

Journey in Faith Course



Participants' Guide

Participants' Handbook

1. Introduction

Well done for registering on the Journey in Faith Course. We hope this will be an enriching adventure.

2. What's the course about?

At the end of the course you will have:

- Explored the teachings and practices of the Christian faith.
- Thought and learnt about how your own faith has developed.
- Identified what direction your discipleship might take.
- You will have completed the first stage of theological education that is a prerequisite for training for licensed ministry.

3. Course contents

Term 1 Exploring faith

This module includes an introduction to the Old Testament. We consider how the Old Testament was formed, the context of the Old Testament world and the characters revealed in it.

Term 2 God's call and our response

This module includes an opportunity to consider our own faith journey. We also discover ways of reflecting on God's presence in our lives and in our communities. We study how people have responded to God's call and what that might mean for us.

Term 3 Christian doctrine

Starting from an overview of the New Testament, we look at the key themes and growth of the church throughout the New Testament period. We study the development of Christian doctrines and hear afresh God's call for the church and our response.

4. Administration

The course is administered by the Diocese of Leicester. Useful contacts are:

Course Coordinator	Liz Rawlings liz.rawlings@leicestercofe.org 07947 533739
Course Administrator	Claire Stapleton claire.stapleton@leicestercofe.org 0116 2615317
Local Convenor	Your group leaders will introduce themselves at the Induction Day

5. Assessment

This course is designed for you to learn in a way and depth that suits you and there is no formal assessment. There is an expectation that you will do the preparation set for each session and participate in the group work. If you are unable to attend a session or are experiencing a particular difficulty, let your course tutor know – they are there to support you.

5.1 Assignments

Each module has a range of assignments which can take the form of an essay, a project or presentation. These are optional but we encourage you to have a go. If you intend to go forward to further study, you should submit at least one assessment as a written essay.

5.2 Marking Assignments

Your assignments will not be graded but tutors will make comments on your work.

Has the person:

- Answered the question
- Demonstrated an understanding of the subject
- Drawn on their own experience and faith journey
- Organised the material into a coherent sequence
- Used evidence appropriately to support what they have said
- Presented written material in a suitable format, with references where necessary

6. The Pathways Workbook

This is a key aid to learning and reflection. If you want to explore formal ministry in the future this can provide a useful basis for selection processes. It is not a workbook to be completed in one go, but to be developed and explored throughout the course.

7. Study Basics

Many of us have not studied for some time, if at all, and it is not unusual for the first few sessions to be quite a steep learning curve. A few simple tips:

1. **Be Prepared** – in the busyness of life it may be hard to find time to do the pre-session reading but it really will pay off. In the preparation section for each week there will be some reading matter to do and some optional reading in the 'Digging Deeper' section.
2. **Give yourself time** - it is a good idea to have a look at your diary as you start a module to make sure that you can plan in the preparation time. Make sure your family and friends know you are doing this course so they can support you.
3. **Don't be afraid to ask** - If you don't understand the material in the handbook, do ask. You will be surprised how many of your fellow participants will thank you for it!
4. **Enjoy yourself** - studying stretches and stimulates our minds; it brings us into contact with new ideas, new people and new ways of seeing the world; it challenges us and helps us grow as individuals. It is a serious business, but that doesn't mean we have to **be** serious.

7.1 What is your learning style?

Knowing your learning style can be very helpful – it can tell you what ways you learn most easily, and where you might struggle.

Imagine you are about to put together a piece of flat-packed furniture. What do you do first?

- Find the instructions, and go make a cup of tea while you read them thoroughly

- Find the instructions, count all the bits and pieces, make sure you have all that you need in the way of tools, then read the instructions while looking at all the parts
- Begin putting the furniture together, referring to the instructions when/if you need to

The interesting thing is that in any group of people, you will find a mix of the above styles, yet they are all solutions *to the same problem*: getting a load of parts to become a bookcase. There is no “right way” to do it.

Learning styles can be broadly described in the following ways – what do you think yours is and what might this mean for you?

Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
Do you dislike listening for too long?	Do you learn best through listening to talks?	Do you learn best by doing something? Having a go.
Do you prefer images and using your imagination?	Do you learn well through reading?	Do you find reading long articles tedious and difficult?
Do you prefer face-to-face meetings?	Do you prefer Zoom meetings	Do you work best in sharing an activity?

7.2 How groups work

Learning in groups is an enriching and challenging experience!

It is enriching because...

- We learn from and with each other.
- We can pool our knowledge and experiences.
- We can give and receive support.
- We can be a part of creating something together.
- We can share a journey of learning.

It is challenging because...

- We can challenge and be challenged by other group members.
- We will hear theology expressed in different ways.
- We may find our underlying assumptions questioned.
- We might not like everyone in the group

How group tutors work

The group tutor will not only guide the group through the material but will also encourage group members to take part and ask questions that promote and extend learning.

The aims for a learning group are to:

- Help each other learn.
- Help each other to think critically and thoughtfully.
- Help each other to explore gifts and calling.
- And maybe to make new friends.

7.3 Writing an assignment

The aim of an assignment is to show what you have learned. It is done by:

- Answering the question that has been asked
- Drawing on what you have learned in the module
- Drawing on what other people think which you will gather through your research
- The experience you bring to the subject
- What conclusions you come to, based on points above.

Beginning the process

- ♦ **READ THE QUESTION.** Make sure you know what the question is asking *before* you begin to think about how to answer it.
- ♦ Do some research on the subject by reading and talking to others.
- ♦ Think about your own response to the question.
- ♦ Write down the subtitles of the question to structure your work.
- ♦ Jot down all the things from your research and your own thinking under the relevant heading. Don't worry about getting it in any sort of order just put everything down you can.
- ♦ Now you can start to organise your thoughts with subheadings that will form the thread of what you want to say. Even if you are not using the headings in the final paper, they can guide you and keep your work in a coherent order. You have to help your reader get from one point to the next.
- ♦ Be ruthless about what belongs in your work. Does it aid answering the question? If not, take it out.
- ♦ Reread what you have written as you go along and see what should and should not be there.
- ♦ Get someone else to read it to see if it holds together in a logical way.

Backing up your arguments

Theology is the study of/knowledge of/thinking about God. No one else will ever have the insights that you have – no one else will ever bring exactly the same set of experiences to the work that you do. Your work is unique and valuable.

But you need to justify what you think. In other words, you need to back up your arguments, to say *why* you are saying what you are saying. Taking the time to do this means that your work will be much stronger.

There are some common problems with this kind of work:

1. Universal statements.

A universal statement is one that takes in all of a particular category. "All Christians believe", "every writer knows"...

All it takes is one example to the contrary, and your argument falls. It will make your argument far stronger, to say, "Most Christians believe..." or "Within the Anglican Communion, it is commonly believed that..."

2. Common sense arguments – or arguments from the crowd

This is the kind of argument which relies on agreement in a society – "everyone knows that stealing is wrong", "everyone knows that school is good for children" and so on. The argument suffers from the same problems as the one above (because it is calling on the entire population for support)– it assumes that something which "everyone" agrees on, must be right.

3. Assumptions

Assuming knowledge or understanding on the part of the reader may mean that you leave important points out of your own work, and therefore your arguments are not as well supported as they could be. One of the best ways around this is to assume that your work will be read by someone who has no knowledge of the JiF course.

4. Arguments which are not backed up

If you make a statement as to fact, e.g. “The Gospel of John was written in the year X”, it is helpful to say how you know – so cite your source. An example would be, “The gardening metaphor for the parish educator is a well-known one, (Astley 2000)” (with the full information about the book at the end of the work).

5. Error of voice

In the work for the JiF course it is not only permissible to say, “I think” or “I believe”; there’s no way you could write the work required without doing so.

But you need to let your tutors know when you are making a statement of personal belief, “I believe that all Christians should...” or you are quoting someone else “Tom Wright claims that...”. *They are both valid statements.* But it needs to be clear who is saying it, what that statement is based on and where it comes from.

7.4 Effective reading

Reading academic texts is not the same as, say, reading a novel. When faced with a book list, or even a single book, it is not necessary to read the whole thing. To start:

1. Survey the book

- Read the contents list
- Decide which chapters look relevant and make a note of the page numbers
- If you are reading more than one book – move on at this point. You may find the next one you open is far more useful.

2. Question the Book

- What’s the author’s apparent standpoint – e.g. does s/he have an axe to grind? Am I looking for support for an opinion I already hold?
- Is it a recent book – is it up to date? Or is it a classic?
- N.B. you are allowed to disagree with a book/author!

3. Read the relevant book passages more carefully

4. Take notes

5. Review how this will fit in with the argument you are developing.

- Does it support your argument?
- Does it disagree with your argument? (This doesn’t mean you have to ditch it –you could say “However, Joe Bloggs makes the challenging point that...”) Then you can rebut this with your own opinion and why you disagree with Joe Bloggs
- Decide if you are going to refer to it.
- Avoid plagiarism – if you are quoting from a book you need to make that clear.

7.5 Taking notes from reading

The three most commonly used types of notes are:

1. **Summary notes:** These are a mini version of the material itself. Written in proper sentences. Most students tend to adopt this style when making notes but, if not careful, end up re-writing whole chapters!
2. **Skeleton notes:** these are rough, brief notes from sessions or reading. Using abbreviations, numbering, underlining, indentation of phrases and other devices to speed up the notation and make the notes easier to re-read. The layout of the notes is important to make them comprehensible later.
3. **Diagrammatic note:** These notes are variously described as spray diagrams, concept-tree systems and, most famously by Tony Buzan, as Mind Maps.

If you want to quote something you need to record it word-for-word in your notes – come up with a way to make this clear and noting beside it the details such as who said it and where, so you can reference it properly in your work.

7.6 Referencing

In your assignment you will need to make it clear what are your own ideas and what you are citing. When you cite another source in the text you need to mark it with a footnote or the reference in brackets then list the source details in the bibliography. For example:

It has been claimed that John's Gospel was written by Socrates (Bloggs. J 2019)

or

It has been claimed that John's Gospel was written by Socrates¹

1. Bloggs J (2019) *John's Gospel – another interpretation* Leicester, Loony Publishers

Recording sources in a bibliography.

If you have cited a reference you need to record the source in your bibliography using the following format:

Reference from a book:

Author, (date of publication) Title (or *Title in Italics – it doesn't matter which, just be consistent!*), Place of publication, Publisher

Armstrong, K. (2000). The battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hammersmith, London, HarperCollins Publishers.

Reference from a journal or newspaper

Author, (date), "Article title in quotes", Journal, etc. Title Or, again, in italics, volume number, issue number, page(s)

Burack, E. (1999). "Spirituality in the workplace." Journal of Organizational Change Management **12:04**: 280 - 291.

Reference from a book chapter

Author of article, (date), Title of article (or in quotes) Title of book or again in italics, Book author(s), Place of publication, Publisher, pages of article (what pages it's on in the book).

Astley, J. (1992). Growing into Christ: The psychology and politics of Christian maturity. The contours of Christian education. J. Astley and D. Day. Great Wakering, McCrimmon Publishing Co. Ltd.: 307 - 322.

Reference from a website

Author, date, Title of webpage, date you accessed the page, URL

Leo XIII, 1879, Aeterni Patris, access date 14 August, 2000, URL
www.listserv.aremican.edu/catholic.church/papal.html

7.8 Plagiarism

Plagiarism means using someone else's work and passing it off as your own. It refers to copying other people's work word for word, or making only minor changes to it with the intention of representing it as your own...The problem occurs when you recycle whole sentences or paragraphs without indicating that these are quotations or paraphrased from your original source.¹

Plagiarism may be done unintentionally; it could result from bad note taking or not being confident enough to express your own thoughts in your own words. Essay markers are very good at recognising plagiarism. They will be familiar with the books written on their subject. They will also be able to detect the change in style between the participant's own work and plagiarised work. You need to reference:

- 1 Quotations.
- 2 Diagrams, statistical information, maps, etc.
- 3 Work referred to but not quoted directly.

8. Sustaining the journey

As you go through your studies, you will do a great deal of reading and thinking.

We can easily become swamped by the volume of new information and overwhelmed by the new ideas we are encountering. A few tips to maintain some perspective:

1. Wise guides

Identify someone or a range of people you trust who you can meet with intermittently to process your thinking and the feelings that are being brought to the surface. Most people are more than flattered to be asked to help!

2. Spiritual habits

God is at work in you and in times of change we need to base our lives on good foundations – grounding ourselves in him. Review your habits of prayer, worship and reading the bible – ensure that you have some space to 'be' with the one who knows you and loves you beyond all others.

3. Rest and fun

Journey in Faith is supposed to be life-enhancing so make sure you schedule time-off, fun and rest as often as possible!

¹ Redman, Peter (2002) *Good Essay Writing*. 2nd edition, London, Sage/The Open University, p10.

References and further sources of information.

Cottrell, Stella (1999) *The Study Skills Handbook*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Redman, Peter (2002) *Good Essay Writing*. 2nd edition, London, Sage/The Open University.

Rowntree, Derek, (2001) *Learn How to Study*. 4th edition, London, Warner Books.

Astley, J., Ed. (2000). *Learning in the Way: Research and reflection on adult Christian education*. Leomister, Gracewing.

Jaques, David. Gilly Salmon. *Learning in Groups*. 4th edition. London, Routledge (2007)