

SEEKING GOD TOGETHER COMPANION **FORMATION** FOR PARISH/SCHOOL TEAM IN PASTORAL ACCOMPANIMENT OF FAMILIES

A stand-alone 1.5 hour session

OVERVIEW OF SLIDES AND LEADER NOTES

1. Notes on Preparing for this Session

i A stand-alone Team Formation session

1 ½ hours contact time needed

Note: If you have NOT had a prior session 'Seeking God Together Introductory PowerPoint' you can use the following 4 slides to do so. If you HAVE had an introductory session, go straight to Slide 6 to begin the Team Formation Process

The Process used is in Appendix B of SGT – Leader can familiarise self with the process in advance of the session

2. Appendix B in Seeking God Together – planning templates

i In Seeking God Together (SGT)r Companion, Appendix B, you will find (1) a **Template for planning** a parish event to look at Pastoral Accompaniment of Families

In the book it looks like this: (see slide)

Planning template (left hand side, p.119 in SGT)

- *This is intended to support new or inexperienced leaders, or those unfamiliar with planning events.*
- *You are encouraged to draw on the wisdom and experience of leaders/facilitators in your own setting.*

*And (2) in Appendix B, you find the 'Planning' Session itself – a **process of formation** for the parish team. The facilitator or leader will take the group through this process (on CLICK see right hand side)*

NOTE: *If you have NOT had an introductory Power Point giving the background and vision for Seeking God Together Companion, please use the following 4 slides to do so in this Formation Session*

3. Seeking God Together – 4 slides introducing the Companion. AIMS

i *Seeking God Together Companion* aims to support this 'Emmaus like' **accompaniment** of families from Conception to Death

See slide, read out.

Comment:

p.11 of The Introduction to the Companion gives a very clear description of 'the art of accompaniment', journeying with and alongside..

And it asks the reader, the team, whoever is beginning this 'review' or 'planning' for family ministry in the parish or school, to think for themselves, and discuss – "What does it mean to accompany like Jesus? "

And P. 11 – continues

- **Which of these bullets about the way Jesus accompanies catch your attention**
- Opportunity for sharing: What would YOU say are the key characteristics of accompaniment?
- And the Method of accompaniment chosen is Christ like - a way of reflective, pastoral practice that **sees and builds on the goodness** in families at the outset rather than being despairing or critical of what is seen to be broken.
- This is known as 'Appreciative Inquiry' – described on pages 11-13 – in **building a 'culture' of accompaniment** - Culture being 'the way we do things round here'

4. A practical Companion

i Seeking God Together – at a glance (see p.9 of Introduction for detail)

The companion... (each point comes up on a click)

- **Is based on a 'journey in faith' model** of accompaniment, across each of the nine seasons of family life
 - Says – **keep close to Christ** ourselves... and meet families where they are, starting from a family perspective, their perspective, as Jesus did 'Where are you going?' 'What things are you talking about?' 'What do you want me to do for you?...
- **Builds on Strengths** – not getting downhearted about problems... finding goodness, celebrating that– which gives families **CONFIDENCE** that God is with them in the ordinary giving and receiving of love, the please, sorry and thank you moments, the power of tenderness, are all full of grace.
- Is about **CREATING SPACE for conversation** = accompanying, walking alongside, with...
- **In making use of this companion**, wherever and however you start, in every SEASON you will find questions to help you reflect as you accompany
 - At this point what is it we are already doing well
 - What is life like for families and those on the edge of our community
 - What is God doing in their lives

- *What more could we offer when time and energy is at a premium*
- *Who is the community could be included here in serving and accompanying families at particular points in their journey?*
- **Although it refers to and integrates key insights of the Church's teaching on MFL, SGT is not primarily a reference book – it is a 'companion' or 'handbook' or 'guide' to support pastoral practice**
 - *It helps a parish review its current practice.. And identify new opportunities – we call these 'take off' and 'landing' points for accompaniment (in our church language, in times of evangelisation, catechesis, formation, guidance, ritual, liturgy)*

5. On-going support across 9 broad 'seasons' of life

i *It follows through nine seasons – human life from conception ... (each Season comes up on a click)*

And each Season begins from the Experience of Family life - family expecting a baby, families with pre-school children, families in childhood years, in adolescent years, young adults and single people – of any age (all of us pass through periods of being single at various times in our life)..

Couples preparing for marriage, enrichment of married and family life over the years, to empty nest, and retirement years, to later life..

6. Who is Seeking God Together for?

i **Bishops** and their diocesan personnel in planning pastoral development – providing for the pastoral care and nurture of families in the gradual and many sided process of growing in faith (e.g. OGF clergy, Liturgy, Evangelisation & Catechesis, Family Life)

Parish communities – clergy and lay – in their responsibility for accompanying families in faith, and in building and sustaining strong family ministry... in accompanying families – nurturing them in their relationships and life at home, as domestic church

Schools – senior leadership, RE co-ordinators, yes, and where there are chaplaincy teams in schools, but all staff, all assistants, all home link workers.. Focussed on all school families – parents and children and wider families... in developing, renewing, sustaining strong, supportive partnerships with families in nurturing children/students, and in their education and formation for Christian living

Chaplaincies – teams/ministries – meeting families of people in prison, or hospital, or in the Traveller community...

Families = for some families, at the different stages on their journey, who are seeking to know more about their faith, and deepen or refresh their relationship with God. May like to dip in.. Have conversations with other people in the same boat.... The parish community has that mission to reach out... perhaps enable these conversations.

Ecumenical ministries supporting families across denominational divides. Often in families themselves who would describe themselves as 'inter-church'... they are living a unity, a communion, that we are ALL

working towards!. We share our love and care for families and there is a great deal we can do together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, particularly in accompanying families in faith. (The Resources we signpost to in each Season will make reference to ecumenical resources, e.g. The Kitchen Table Project, or Going4Growth.

Appendix B offers a process – stop and think, formation in pastoral accompaniment of families as a team, a group... This will be our focus today.

7. Formation session begins here



8. Seeking God Together (SGT) cover slide

i 1.5 hours **FORMATION** Session for Parish Team in Pastoral Accompaniment and USE of SGT

Notes for Leader:

Leader/team will make all the necessary arrangements for the session

- ☐ warm, comfortable setting, refreshments, opening prayer/prayer focus.

Following an Introductory Power-point that gives the background to Seeking God Together, a companion for the Pastoral Accompaniment of Families, this is **a Formation Process for a team** who want to take accompaniment forward, to share and enrich our understanding of accompaniment and family ministry, moving on to exploring this through the lens of a particular 'Season' of family life.

NB: This Formation Process can be used with or without the power-point slides. You decide whether or not you want to use the slides, as a prompt for moving forward in the process, or not. Play to your own strengths.

Why a Formation Process? Seeking God Together Companion begins from family experience, and asks us to look at what is needed in terms of pastoral support and faith development through their eyes, offering sensitive accompaniment that connects with their love, their lives, their language, their growth. This formation process is to help individuals and teams to gain a fresh perspective, insights and encouragement that builds on strengths and not 'fixing problems'.

9. Parishes using SGT – formation for accompaniment of families

i **Leader/team will make all the necessary arrangements for the session**

- ☐ preparing warm, comfortable setting, refreshments, opening prayer/prayer focus.

Welcome and Introductions

AIMS (purpose) of Our session today: (each comes up on a 'click')

1. To come and explore/think about our own personal experience of family life
2. To consider what life is like for those we accompany i.e. to stand in the shoes of a family we know and may have accompanied in some way, and ask “What’s life like?”
3. To reflect: What did we learn from this? What are our principles or be-attitudes for engaging in pastoral accompaniment as a parish/school? (Be attitudes p.116)

And then we will move on to 4. Review and plan based on our principles for walking with families: (in Seeking God Together, the principles of Accompaniment, like Christ on the road to Emmaus, are foundational in our approach)

We are making a start today – opportunity for fresh ideas, going a bit deeper into why and what we are offering families.

- **Building on strengths:** To consider what we are already doing well? What more we would like to offer?
- Encourage growing awareness of **community responsibility for family ministry**
 - Find ways to make it attractive and easy for people to play their part
- Consider best form of **shared-leadership**
- Where /How to start with one or more ‘Seasons’ - some beginnings, take off or landing points for sensitive family ministry
- Commitment to training where and when needed – supports the community in confident ministry
- Safeguarding - as a community who love and cares about one another, to ensure that everything we do is in line with our safeguarding policy
- Evaluation – to review how we are doing, in order to develop, to change, to grow...

Finally, if we have TIME, we can make a beginning, and either choose a season or seasons to look at in 2’s and 3’s, or explore the Season that the team or group has a particular interest in or reason for looking at, e.g. 1st communion parents/children, baptism parents, older people in the community, marriage preparation, married life... empty nesters... whichever

Opening Prayer

You as leader invite a moment of quiet to settle, and pray:

A moment’s pause, thanking God for being together, and for each person bringing their own story, wisdom and experience. Let’s tune in to the Holy Spirit at work in each person here, able to achieve so much more than we can ask or even imagine. ...

Leader: add your own prayer according to the day/time/season/gathering in the room

10. The Planning Process (p.117) Personal Reflection

i We begin with Personal reflection (20m)

Leader: you may wish to use the book to guide you through the process (p 117) Timings are approximate.

Leader will keep an eye on how things are going. The questions are on the slide, if you are using the slides.

(1) Standing in our own shoes (Leader invites the group to do some personal reflection on their own for first 15-20 minutes using the following as a prompt if you wish. They may find it helpful just to jot things down, or just 'reflect' whichever helps them gather thoughts...guide the group through, using the timings)

- **Briefly, think about: Who is family for you?** What was your own experience of growing up in a family (good or bad)? Who have been the key people on your journey in faith – in family life? What were your parents hopes? What **did** you expect from the Church? What about being a parent or grandparent yourself? What are or have been your personal hopes over the years? (5minutes)
- **Yesterday: Thinking back:** describe an early experience – something you would say was 'spiritual'? And as an adult?

What put you in touch with the mystery of God? What did you discover... (5 minutes)

- **Today** - How would you say you share your faith with others today? Who would you say accompanies YOU? (5 minutes)
- **Tomorrow** – what do you hope for or expect from the Church now? What sort of accompaniment would you like to offer? (5 minutes)

As leader, invite the group to move on, see next slide.

11. Moving on to Group Reflection (p.118)

i **Leader invites: take time now to share from your personal reflection (in 2's and 3's)**

Share in 2's and 3's something of own experience (5-10 minutes depending on the time you have made available)

Then gather the group back and invite them to think for a moment on their own using the prompts below

Stand in the shoes of another: (5-10m)

- ❑ Think of an individual or couple or family that you have met, listened to, or come alongside at some point
- ❑ Try and step into their shoes, imagine you are them... Ask yourself: What is life like for me, as this person? For my family? What are my hopes, my dreams, my questions? (Allow time for them to think as that 'other' person – to really get into their shoes, and speak using the first person, I hope... I dream... my questions are....) What do I hope for from the church at this point? What do I expect?

AFTER TIME ALONE in another's shoes. Invite people to share in 2's and 3's, again speaking **from the 'other's shoes'** in the first person: 'Life for **me** is' (10m sharing)

After time sharing invite the group to now get back into their own shoes, and feedback insights to whole group (10m)

- What are your HOPES for family ministry in meeting the needs of those you accompany?

After feedback, invite them to look at Appendix A, p.116, Be Attitudes for Pastoral Accompaniment (see next slide)

12. Appendix A – Be-Attitudes for Pastoral Accompaniment (p.116)

i **EXTRA MATERIAL:** After some group sharing, invite people to **take a few minutes only** now in 2's and 3's to look at the Be-attitudes for family accompaniment, (**Appendix A**) see next slide

- **Explain the “Be attitudes”**, as an additional aid to a parish or group reflection that looks at the principles of family ministry – 16 statements on what it means to accompany. Invite them to choose one or two that strike them for inclusion in a parish/school ‘charter’ for walking with families.

After some minutes in pairs, invite people to come back together, and take **some** feedback – a flavour - on favourites and why they chose that one. (10m)

13. Next Steps

i **Next steps: see slide**

You might like to consider – following key points

- Affirm what we do well (allow time)
- Consider what we want to offer (allow time)
- What kind of shared leadership model can we use....(allow time)
- Some starting points – which season do we want to start with? Who would like to make a beginning? (allow time)
- Any general training needs discerned – commit to this/find out/arrange (allow time)
- And how are we going to evaluate – sit down in a month, two months... regularly... how is it going? (allow time)
- Next step – see Additional Material for a group to take responsibility for a CHOSEN SEASON**
 - e.g. Season TWO , Birth to Starting School, Or Season THREE, with a Home-Parish-School team of interested people. Who, when, where?
 - Offer this group A simple 3 point session (see next three slides)

14. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL – EXPLORING PASTORAL ACCOMPANIMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF A PARTICULAR ‘SEASON’

i **Shape of that: Choose a Season, listen to the story, look at the image, share experience of -**

- What's happening in families at this point (maybe a learning curve for some)
- Talk about What are we already doing well
- Think about/discover What are the opportunities – lots of ideas in SGT sections, at a glance
- Small take off and landing points
- Who?

- Training?
- Next steps...
- Review...

15. Season Two: Birth to Starting School (p.27) or your CHOSEN SEASON

i e.g. of a Season. **YOU CHOOSE A SEASON** that your group/parish would like to explore family accompaniment through.

e.g. *Season Two Birth to Starting School (p.27)*

In 2's and 3's or small table groups.

Look at Picture, and AL quote...

Read the story

- What strikes you – how does this resonate with your experience? Or not?*

16. DESCRIBE What's happening in the family – pointers to deepen conversation (p.28-29) or your chosen season

i *In a group, you then follow on from your own experience.*

Take a look at “What's happening in the family” – using the text and the ‘At a Glance charts - Pointers to Deepen Conversation’ – DESCRIBE the family reality...

- *What resonates with you...*
- *Good things going on?*

MOVE ON TO next slide DISCOVER : Pointers for Family Sensitive Accompaniment

17. At a glance, Pointers for Family Sensitive Accompaniment: Home, Parish, School

i **DISCOVER: Using the at a Glance charts... Pointers for Family Sensitive Accompaniment – in Home, Parish, School**

What is God doing here? Keeping close to Christ, what do you see? Hopes?

- Given the family reality, what is most needed at this time.*
- What small practical, sensitive take off or landing points... home, parish, school ... **Something to build on?** to support their relationships, their spirituality, their family times, their service of one another and outreach to others*
- See the At a glance charts – p.30-34 (in the book, it looks like this – image)*

- ❑ *What catches your attention?*
- ❑ *First steps? Follow up?*

18. DESIGN AND DELIVER – opportunities for accompaniment p.36

i *Move on to Design... (see slide) and page 35 – for ‘text’ on opportunities for accompaniment to support your conversation together*

Deliver: practical first steps and action – see slide – sift through ideas, what small practical steps to start with in home, parish, school? Who is going to accompany? Any training to support? Any resources? Make the offer

*See **A word about RESOURCES** on next slide – and see page 120 APPENDIX C*

19. Seeking God Together RESOURCES – Click QR code

i *See slide:*

- *DRAW ON YOUR OWN WISDOM! The most valuable resource is wisdom in the room, in the community, in families.*
- *Trust in the Holy Spirit at work*
- *Look at what we already do well! Build on strengths.*
- *Recommended resources: these have been identified by practitioners as valuable. You can offer your own ideas via our website – resources that you have used or developed and find to be “gold-standard”*

Each Season has a QR code on this ‘Deliver’ page, which takes you to Catholic Family Website, www.catholicfamily.org.uk

Here you will find Seeking God Together pages, and if you scroll down to the bottom, you will find PDFs with resources, one for each season

(Just for those who are not familiar: QR code (abbreviated from Quick Response Code) is the trademark for a type of matrix barcode (or two-dimensional barcode) first designed in 1994. A QR code consists of black squares arranged in a square grid on a white background, which can be read by an imaging device such as a camera, and processed by the QR scanner (You need a QR scanner APP - install on your mobile device from your APP store)

The required data is then extracted from patterns that are present in both horizontal and vertical components of the image and a click takes you to the website)

20. Closing Prayer of Hope and Thanksgiving

i *Invite people to contribute to a short closing 'litany' of hope and thanksgiving for our pastoral accompaniment of families (or prepare one in advance if you prefer)*