

Outreach supporting local groups

Impressions from the feedback on maintaining local groups and forming new ones

Whilst we explore the possibilities of local groups, or as some prefer to call them, small groups, due to the distances between their members, we begin with a word of caution kindly and sensibly provided by our Chair of Trustees, Stephen Serpell:

Not to deter, but to keep us all safe and happy, here is a summary of some LCSB guardrails for local/small groups:

LCSB local or small groups can only be authorised as part of the LCSB if

- i) We agree to implement LCSB policies paying particular attention to Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Food Hygiene.
- ii) Any new activity should be checked against the LCSB insurance cover and the LCSB Charitable Charter.

QUESTIONS posed to small groups on 22nd August:

1. What would make me want to join or set up a local group? *
2. Is the local group just for members or is there a broader outreach?
3. Is it a good idea to include some form of work for the group in addition to prayer, community sharing and study eg creating or supporting a community based project (Benedictine value of "ora et labora")
4. In what ways could the Community help members to set up local groups?
5. In your group, how many prefer an actual meeting and how many would also continue to meet virtually because of distance?
6. Leading to action: Is there anyone amongst us who would be willing to start a local group if given the correct support?

*For those not yet in a local group

REPLIES BELOW:

Q1*: 'What would make me want to join or set up a local group? *_(for those not yet in a local group)

Scotland and the North: getting to know people better in my area by meeting each other online in a small breakout room e.g., after Vespers.

Wolverhampton: n/a

Chilterns: it would need to be distinct from what the local church is already doing; if it's Benedictine/fed by the LCSB; to be local geographically if reaching out to others; tasty puddings!

East Anglia: online group on the model of Benedict at Home.

Kent: for the two new people, physical proximity to the group.

Weyside: a shared activity.

Brighton: "Go forward together" as Abbot Mark said, with Dom Aidan and possibly the Wellspring group. Whitehawk is their concern. (Pip Weitz)

Balcombe: house groups have been a rich source for her (Rachel Davies)

Dumbledon: n/a

Mid-South: keen to give it a go as circumstances allow.

Q2: Is the local group just for members or is there a broader outreach?

Scotland and the North: As retreats at Ampleforth were popular, broad outreach is implied.

Wolverhampton: already a mixed group of members and non-members and planning to advertise in the parish again.

Chilterns: utilise the gifts of Members first and then bring people in. Bring people into the Benedictine way.

East Anglia: living more than 30 mins from the next LCSB member, several are or have taken part instead in existing prayer/lectio groups in their geographical area

Kent: already a hybrid group and open to new members.

Weyside: the latter?

Brighton: keen on collaboration between LCSB including former member, monks and Wellspring.

Balcombe: in discussion

Dumbledon: by invitation in order to maintain the environment of stability, intimacy and trust.

Mid-South: We would like the disposition of the group to be open to all, and not just members. We would see the group as a place where people can meet the community, and taste and see, without feeling compelled to sign up.

Q3: Is it a good idea to include some form of work for the group in addition to prayer, community sharing and study eg creating or supporting a community based project (Benedictine value of "ora et labora")

Scotland and the North: no conclusions reached but keeping in mind the distances and avoiding duplication of what already goes on in the parish.

Wolverhampton: Most are already heavily involved in some community service e.g., prison visiting, night shelters, so best to support existing projects and report back to the group how things are progressing. A joint activity might emerge in time.

Chilterns: Yes, good to include work. Could be to help a project in a parish but needs to involve the parish people too. Reaching out to those on the margins. Work brings people together. Opportunity to do Holy Service. Group would decide what work to do.

East Anglia: Suggestion of a possible litter pick as a way of including work as well as prayer, as this increased the sense of community. However, unless the group was local this could be difficult to do.

Kent: At present considered a step too far. Work would not fit in within our existing 'oasis'. Most have 'busy church work lives' outside of the LCSB and other responsibilities. Our group is 'somewhere just to be'. We are not fully established but we are a group which openly provides support, love, friendship, cares (both individually and as a group). We practise hospitality and provide holy space. We link to the mother group.

Weyside: People liked the idea of a shared activity. "We need a mission. It will transform itself in different groups in different ways. We need to be outward looking."

Brighton: Pip and Aidan have been working together on litter picking and discussing the Brighton plans. Whitehawk estate in Brighton is the 30th most deprived area in England.

Balcombe: thinking about it

Dumbledon: While this may be a good idea in principle, this is felt to be more difficult than it sounds in the context of the current membership of Dumbledon and members' existing commitments. Any such activities would ideally be purposeful, practical and the simpler the better.

Mid-south:

Q4. In what ways could the Community help members to set up local groups?

Scotland and the North: provide the time and space for this group to meet up online after Vespers.

Wolverhampton: n/a

Chilterns: Encourage new models of structure/Perhaps help to finance the funding of a venue? Some groups don't have good sized place to meet. Maybe book church halls? Previous, experienced leaders could come and start a new group off.

East Anglia: to help set up an online group on the model of Benedict at Home?

Kent: n/a

Weyside: n/a

Brighton: none asked

Balcombe: none asked

Dumbledon:

- enabling members (consistent with data protection requirements) to find out easily which other members live nearby and to contact them with a view to setting up a local group.
- providing details of the different kinds of *modus operandi* adopted by different existing groups.

Mid-south:

Q5. In your group, how many prefer an actual meeting and how many would also continue to meet virtually because of distance?

Scotland and the North: impractical at this stage but one said how important it had been in their early contact with the Community to have a face-to-face meeting with hospitality offered. There is general enthusiasm for occasional retreats in Ampleforth, a geographical centre point.

Wolverhampton: Wolverhampton “Benedictine Way” meeting will go back to meeting physically on the first Tuesday evening each month, beginning in October.

Chilterns: not discussed

East Anglia: people are tired of zoom and would much prefer to meet in person but practically, online will be the best option.

Kent: physical is preferred and was done early September outside but Zoom will be safer/more sensible come the winter so we shall continue to meet monthly on Zoom.

Weyside:

Brighton:

Balcombe:

Dumbledon: We look forward to being able to meet again in person; but some nervousness about the risks of Covid remains.

Mid-South: Realistically it will be a hybrid effort – some zoom meeting to pray together, and some face to face more occasionally’

Q6. Leading to action: Is there anyone amongst us who would be willing to start a local group if given the correct support?

Scotland and the North:

Wolverhampton: n/a

Chilterns:

East Anglia: at the moment, the regional group meet 3-4 times a year

Kent: n/a **Weyside:** n/a

Brighton: Pip Weitz

Balcombe:

Dumbledon: proposals to start a group called "Wimbledon Walkers" (or something similar) for members / seekers / friends in the Wimbledon / Richmond area to meet for a walk two or three times a year. This would be more like a regional group, and therefore open to anyone to join in, so that it would be suitable both for established members and for people who are new to the Community. We would meet for a walk, then have a cup of tea (or whatever), whether as a picnic, at a café, or in someone's garden or house (taking into account any nervousness about Covid). The aim would be to cater both for those who want to meet outside and those who cannot manage a walk.

Mid-south: Peter A, Angela J and Richard and Angela.

What we don't want to do: duplicate meetings or activities that are already going on in other contexts (such as parishes) e.g., a secular Franciscan group in the parish. We don't want to tread on toes.

P.S. We have no feedback from the Southwest or Ireland as yet.