

# Your *SHAPE* for God's Service

Materials for six sessions for church groups, to help people discern their gifts for God's service.

**3rd edition, 2013** (revised in the light of helpful feedback from users in Britain and abroad)

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* is designed to be appropriate for all kinds of churches, of any denomination, including churches whose members may not be confident about "having anything spiritual to offer." The materials are deliberately being offered in a simple and flexible form as Word documents downloadable free or on a computer disc, so that it can be tailored and adapted to suit the context. (There are no copyright restrictions).

## The aim

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* aims to enable church members to understand the unique *SHAPE* God has made them, the gifts he has given them and how he might want to use them. This is so that God's Kingdom may be built up as each person finds the ministry to which God is calling them in the Church and in the world. Hopefully this will enable participants to live and serve with more joy, satisfaction and fruitfulness. This should build a healthy growing church, and will affect the way each person engages with their family, friends, job, local community, and voluntary / leisure activities.

## The core topics

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* has a holistic approach. The sessions involve looking at:

<b>Your Spiritual Gifts</b>	(God's unique gifts to you)
<b>Heart's Desire</b>	(what motivates and excites you; what you love to do)
<b>Abilities</b>	(your talents, knowledge and skills)
<b>Personality</b>	(your character, personal qualities and strengths)
<b>Experience</b>	(your life experiences and what you've gained from them)
<b>for God's Service</b>	



## The strategy

Sadly, we often explore our gifts and calling in a rather individualistic way. Within the Body of Christ, this should be a collaborative process, drawing on each other's insights and spiritual discernment. *Your SHAPE for God's Service* creates an opportunity for this to happen.

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* is most effective when used regularly as part of a church's long term strategy, though it can be used as a one-off with small groups of interested people.

Ideally, the strategy would be to encourage most of the congregation to do the *SHAPE* course before too long (e.g. over a period of 2-3 years, though this depends on how many leaders you have available and how large the congregation is). After this, it should be run regularly to draw in recent church members, newly confirmed adults etc. It consists of six 2-hour sessions.

It is recommended that short-term groups are set up specifically to do *Your SHAPE for God's Service*, perhaps as a slightly extended Advent or Lent course. The material could be used in an existing home group if it is not too large, though experience has shown that this does not work as well as a specially created group where people have 'opted in' and chosen to do the course. Each group should have two leaders and ideally six to eight members.

The materials give full instructions for the group leaders, so that anyone with experience of group leadership and facilitation would be able to lead the course.

The materials are appropriate for people with a wide range of Christian experience and from a variety of church traditions.

After the course ends, each group member has a private **Individual Review** session with the Vicar, Parish Priest or Minister (and /or one of the group leaders), in order to explore what has been discovered, suggest possible areas of ministry, and make practical arrangements for action. **This is essential**, as it can be very frustrating to discover one's gifts and then to be unable to find ways of using them! Of course people need to be helped to see ways of using their gifts in all areas of their lives (e.g. at work), not just in a church context, and in ways appropriate for their particular *SHAPE*.



## The methods

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* aims to create an informal, accepting and relaxed atmosphere, where people feel safe to share things at a personal level. There will be some input from the leaders on the topics, and an exploration of Biblical teaching. There will also be practical exercises, discussion and application to each person's life situation, and prayer together. At the end of each session, a practical personal reflection exercise or questionnaire is given out, which will take about one hour to do. The following session will begin by discussing and applying the results of it. By the end of the course, each person will have compiled a profile of their current **SHAPE** for ministry.

## The content

**Session 1:** Introduces the aims and outlines of the *Your SHAPE for God's Service*; establishes an atmosphere of openness and trust; explores Biblical material on gifts, vocation, every member ministry and our role in building God's church and Kingdom on earth.

**Sessions 2-5:** Take each of the aspects of our **SHAPE**. This starts with Experience (which is the easiest to explore), and works backwards to Spiritual gifts.

**Session 6:** Concludes by looking at each person's profile and its implications, encouraging and praying for each other's ministries.



## Alternative 'non-group' ways of using Your SHAPE for God's Service

Many clergy, Vocations Advisers etc have also valued using some of the **SHAPE** materials with individuals, as part of the process of vocational discernment, spiritual direction or a 'Spiritual MOT'.

## The source

*Your SHAPE for God's Service* has been created by **Rev. Canon Amiel Mary E. Osmaston** (Ministry Development Officer for the Anglican Diocese of Carlisle).

## To obtain "Your SHAPE for God's Service":

a) download a zip file of the materials from the Diocese of Carlisle's website:

<http://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/our-faith/learning/shape-course-exploring-gifts.html> or

b) obtain a copy of the materials on computer disc (for £5, which covers p&p, to be paid by a cheque made out to "Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd"). Contact:

The Revd. Canon Amiel Osmaston, Church House, 19-24 Friargate, Penrith CA11 7XR

Tel: 01768 807765 Email: [ministry.dev@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:ministry.dev@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)