

Developing key skills for church-based family ministry

Core Skills

for

Family Ministry

THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON MINISTRY AMONG CHILDREN





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Inside illustrations: Rebecca J Hall

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15 The Chambers, Vineyard
Abingdon, OX14 3FE
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1865 319700
Email: enquiries@brf.org.uk
Website: www.brf.org.uk
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Introduction

All people are made in the image of God, loved unconditionally and affirmed in the life and ministry of Jesus. This is reflected in the Christian community where:



The current context of family

The UN has sought to highlight the place of family in society and the opportunities and challenges it faces. Their statements on family suggest that owing to rapid socio-economic and demographic transformations, families find it increasingly difficult to fulfil their numerous responsibilities. Many struggle to overcome poverty and adequately provide for younger and older family members. It is also harder for them to reconcile work and family commitments and maintain the intergenerational bonds that sustained them in the past. The impact of low incomes, relationship breakdown, employment pressure and other life experiences is felt by all members of the family.

Defining 'family' can be difficult these days. In this resource we are using the term 'family' to include and group people who consider themselves family, whether biological, legal or any other form, structure or context in which a family exists. This includes children and young people of all ages.

Adults' experience of family life will be varied and issues may arise for some in your group. It is not your responsibility to deal with or address these. However, it is beneficial to be aware of external support available that can be signposted to should it be needed. It would be valuable to find out about local services before the start of the course.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Core Skills for Family Ministry does not include Child Protection training. Most denominations or organisations in Britain and Ireland have their own policies, procedures and training, to which all participants should look. You should also be aware of relevant support available in your area or organisation, should the need arise.

We recommend that the information sheet on the following page is completed by all participants before starting the course. A copy of this sheet can then be included in their portfolio.



Safeguarding and child protection

Title of your denomination's policy document:

What do you do if you have an issue relating to child protection?

Who is the person in your church who deals with child protection issues?

What training in child protection have you had?

If none, when is the next available training?

When is the next review of your local child protection procedures?

At-a-glance summary of aims and learning outcomes

Introductory session

Aim

- ❖ To provide a basic introduction to working with families in a church context
- ❖ To begin to engage participants in the content of the course

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To share hopes and fears about working with families
- ❖ To reflect critically on a variety of strategies for developing relationships with families
- ❖ To explore issues around families, theology and culture
- ❖ To consider how to approach a session with families
- ❖ To acknowledge and reflect on our personal experiences of family, and to recognise how this might impact on our approach to family ministry

Core Session One: Biblical, historical and contemporary understanding of family

Aim

- ❖ To introduce participants to biblical and contemporary understandings and meanings of family.

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To gain insight into the biblical and historical understandings surrounding family
- ❖ To reflect on the differences and similarities between historical and contemporary situations
- ❖ To reflect on the structure of your own family, and of those around them

Core Session Two: Family ministry today

Aim

- ❖ To recognise the importance of relevant work with families in a rapidly changing world

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To explore opportunities for families and churches to engage with each other
- ❖ To recognise the contemporary context of family life

Core Session Three: Seasons of family life

Aim

- ❖ To reflect on and understand that there are different seasons of life for families, applying this understanding to interaction with families and exploring ways the church can affirm and support them

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To recognise the role of the church in the various seasons of family life
- ❖ To reflect on the occasions when families may celebrate and commemorate significant milestones experienced in their lives
- ❖ To appreciate the importance of managing these seasons well
- ❖ To be equipped and gain tools to support and resource families during these seasons of life

Core Session Four: Role of family relationships

Aim

- ❖ To understand the role of relationships within families and between families and their community, including the church
- ❖ To explore how the church might offer additional support where relationships are missing or dysfunctional

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To reflect on traditional relationships and consider the implications for families if some of these relationships are missing or distorted (for example, mother/child, father/child, husband/wife, grandparent/child, neighbours, siblings, family/school, family/GP, family/vicar)
- ❖ To plan ways to develop and strengthen relationships with families
- ❖ To explore how the church might offer specific support to families to help alleviate the impact of a missing or distorted relationship

Core Session Five: Family well-being and wholeness

Aim

- ❖ To understand what subjective well-being is for children and young people
- ❖ To understand which aspects of life have the greatest influence on children and young people's well-being
- ❖ To consider how the church can listen to and involve families, children and young people to improve and support the collective well-being of families

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To gain a clearer understanding of the influence and impact of well-being on the life of families
- ❖ To develop thinking and inform future practice to ensure full participation by families in the life of the church

Core Session Six: Faith in families

Aim

- ❖ To reflect on and understand the challenges and limitations that families may face in living out faith in the home
- ❖ To consider the ways in which the church can encourage, support and resource families in practical ways, and the resources available to do so

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To recognise the role of the church in supporting families to live out faith in the home in a way that is appropriate and accessible for families
- ❖ To recognise the different factors to be taken into account when working with families, such as age, experience, time and finance
- ❖ To equip leaders to help families create faith-filled homes

Using Core Skills for Family Ministry

This resource is planned for ease of use in a variety of ways. As the material has been written from a number of ecumenical settings, it is hoped that it will be delivered ecumenically wherever possible.

If you would like to know where your nearest Core Skills course is happening:

- ❖ visit the CGMC website www.cgmcontheweb.com or contact CGMC via the website
- ❖ ask your denominational or organisational office

The six sessions in *Core Skills for Family Ministry* are designed as stand-alone modules, covering specific areas related to family ministry. It is expected that an individual or group will select an initial module appropriate to their needs and potentially move on to cover the remaining modules at a future date.

Each session is designed to take two hours. This timespan will be achieved by selecting from the material available. Each session could be extended to cover a whole day by using more of the material, adding some from the website and slowing the pace to allow more discussion, exploration and activity.

The **key indicators** shown beside each activity have been developed to give an idea of how long that item might take.

-  One key indicates a simple introductory activity that is likely to take only a short time to complete.
-  Two keys indicate a more in-depth activity that will require some thought and time.
-  Three keys indicate a high-content section containing the main thrust of the teaching.

By choosing more of the one-key activities and fewer of the three-key ones, you will have a shorter session. The reverse, of course, will give a longer session.

A *Core Skills for Family Ministry* session is laid out as follows.

- ❖ **Aim** of the whole module
- ❖ **Learning outcomes** that should be achieved through the session
- ❖ **Materials** needed to run the session
- ❖ **Opening thought** to enable reflection
- ❖ **Starters:** ways into the topic
- ❖ **Core teaching:** the main teaching element
- ❖ **Biblical thought:** tying the teaching to the Bible
- ❖ **Reflection on learning:** a prompt to help better understanding of the session
- ❖ **Worship:** suggestions to close the session in themed worship
- ❖ **Personal reflection sheet** to assist participants in noting their learning outcomes
- ❖ **Portfolio checklist** for those wishing to collect evidence of learning

Keep an eye on the CGMC website www.cgmcontheweb.com for additional resources, web links, articles and book suggestions, which will help participants to expand their knowledge.



Templates and handout sheets can be downloaded at www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/9780857464316.

Introductory session

Aim

- ❖ To provide a basic introduction to working with families in a church context
- ❖ To begin to engage participants in the content of the course

Learning outcomes

- ❖ To share hopes and fears about working with families
- ❖ To reflect critically on a variety of strategies for developing relationships with families
- ❖ To explore issues around families, theology and culture
- ❖ To consider how to approach a session with families
- ❖ To acknowledge and reflect on our personal experiences of family, and to recognise how this might impact on our approach to family ministry

Materials needed

- ❖ Labels or name badges for people as they arrive
- ❖ Flip chart paper and pens
- ❖ Bowl containing a wide variety of fruits, including some more unusual fruits if possible
- ❖ Sticky notes
- ❖ Pictures of fruit (page 16) or fruit-shaped sticky notes
- ❖ Copies of the Assessing training needs questionnaire (page 17)

Opening thought

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Community may be one of the first ways in which we encounter faith in the context of daily life. This may be in a family environment, whether that be biological, extended or church family. Faith can be nurtured and shaped through our experiences of such relationships. In this learning session, the group will develop a better understanding of each other's role in family ministry.

Starters

Who am I?

You will need

- * Flip chart paper and pens

Invite those attending to create groups of three and to check that they know each other's names. Then find out about the context of each other's work with families and family ministry.

Invite people to discuss:

- ❖ How they each felt before they came to this session.
- ❖ Their hopes and concerns about working with families.
- ❖ What they hope to get out of this session.

Invite feedback only on the hopes and concerns, which should be written on flip chart paper.

Fruit bowl

You will need

- * Bowl containing a wide variety of fruits, including some more unusual fruits if possible

Place the bowl of fruit at the front or in the centre of the group. Each person states which of the fruits best describes them and why.

This is a reminder that each person brings something different to family ministry, which leads to a balanced and varied combination—as would be the case in a fruit salad.

Ask people:

- ❖ How did they feel when they were choosing a piece of fruit?
- ❖ What is their role in family ministry? Is it, for example, exciting, daunting or a combination?
- ❖ What insight does this give them in their work with families?

Core teaching

Reflecting on family life

It is important to be sensitive and offer the following as a time for personal reflection as opposed to sharing with the wider group, as it may be a difficult or painful experience for some people.

For many of us, there will have been someone who has influenced us and had an impact on our lives.

Invite people to find their own space and go through the following points:

- ❖ What words come to mind when you think about your own experience of family?
- ❖ Can you think about a person in your family who was a positive influence, or someone that you learnt from?
- ❖ What qualities did that person have that had the most influence on you?
- ❖ Think of a family tradition that has stayed with you. For example, for some eating meals in the house anywhere other than the kitchen or dining room would have been unacceptable. For others it may be something different.
- ❖ Is this something you still hold to now and has it been passed on to younger generations?
- ❖ How do you think your past experience, whether positive or negative, impacts your approach to family ministry?

As part of your portfolio, without going into specific detail, are there things that you have been surprised to remember during these questions and/or are there things you have realised for the first time?

Current context of families

You will need

- * Pictures of fruit (page 16) or fruit-shaped sticky notes

Working in small groups, invite people to write on the fruit shapes the key challenges faced by families they know or work with today, e.g. financial difficulties.

Share findings as a whole group.

Working with families

Invite people to share the experience of a memorable occasion when they have worked with families. Ask them to consider:

- ❖ What worked well, why did it work well and why do they remember it?
- ❖ What challenges have they met, or are they anticipating, in their work with families?
- ❖ Referring back to the fruit bowl exercise, which three challenges are the most relevant to their work and are they able to address these?

Considerations when working with families

It is important to be aware of a number of factors when working with and supporting families:

- ❖ Recognise the value of building positive, open and trusting relationships with the families you are working with
- ❖ Recognise the real difficulties the families face rather than perceived difficulties—taking time to get to know them is an important factor in this
- ❖ Recognise the importance of starting from where they are and journeying with them

Ask the group to discuss which of these factors is most important to them at this stage in their work. Which of them presents the greatest challenges?

Assessing training needs

You will need

- * Copies of the Assessing training needs questionnaire (page 17)

This session has drawn attention to just some of the skills and knowledge that are important for any adult working with families on behalf of the church. Some of this skill comes with experience, but it is important to take time to do some conscious learning as well, and to reflect critically on your experiences. Look at the outline of these sessions on the questionnaire and fill in the boxes to help you assess which topics are priorities for you.

Biblical thought

Choose a Bible story which does *not* reflect an 'ideal' family situation. Some suggestions are given below.

- Joseph's dreams, Genesis 37
- Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38–42
- The birth of Moses, Exodus 2:1–10
- Ruth and Naomi, Ruth 1:1–10
- Jesus in the temple, Luke 2:41–52

Ask one/some of the following questions:

- ❖ What is it that is causing the difficulties?
- ❖ How does it progress?
- ❖ Is there a satisfactory resolution?
- ❖ Are there things we can learn from this for our work with families?

In small groups, invite people to share one aspect of this session that has had a particular impact on them.

Worship

Sing or reflect on the words of the hymn 'Amazing Grace' together. Recognise and give thanks for the grace of God which allows each one of us to be a part of God's family.

Prayer

Heavenly Father

Thank you for the wonder of family—
A place that brings us joy and hope
Laughter and kindness
Yet also sometimes difficulty and frustration
Heartache and worry.

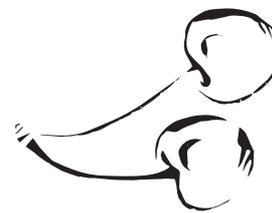
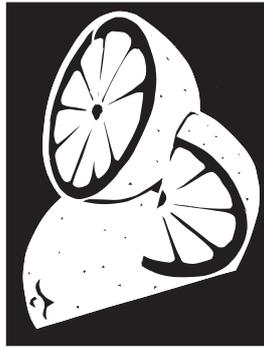
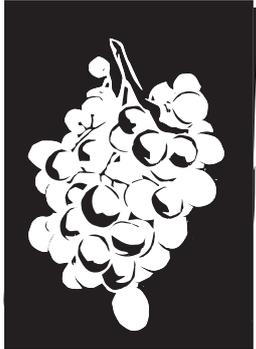
Father, would you dwell
At the heart of all families
As they seek to live life with one another.
Give them love and patience
Guide them in their lives together
Sustain them when life is difficult
Rejoice with them when life is good
And forever be the firm foundation
On which they can trust.

Thank you for your eternal love of us
Thank you for mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters,
Grandparents, cousins, sons, daughters
For all those who care and love
And create family where maybe it
Has been absent.
Give us all a heart to serve, love and cherish our
family
As you have loved us.
Amen

Optional activity

Chop up the fruit from the fruit bowl and enjoy together before leaving the session.

Pictures of fruit



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Assessing training needs questionnaire

No knowledge: **N**

Some knowledge: **S**

Fully confident: **F**

Introductory session

- ❖ To share hopes and fears about working with families
- ❖ To reflect critically on a variety of strategies for developing relationships with families
- ❖ To explore issues around families, theology and culture
- ❖ To consider how to approach a session with families
- ❖ To acknowledge and reflect on our personal experiences of family, and to recognise how this might impact on our approach to family ministry

Core Session One: Biblical, historical and contemporary understanding of family

- ❖ To gain insight into the biblical and historical understandings surrounding family
- ❖ To reflect on the differences and similarities between similarities between historical and contemporary situations
- ❖ To reflect on the structure of your own family, and of those around them

Core Session Two: Family ministry today

- ❖ To explore opportunities for families and churches to engage with each other
- ❖ To recognise the contemporary context of family life

Core Session Three: Seasons of family life

- ❖ To recognise the role of the church in the various seasons of family life
- ❖ To reflect on the occasions when families may celebrate and commemorate significant milestones experienced in their lives
- ❖ To appreciate the importance of managing these seasons well
- ❖ To be equipped and gain tools to support and resource families during these seasons of life

Core Session Four: Role of family relationships

- ❖ To reflect on traditional relationships and consider the implications for families if some of these relationships are missing or distorted (for example, mother/child, father/child, husband/wife, grandparent/child, neighbours, siblings, family/school, family/GP, family/vicar)

Assessing training needs questionnaire continued

No knowledge: **N**

Some knowledge: **S**

Fully confident: **F**

Core Session Four: Role of family relationships continued

- ❖ To plan ways to develop and strengthen relationships with families
- ❖ To explore how the church might offer specific support to families to help alleviate the impact of a missing or distorted relationship

Core Session Five: Family well-being and wholeness

- ❖ To gain a clearer understanding of the influence and impact of well-being on the life of families
- ❖ To develop thinking and inform future practice to ensure full participation by families in the life of the church

Core Session Six: Faith in families

- ❖ To recognise the role of the church in supporting families to live out faith in the home in a way that is appropriate and accessible for families
- ❖ To recognise the different factors to be taken into account when working with families, such as age, experience, time and finance
- ❖ To equip leaders to help families create faith-filled homes