

# **COMPONENTS OF A CLC MEETING**

This document has been prepared by the Formation Subcommittee of NSW CLC ExCo in consultation with NSW CLC guides (November 2003 – May 2004). We see it as a "work in progress" rather than a final document. (Margaret Armstrong IBVM, Marlene Beck, Catherine Everett, Kay Hooper, Ruth Morgan, Brian Neary)

The purpose of the Christian Life Community meeting is to help us come to a deeper understanding of what has happened in our prayer and our life in the preceding fortnight in order to discern where God is leading us to be more effective in our service.

We outline below a description of the various components of a meeting and their purpose. The format of a meeting may vary slightly from group to group.

## **1. Check-in**

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This is not meant to be a long sharing. Each is asked to say in a word/phrase/image how he/she is at this moment. By noticing this and sharing it with others, both the individual and the others in the group are able to appreciate how each is feeling. This awareness will help all to a greater sensitivity. Noting this at the beginning of the meeting provides a benchmark against which each can compare the impact of what takes place during the meeting thus providing a point of comparison.

## **2. Grace Prayed For**

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The guide invites the members to spend several minutes reflecting on the grace prayed for during the last fortnight.

## **3. Prayer**

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This often includes some music and a passage usually from Scripture. The stilling and time of prayer helps us to focus on God's presence. By reflecting on the Word of God we recognise that it is He who draws us together and calls us to be open to his action in each of our lives. The prayer time helps us to develop the skills of "listening with the heart" and is a way of preparing us for sharing from our life experience. The prayer time usually lasts about 10 minutes.

## **4. Sharing on the life of each person**

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Each person is invited to share from where God has been drawing them both in prayer and in life in the time since the last meeting. People are invited to share from something significant in the past fortnight or flowing on from the previous meeting. The purpose of this sharing is not a discussion of Scripture but rather a time to share our experience and more importantly where we have recognised the action of God in our experience. Quite likely this has already come to our awareness through the daily Examen. The sharing could be prompted by our prayer, our work, our relationships, our work place, our area of activity or

something in the world around us that has had an impact on us. Gradually all aspects of life come to be seen as the place where God is. All listen attentively.

Our sharing places us in a communal context. It helps us to become more objective in our understanding of the experience reflected on and shared. It may be the occasion for new insights for the person speaking and those listening and helps us in making decisions for the future.

This crucial segment of the meeting needs guidance to avoid it becoming a report or "story telling". The guide's skill in questioning and encouraging can lead the person to a deeper sharing and can enable them to recognise God working in their lives. This interaction takes place without prompting or forcing.

## **5. Exchange**

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There may now be a time of exchange about something that has been raised. This provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of Spirit-shaped service according to our Ignatian and CLC tradition. An individual may request help with a decision that has arisen or seek to explore some area of their activity. It is not a time of giving advice but rather an exploration of how one's activity might be more effective for the Lord. The guide may need to prompt or lead here.

## **6. Second Round of Sharing**

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After those who wish to share have done so, the group takes a few minutes of silence to reflect on what has been heard in the light of the following questions. *Where did I experience harmony with the others as they shared? What new insights were given to me about my community and me? How will this help my prayer and spiritual life?* Then, briefly, usually in two minutes or less, each member shares their thoughts or insights. The second round is important for it gives group members an experience of emergence, where the group takes on a communal identity larger than its individual members. Knowledge of this identity is essential when, in the weeks to come, the group may wish to make a communal decision. After the second round of sharing, the group can end with the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary or Soul of Christ.

## **7. Business, practicals, input**

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This part of the meeting involves a change of mode from reflection to discussion. A group may be deepening their understanding of a topic and there may be some input at this point. This is also the time when practical details such as time and place and content of the next meeting is arranged or when notices about forthcoming events are given.

## **8. Evaluation/Review**

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The Review enables/encourages/provides the opportunity to notice what's been happening during the meeting; whether I've noticed any signs of spiritual movement in the group, what these signs might mean for US. 10-15 minutes needs to be allowed for evaluation/review beginning with approximately 5 minutes for reflection on a question posed by the guide which will help members notice what's been happening during the meeting. The question

used for evaluation will depend on the stage of the group. Examples of possible questions are listed below.

The Review is not so much a focus on the individual's experience of the meeting but rather an opportunity to reflect on what we have shared/heard and the "overall sense of the meeting". By articulating this we can begin to see the implications which move us to action. By reflecting on the group-as-a-whole we become more of a discerning community.

It is a time for each to reflect on the period of time spent together, to note the action of the Lord, promptings or insights from the prayer, the content, the sharing. It is a time when each can note whether one has experienced a shift since the beginning of the meeting. By listening to others we grow in understanding of how the Lord moves each individual and the group. Sometimes there will be a sense of uniformity, sometimes a sense of diversity. Sometimes there will be a sense of calm sometimes there may be some disquiet expressed. Honesty is crucial for the growth of the group. The review of the meeting enables the group to decide on direction.

## **9. Closing Prayer**

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This is a time of prayer for needs, desires and concerns as well as graces related to insights gained during the meeting.

The grace prayed for can be noted by the guide who might check at the next meeting how the grace has been present in the fortnight.

At this point in the meeting, "Sending each other forth" is important. This sending could be formal or informal. A more formal sending might be appropriate when a person has discerned with the group a new direction. We state the support and prayer offered as each goes out from the group sent in the Lord's name.

## **Questions for Evaluation/Review of Meeting**

Different questions will be appropriate at different stages of a group's development. Pose one or two questions at a meeting. Here are some suggestions that could be rephrased or reworded.

*What am I most thankful for or grateful for in tonight's meeting?*

*What is it that is hardest for me to be thankful for?*

*Where did I feel the Lord's presence?*

*How well did we listen to each other, deeply, respectfully and with loving attention during the meeting?*

*What do I take away from this meeting?*

*What energised/de-energised me?*

*What captured my imagination tonight?*

*When have I felt close to/distant from, the Lord in tonight's meeting?*

*What was it in this meeting that challenged me to be more loving?*

*What was the dominant image, idea, feeling, word/phrase that came out of the meeting?*

*What has engaged my attention?*

*What touched my affective side, moments of surprise, presence of the Spirit?*

*How/where is the Lord drawing me/us tonight?*

*Is there an emerging sense of where we should go from here?*

*What was the movement that took place within me from the time I arrived at the meeting until now?*

*How well did we share responsibility for mission tonight?*

*How well did we discern?*

*How well did we support?*

*How well did we send?*

*How will did we evaluate?*

## **Questions for a Periodic Evaluation**

*What does belonging to this CLC group mean to me?*

*What nourishes me/holds me back?*

*How does my participation at the fortnightly meeting affect my life and vice versa?*

*What does the phrase "CLC is a way of life" mean to me?*

*How does my sharing reflect my mission?*

*What personal decisions do I take to the group?*

*How does the group help me to:*

- *integrate faith and daily living?*
- *become more sensitive to the presence of Jesus in everyday events?*

- *grow in appreciation of prayer and the Scriptures?*
- *acquire and deepen my sense of mission?*

*How does/can this group support me in mission?*

*How do I understand commitment to the group?*

*What does CLC ask of me?*

*As I reflect on our meetings since our last Periodic Evaluation, do I notice that I have shared on one aspect of my life more than any other?*

*How has my understanding of this aspect of my life grown over time as a consequence of sharing about it in the group?*

*How has this change in my understanding influenced my action in regard to this issue?*

*Looking at the group in its present stage, where do I see its strengths/weaknesses?*

*What are the signs of growth that I have observed in the group?*

*Are there changes that I can suggest, for example:*

- *Content*
- *Structure*
- *Involvement*
- *Timing,*
- *Responsibility for planning*
- *Commitment*
- *Meeting place,*
- *Socialising,*
- *Contact with other CLC groups etc?*