

Running Emmaus in a Pub – a personal story

Members of the congregation at St Mary's, Shinfield, Berkshire have been experimenting with exploring the Christian faith within the community. Rather than meeting in the church hall, the group led by Rev Owen Murphy, originator of the concept of meeting in local pub bars and calling the meetings 'Inn Keeping with Faith', and our local Reader, Chris Leslie, met on Tuesdays for around 2 hours at local public houses to work together to better understand their faith, and to bring Christianity out of the Church and into the community.

Owen agreed with local landlords to book a table for about six, all men, to explore faith through the Emmaus material, often digressing when things got personal.

Emmaus Units were used as the basis for the studies with a series of meetings occurring over a 5 week period. Our group has completed two sets of meetings studying the Holy Trinity, during the first session the group looked at Christ and in the second series we looked at the Holy Spirit, with a visit to one on the sessions by Reading's Bishop Stephen (one of the co-authors of Emmaus material).

As a member of the group, I was initially concerned at the prospect of reading and praying in public, especially in a location which felt inappropriate. These feelings only lasted however for the first couple of meetings, I found the relaxing environment encouraged debate with the sharing of experiences, bringing to life my faith. Pub regulars soon got used to the strange huddle and language, and just accepted us. I found the opportunity to question and debate the meaning of the readings refreshing compared with a more formal tutorial environment or within a normal church service. Most importantly through sharing experiences I now know that Christ is still communicating and influencing those who take time to listen.

Mike Bunn and Owen Murphy