during the session
- Other media e.g.
  - reflective music
  - Using art to help illustrate the theme (e.g. bring a picture to share that speaks to you)
- Notices – e.g. invitations to join worship
- Flexibility – two sessions can run together for max 2 hours with a break away from the screen in the middle

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### **Post sessions**

- Offer support (email/phone) for any questions or prayer requests

### **Holy Spirit 'weekend'**

- Double session (2 hours with a break and interim music) on usual week night
  - Who is the Holy Spirit
  - What does the Holy Spirit do
- Saturday morning
  - How can i be filled with the Holy Spirit
- Could be 3 separate sessions

### **Zoom advantages**

- No travel time
- No childcare issues
- Could access from anywhere
- No food prep
- No venue costs
- Less intimidating – people could switch off video e.g. while watching the film
- Shorter, focussed sessions
- Accessibility

### **Zoom challenges**

- No hospitality due to Covid
- Fitting everything in within constraints of an hour and half max
- Broadband sometimes an issue
- Online learning not for everyone

### **Review as the course progresses**

- As a leadership team
- Ask for feedback from the participants
- Plan a post-lockdown social
- What next?

## *Enquirers' courses (not a definitive list!)*

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/the-bible-series/>

*What they say:* 'In partnership with KingsGate Community Church and Hope Together, Bible Society is providing free content for children, youth and adults, so your whole church can journey through the Bible together. This is also a great opportunity for new people or invited guests to experience a better story and see how the Bible is relevant today.'

We invite you to use the resources and host The Bible Series in your church from October 2020 as part of your regular Sunday and mid-week programme. The series and its content is suitable for either physical gatherings or online services'

6 sessions: videos and conversations exploring the Bible

- Introducing the Bible
- Origins and meaning
- Exodus and freedom
- Exile and peace
- Messiah and Love
- Spirit and Community

<http://www.pilgrimcourse.org/>

*What they say:* 'Pilgrim is a teaching and discipleship resource from the Church of England. It aims to help every local church create a place where people can explore the Christian faith together and see how it can be lived out each day.'

Pilgrim takes a different approach to other Christian programmes. It approaches the great issues of faith not through persuasion, but participation in a pattern of contemplation and discussion with a group of fellow travellers.

Pilgrim is comprised of two stages: the Follow stage for those very new to faith, and the Grow stage for those who want to go further. Each stage contains four short six-session courses which focus on a major theme of Christian life.'

- Follow
  - What do Christians Believe - Turning to Christ
  - How do Christians know and worship God - The Lord's Prayer
  - How do Christians behave - The Commandments
  - What is the Christian vision for the world - The Beatitudes
- Grow
  - The Creeds
  - The Eucharist
  - The Bible

- Church and Kingdom

<https://alpha.org.uk/alpha-online>

*What they say:* 'Alpha is a place to ask the big questions of life. Connect with others online to watch a series of episodes and explore the Christian faith together.'

- Is there more to life than this?
- Who is Jesus?
- Why did Jesus die?
- How can I have faith?
- Why and how do I pray?
- Why and how should I read the Bible?
- How does God guide us?
- 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?
- How can I resist evil?
- Why and how do I tell others?
- Does God heal today?
- What about the Church?

<https://www.disciplekit.org/resource/puzzling-questions-a-six-week-course-to-explore-lifes-deeper-issues/>

*what they say:* 'The *Puzzling Questions* course is for those whose frame of reference simply doesn't include anything about the Bible or the Christian faith. It provides a space where our friends can take time to explore some of life's deeper questions, discover the issues that really concern them, develop their own spiritual vocabulary and connect with others who are on a spiritual journey too.'

- Who am I?
- What is God like?
- What happens after I die?
- How can I be happy?
- Why is there suffering in the world?
- What is the spiritual world and how does it impact my life?

Claire Horton, Rural Field Officer, Sarum Archdeaconry  
[rfosarum@salisbury.anglican.org](mailto:rfosarum@salisbury.anglican.org) 2020