

# *KEEPING IN TOUCH*

*(KIT)*

*parish ministry reaching out to  
non church-going and church-going Catholics*

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

KEEPING IN TOUCH (KIT) is a new, lay-led ministry designed to involve the whole parish in reaching out in welcome to every local Catholic, whether or not they go to Church, and to strengthen the roots of the whole parish community through home visits and small group meetings for those who wish to explore their faith once more.

Those interested are invited to join other church-going and non church-going Catholics for a series of small group meetings during which they can ask questions, raise issues, deal with difficulties and explore today's Church without the need to commit themselves.

This resource, based on the experience of a U.K. parish, gives step by step guidelines to parishes embarking on this new ministry.

KIT resource written by Sheila Keefe.

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## **The KIT Prayer**

Lord,

I offer you my seeking; show me the way.

I offer you my doubts; lead me to trust in you.

I offer you my hurts; heal me.

I offer you my fears; give me hope.

I offer you my loneliness; welcome me.

I offer you my mind; grant me understanding.

I offer you my heart; warm it with love.

I offer you my journey; lead me home  
where I can live in your justice, peace and love.

Amen.

# Introduction

KEEPING IN TOUCH (KIT) is a lay-led ministry designed to involve the whole parish in reaching out in welcome to every local Catholic, whether or not they go to Church, through home visits and small group meetings for those who wish to explore their faith once more.

**Parish involvement.** Each parish will need one or two enthusiastic parishioners, supported by the parish priest, to begin a KIT programme, but all parishioners have the opportunity to play a key role - through their prayers, their contacts with church-going and non church-going Catholics, by acting as welcomers and companions during the group meetings or by joining the KIT Team.

**Lay responsibility.** Many Catholics today would appreciate the opportunity for closer links with their parish community. In previous years this was provided for at least in part by the parish priest, whose home visits told them they belonged. If they failed to come to Church, they would be missed and in many cases, problems and difficulties could be talked through and solved.

Today, “lay people find themselves in the front line of the Church’s mission and in places where clergy seldom venture”<sup>1</sup>. We are being encouraged to take up the responsibilities of our baptism and to reach out in love and care for one another. ‘Love must not be a matter of theory or talk; it must be true love which shows itself in action’ (1 John 3:18). We believe that every person is gifted by God and that no parish is whole when it fails to include the gifts and talents of those who are uninvolved or absent. ‘All of us, though there are so many of us, make up one body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another’ (Rom: 12:4).

**Home visits.** The KIT programme suggests many different ways in which parishes can reach out and keep in touch with all their parishioners - whether or not they go to Church. One of the most effective ways is through home visits. This is a ministry which now falls into the hands of the laity; and it is one which can be done quite exceptionally well provided they go prepared! Most people are terrified of knocking on strange doors! But when they know what to say, and are holding something to give to people, home visits can become one of the most rewarding, needed and effective ministries ever!

**Small group meetings.** Those who wish to explore their faith once more are invited to join other church-going and non church-going Catholics for a series of small group lay-led meetings, during which they can ask questions, explore today’s Church and deal with issues and difficulties without the need to commit themselves. The final meeting includes an invitation to Reconciliation for those who wish, a Group Mass and a party. Exploring Catholics can repeat the course as often as they wish, either as enquirers or as welcomers and companions to new returning Catholics.

**Two out of every three Catholics no longer come to Church, and for many different reasons:**

Some, although baptised, have never had their faith awakened; some have never really heard the Gospel message or have been given such a distorted view of it that they have rejected it out of hand; some people stop going to Church because their child failed to get a place in a Catholic school.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Growing Together In Christ’ by Bp Crispian Hollis paragraph 43

Some have been shocked or scandalised by the behaviour and attitudes of practising Catholics – including priests and bishops.

Some have experienced deep hurt and rejection, especially as a result of the Church's laws relating to marriage and sexuality. One Catholic lady was actually told by her parish priest to choose between her non-Catholic fiancé and the Church; many others have been hurt by the coldness of their (mixed) marriage ceremony, often in a side-chapel with no flowers or music.

Some have been unable to accept the teaching of the Church on certain issues.

Many of these Catholics can feel a great emptiness in their lives and would love the opportunity to explore their Church once more, although they may be nervous about approaching their parish priest. Some have sought the help of the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) but this is not the right place for them and their often painful stories do not help enquirers who may be exploring the Catholic Church for the first time.

**Other programmes.** In recent years several programmes for returning Catholics have been produced, including 'Re-Membering'<sup>2</sup> and 'Landings'<sup>3</sup> in the United States, and 'Catholics returning Home'<sup>4</sup> in New Zealand. In 1995 in the U.K a parish group called ROOTS<sup>5</sup> began the task of reaching out, first to non church-going Catholics and then to all its parishioners through home visits. We are indebted to and draw on the experiences of each of these programmes.

Portsmouth diocese has adopted KIT as part of its Pastoral Plan. In 2004 a diocesan group was formed to promote the programme and has been responsible for overseeing this 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the KIT handbook. In the spring of 2006 3 KIT workshops attracted the support of 70 people from 32 parishes, 17 deaneries and 3 other dioceses and now offers help, support and formation to any group wishing to run KIT in their local pastoral area.

See the diocesan website for all you need to know about KIT.

[www.portsmouth-dio.org.uk](http://www.portsmouth-dio.org.uk)

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Harmony, "RE-MEMBERING - the ministry of welcoming alienated and returning Catholics" (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota)

<sup>3</sup> [landingsuk@hotmail.com](mailto:landingsuk@hotmail.com) [www.bsac.ac.uk](http://www.bsac.ac.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Catholics Returning Home Program  
A Ministry Outreach of Petrie Catholic Community  
38 Armstrong St. Petrie Qld. 4502  
Email: [lrd@petrie.hotkey.net.au](mailto:lrd@petrie.hotkey.net.au)

Fax: (07) 3285 6243

<sup>5</sup> 'ROOTS - a way back to the Catholic Church' by Sheila Keefe. Available from [estephen@predtr-parkplace.org](mailto:estephen@predtr-parkplace.org)

## **Parish involvement**

*(This could form the basis of a talk to the parish when launching the programme)*

The more parishioners who are involved in the programme, the more effective it will be for Catholics who are looking for a way back to the Church.

### **Why should I become involved?**

- Christ told all the baptised to go out and spread the Good News. This programme is our opportunity to do just that!
- Every parishioner will almost certainly know at least one Catholic who no longer goes to Mass. What we may not realise is that we could be that person's only contact with the parish. The ROOTS team heard about Rose from her next-door neighbour; she was housebound and unable to speak. When she was asked if she wanted to see the priest her face lit up and she smiled continuously as he anointed her. Once in touch she received weekly Holy Communion until she died two years later.
- When Catholics leave the parish, they take with them precious gifts and skills, leaving us impoverished and incomplete.
- We may think of 'lapsed' Catholics as 'them' rather than 'us'. Yet all of us are 'lapsed' in some way. Perhaps we too have no-go areas in our faith; perhaps we too have been hurt or scandalised by a member of the Church, or have difficulty in accepting part of the Church's teaching.
- We 'practice' our faith more than by simply going to Church; we practice our faith at home, at work and in the world. The Sacraments nourish, strengthen, unite and reconcile us. Many Catholics who no longer come to Church still practice their faith in the world, often alone and with great difficulty and without the Sacramental support we enjoy.
- As a body, Catholics are reluctant to talk about their faith, perhaps because of fear of preaching heresy! However, most Catholics who stop coming to Mass are not looking for theological answers. They are far more likely to be apathetic, or to be carrying a burden of guilt, pain or anger. Often what they need is to be listened to and made to feel welcomed, wanted and understood. If we cannot answer a question, we can always tell them we will find out.
- The most important reason of all is that our faith, to survive, needs to be shared! Just as we grow to wholeness and become ourselves through belonging to one another, so we grow as Christians through our love and care for each other.

## **What would I have to do?**

- Pray:
  - For the success of the programme.
  - For any non church-going Catholics we know.
  - For ourselves, that we can become more welcoming, compassionate, sensitive to the hurts and anger of others, less judgemental, better listeners.
  - Say the KIT prayer daily.
- Take home a flyer (*see page 29 - Appendix E*). Keep it in a safe place, ready to give to any Catholic you know or meet whom you think might be interested.
- **Or** give the team, priest or parish office the name and address of any Catholic you have reason to believe might be interested and the KIT team will invite them to the next Information Evening.
- Be prepared to listen if someone tells you they are Catholic but do not go to Church. Ask them if they miss it, if they ever thought of coming back – and be prepared to listen, if they want to talk. One person visited confessed that he had stopped going to Mass because it was so old fashioned, and wistfully asked many questions about the changes that had taken place after Vatican II. Another told us she had never been invited back to the Church she left twenty years ago. Both these are now regular Mass-goers.
- Offer to take any interested Catholic to the information evening (or perhaps the meetings), or help them to find a friend to go with.
- Offer to be a companion or welcomer(*see page 12*) for a returning Catholic.

# The KIT Team

The KIT Team and the active support of the parish priest are the keys to the success of the whole programme. They will be responsible for opening minds and hearts to welcome all parishioners, whether or not they go to Church. The support of the parish priest is crucial, both in helping to select, train and commission the team, in presiding at the final meeting and in acting as a mentor and guide, although he will not be present during the group meetings with non church-going Catholics for fear of inhibiting them from sharing freely.

One or two enthusiastic facilitators will be needed to set the wheels in motion. Their aim will be to find and form a team of parishioners who are prepared:

- to make this ministry a priority
- to go through a short period of formation (*see p.10:Formation of a KIT team*)
- to meet once a week or according to the needs of the group
- to be commissioned by the parish priest
- Never to repeat outside the team what is said during meetings or information gained through accessing parish records<sup>4</sup> or home visits<sup>5</sup>.

## **STEPS TOWARDS SETTING UP A KIT TEAM**

**1. Request the prayers of the parish**, the housebound and religious communities, and write intercessions to be included at Sunday Masses.

**2. List potential KIT team members**. (Task for the priest and facilitators) Find up to 30 parishioners, through personal contact and parish records (taking care to conform to the provisions of the Data Protection Act – see below), who may be willing and able to join the team, selecting in particular people who are non-judgmental, compassionate welcoming, good listeners and who have time to attend regular meetings, and including:  
people who have been away from the Church and have returned  
newcomers to the parish who may not be already involved  
active retired parishioners  
people who are already in touch with non church-going Catholics  
representatives of the whole parish ethnic and cultural community

**3. Invite those listed to a meeting** Write a letter (*see Appendix A – page 25*) from the parish priest to those selected, inviting them to a meeting about the KIT programme. During the meeting describe the programme and collect the names of those prepared to

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<sup>4</sup> The Data Protection Act exists to prevent a record keeper from releasing information to a third party for a purpose other than that already agreed with the person whose data is being released without their agreement. Where parish records are kept they are legally being kept by the Charity (i.e. the Diocese) and they contain information about individuals (which those individuals have either consented to being held or not) which are subsequently used by the parish (or diocese) for the purposes of the charity. A team working on a pastoral programme (such as KIT) is not a third party but part of the activity of the Charity and so the only data protection issue to keep in mind is that the information should not be released to a third party.

*As authorised by the Head of Portsmouth Diocese Dept of Finance & Property*

<sup>5</sup> N.B. **All those making home visits will need to be CRB checked.**

be committed – a team of 12 - 14 would be ideal, but 6 is enough to start with. Choose a suitable time and place and begin team formation!

#### **4. KIT team formation** (This could take several weeks with regular meetings)

Begin each meeting by spending 20-30 minutes looking at the following Sunday's Gospel and listening to what it is saying to us through one another. (*A well tried way is to read the passage aloud, pause for personal reflection, read it again and then each share our thoughts on its meaning and message*). In this way, the group draws together and begins to share and deepen faith. A different person could lead this part of the meeting each week.

Spend the rest of the meetings preparing for the ministry, asking:

- Why do people stop coming to Church? (*drifted, been hurt, scandalised, broken the rules, disagreed with Church teaching, never grown into a personal relationship with Christ?*)
- Have we ever been through similar experiences?
- What attracts us to Church? Why do we keep coming?
- What might non church-going Catholics miss? What do we miss through their absence?
- This programme is a **listening ministry**. How can we become better listeners?
- What does it mean to be a minister? What other lay ministries are there?
- What happens during the meetings for returning Catholics? (*Run through one of these meetings so that the team can talk about them with enquirers ( see pages 13 - 15).*)
- What gifts and skills do we have in the team? (*Time, letter-writing, designing posters and flyers, computer skills, talking at Masses, keeping records, leading meetings, visiting, listening, writing prayers etc.*)
- How do we make contact with non church-going Catholics?

**5. Arrange an Information Evening** (*Page 13*) When the team feels ready, agree a date and venue for an information evening for anyone interested in KIT, including non church-going Catholics and those interested in becoming welcomers or companions (*see page 12*) during the KIT group meetings. Advertise this evening as widely as possible, following the guidelines below.

## **Making contact**

### **Making contact with non church-going RCs**

Ideas include:

- Talks at Sunday Masses inviting parishioners to play their part in KIT *[see page 7]*.
- Give every parishioner a flyer *[see page 29 Appendix E]* to give to any non church-going Catholic whom they think may be interested, advertising the next information evening and the meetings, leaving plenty in the Church - especially for baptisms, weddings, funerals, First Holy Communion and Confirmation celebrations and at Christmas and Easter, all of which attract people who do not usually come to church.
- Offer flyers to those running baptism, 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Communion, confirmation and marriage preparation programmes, to the S.V.P., the parish Welcome group, the PPC, CWL etc. and leave plenty in the priest's house.
- Advertise KIT in local schools and leave copies for parents' meetings.
- Display posters – in Church porch, notice boards, school playground (where parents pick up their children), in the parish social centre, in local shops, libraries.
- Put KIT onto the parish/pastoral area website.
- Articles in the local press (with enquiries to parish secretary).
- Be welcoming – especially to newcomers, visitors and unknown church-goers.
- Personal contact – this is the most effective way. One parishioner who prepared children for first Holy Communion discovered that her friend was a Catholic and asked if she would like her children to attend the sessions. Within the next year the whole family were going to Mass regularly.
- Send personal invitations *(see page 26 – Appendix B)* to the next information evening to Catholics who might be interested, making sure they would have someone to go with.
- Go through parish records and list any unknown Catholic and any Catholic known not to go to Mass. Write them a letter *[see page 28 - Appendix D]* Visit them! *(see Home Visits page 16-18)*

# **MEETINGS FOR EXPLORING CATHOLICS**

Catholics who wish to explore their faith once more are invited to a series of meetings to help them re-connect with the Church they left, perhaps many years ago. It is important for them to come into a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, either in someone's home or in a small welcoming parish room which is accessible to all and including disability, video and catering facilities.

**1. Members** Numbers can vary between six and twelve – more than twelve people can be forbidding and may stifle participation by the shyer members. They will include:

a) **Facilitators:** one or two members of the KIT Team who will facilitate the meetings.

Their duties will include:

- Gathering together a group of about 6 welcomers and companions to assist them in running the meetings; an appeal to the parish at Mass is often successful.
- Arranging suitable times and venues with the priest, welcomers and companions for all the meetings and particularly the last meeting, which includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Mass. The presence of the priest at the earlier meetings is not encouraged as it may well inhibit returning Catholics from expressing their views freely.
- With the KIT Team, composing and distributing the flyer widely.
- With the KIT Team, collecting the names of all those who have shown an interest in exploring their faith once more, writing them a personal letter (*see Appendix B page 27*), inviting them to the information evening and giving them a copy of the flyer.
- Giving the talk at the information evening and leading the meetings.
- Assembling some simple resources, including bibles, prayer and simple study books, videos, the catechism, C.T.S. leaflets, missals and little prayer cards, to display in the meeting room, for people to take home and study if they wish.
- Reporting back to the KIT Team on the progress of the meetings.

b) **Welcomers and Companions** Volunteers from the parish (welcomers), and perhaps friends of Catholics who wish to explore their faith once more (companions).

Their duties will include:

- To create a warm, friendly atmosphere at each meeting, making sure that everyone is welcomed as they arrive and has someone to be with during the evening.
- To offer refreshments (tea, coffee, wine, soft drinks and biscuits).
- To make sure pens, paper and copies of the reply slip (*see page 27 - Appendix C*), the prayer and the worksheets for each meeting are available.
- To stay behind after the meetings in case people wish to talk.
- To be available as a companion for returning Catholics who may wish to go to Mass or talk between meetings.

- Companions could also encourage returning Catholics to become involved (with them) in some parish activities, giving out hymnbooks, joining the choir, making tea.

The part played by the welcomers and companions is of the utmost importance. Nobody likes to walk into a room full of strangers and for a Catholic who may be feeling nervous, suspicious, guilty or still smarting from the pain of past hurts, it is even harder. The welcomers are there to greet all who come, make them feel at home and ensure that they are not left by themselves. They need to be people who can be trusted, who observe the confidentiality rule and who are sensitive to the returners. As soon as people arrive, two welcomers will serve light refreshments.

- c) **Exploring Catholics:** If there are more than four, start another group!

## **2. The meetings**

### **i. Information evening**

Interested Catholics will first be invited to an information evening, to help them decide whether to join the programme.

Here is a format that you may find helpful:

- *(30 minutes)* As people arrive they will be offered a welcome and refreshments; group leaders and welcomers ensure that each exploring Catholic has someone to be with during the evening.
- *(10 minutes)* The group leader will give a short outline of the sessions, stressing that we are all on the same journey and all need information, help and support.
- *(30 minutes)* After the talk, allow plenty of time for general questions and more refreshments for those who wish.
- *(15 minutes)* Everyone there will receive a copy of the KIT prayer and a simple reply slip to fill in and give to the group leader (*see Appendix C page 27*).
- The group then agrees the date, time and place for the subsequent meetings and the meeting ends with the KIT prayer.

### **ii. Subsequent Meetings of the group**

In the following 6-8 group meetings exploring Catholics are offered an opportunity to ask questions, raise issues, explore today's Church and deal with difficulties without the need to commit themselves.

The purpose of the meetings is threefold:

- To offer non church-going Catholics the opportunity to explore their faith once more and learn about the changes that may have taken place since they left.

- To give them an opportunity to share their own faith journey with the group and to listen to the experiences of others.
- To offer church-going Catholics (up to 6 of whom could be invited to be welcomers or companions during the meetings) an opportunity to take a new look at their faith, because every time we gather in this way we grow in our faith.

The format of the meetings is quite simple: After introductions and a reflection, members of the group will share their own faith journeys and then explore different aspects of the Catholic faith, through videos, talks and/or work sheets.

***What is said during the meetings can be very personal and sensitive and must never be repeated outside the group.***

Time keeping is important to allow for baby-sitters and early risers. The meeting lasts for about one and a half hours, leaving time for people to stay and talk informally afterwards if they wish.

**1. Welcome and Refreshments (10-15 minutes)**

**2. Tune in to one another (5-10 minutes)**

Introduce ourselves and mark ourselves out of ten for what sort of a day we have had, and perhaps how we are feeling – nervous, excited, tired, stressed etc. This is a light-hearted way of breaking the ice and getting to know each other. It is important to ask people to say the number first without saying why they have chosen it. Then they are invited to share if they wish why they chose that number.

**3. Tune in to God (5-10 minutes)**

Each week a different person in the group (beginning with the facilitator and companions) shares a favourite prayer, reading, picture, object or piece of music, explaining why it is special to them or has brought them close to God, and then listens to responses from the rest of the group. This part of the meeting could also end with a short prayer.

**4. Story Telling (15-20 minutes)**

Each week a different member of the group shares their faith story. This is a very important part of the meeting. All of us have faced difficulties at times in our lives as Catholics, periods of doubt, feelings of guilt and unworthiness. Many of us have been hurt, some of us deeply wounded, perhaps because of the way we have been treated; or perhaps we have been scandalised by the behaviour of other Catholics, even priests, nuns or bishops. Some may be living in ways which are not in tune with Church teaching, especially relating to sex and marriage. To some, the Church has just seemed to be rules and regulations or a moral code; they have never heard the invitation to build a personal relationship with God.

So at each meeting, one person is invited to spend a few minutes sharing their faith story with the rest of the group, perhaps including a little about their parents, their childhood experiences of Church, who has and has not helped them on their journey, why they are here today. No one has to do this and we share only as much of our story as we feel comfortable with. The story telling is important because it is here that the group will begin to look at the issues, challenges and difficulties so many people

face, as well as their blessings - and it is amazing how many others in the group will have had similar experiences. For the rest of the group, the key factor here is in our listening – story telling is a very personal and emotional time and the story-teller needs to be appreciated, understood and made to feel comfortable. Stillness, eye-contact, body language are all very important here. At the end of the story, feedback from the rest of the group should never challenge or question but always appreciate and affirm the story teller.

### **5. Exploring our Faith (30 minutes)**

Each week the group explores one aspect of the Church's faith and life including:

- Why Catholics leave, and return to, the Church
- Today's Church – Vatican II
- Reconciliation
- The Mass
- The Creed
- Justice and Peace
- Other issues which the group may wish to explore.

Videos, fact sheets [see worksheets pp.19-24] or talks can supply simple information for this part of the meeting. After a short presentation group members can share their reactions to and their own experiences of the subjects they have just looked at.

### **6. Preparations for the next meeting (5 minutes)**

Arrange date, prayer leader, story teller and theme leader for the following meeting.

### **7. The meeting ends with the KIT prayer [page 4].**

## **iii. Final Meeting**

At the end of this series of meetings the group will spend a longer time together, when there will be an opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (if they wish), a group House Mass and a party. This meeting could take place in a local retreat centre or in the home or centre where the meetings were held. Facilitators will arrange times and venues for this meeting with the priest well in advance.

- Anyone who wishes, not just those who are returning, has an opportunity to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The rest of the group gathers in a room nearby and prepares the House Mass – choosing hymns, readers, readings, offertory bearers and ministers for Holy Communion.
- The Group Mass should involve as many of the group as possible.
- After the Mass the group continues to celebrate with a party, during which a date for the next series of meetings is set. All members are invited to join once more, perhaps as companions or simply because they may like to repeat the meetings.

## Home Visits

One of the most effective ways of making contact and keeping in touch with all parishioners is through home visits. This is a vital and special ministry which, in previous years was always done by the priest. Today, however, priests no longer visit people in their homes on a regular basis. This is a ministry which now falls into the hands of the laity; and it is one which they can do quite exceptionally well provided they have training! Most people are terrified of knocking on strange doors! But when we know what to say, and are holding something to give to people, home visits can become one of the most rewarding, needed and effective ministries ever!

*“When I learned that we were expected to go knocking on doors I nearly left the team, but my friend and I practised what to do and say with the team and we were encouraged to give it a try. We were literally terrified as we approached the first few doors but unbelievably people seemed pleased to see us. They were really impressed that they were still on our list as belonging to the parish and that we had bothered to call, not to judge or preach but to offer them information about the parish and help if they needed it. We soon looked forward to visiting and so often came away humbled and enriched by the stories we heard on the doorsteps”. (Written by a member of the ROOTS group).*

The KIT team will want to spend a few meetings preparing for Home visits, including dividing up the parish, composing a letter and bookmark to send to all those to be visited, preparing materials to take with them on visits and practicing visiting through role play.

**N.B. All home visitors will need to be C.R.B. checked.**

### **The following guidelines could prove helpful:**

- Divide the parish into manageable sections
- From parish lists and personal knowledge (helped by the parish priest/secretary) note any unknown Catholic, and any Catholic known not to go to Mass, in each section.
- Compose a letter, signed by the parish priest, (*see page 28 - Appendix D*), and a small card or bookmark with contact details, to send to people on the list, section by section, so that you are not ‘cold calling’. Visit them two weeks later, giving them plenty of time to think about where they stand and to decline a visit if they prefer.
- Prepare materials to take with you on your visits which could include:
  - a calling card to put through the door in case there is no reply
  - a list of parish activities with contact details, and a weekly parish bulletin
  - a prayer of blessing for the home
  - copies of the flyer advertising the next KIT information evening
  - book marks or cards to give to children
  - a photo and an authorisation signed by the parish priest
  - a list of local, diocesan and national helplines (marriage, drug/alcohol/child abuse, disability, social etc)
- Visitors should always go in twos, at least for a first visit (if a person needs a second visit this could be one to one if it seems appropriate, provided the team know when and where the visitor is at any time). It helps to say a short, silent prayer when approaching the house, to find the right words for whoever opens the door. It might also help to
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- keep handy a notepad and pencil, but never write after a visit when you can still be seen by the person visited!
- First impressions are vital! In spite of the letter, many people will think we are checking up on them or trying to get them back to Church! They need to be welcomed and made to feel they belong, wherever they are on their journey. They know from the letter that you represent the priest. Ask if they need any information or help from the parish, or if they would like to be in touch with other Catholics. Above all, listen!
- If they tell you they do not go to Church, ask if they miss it. That has often proved a good opening for them to share in a very personal way. Listen!
- Leave appropriate materials with them as you go and let the KIT Team know of anyone who shows an interest in exploring their faith once more. These should receive a personal letters (*see Appendix C - page 27*) inviting them to the next information evening.
- Practice home visits in role play so that the words you use are familiar [*see below*].

The value of home visits by the laity, once established, is quickly seen. The ROOTS team (*see page 6: 'other programmes'*) went on to visit every Catholic household in their parish. They were able to put would-be singers and cantors in touch with the choir and liturgy group, enquirers with the RCIA, the housebound with the S.V.P., the telephone Mass link and onto the sick communion list. They arranged lifts for the lonely to the Thursday lunches and gave the names of young people, sports enthusiasts and justice and peace activists to the groups concerned. A few people turned down the offer of a visit but the majority were pleased to see them and to have the opportunity to talk about their likes and dislikes about the parish, their hopes and needs and, for more than a few, their faith. Visits such as these fill the vacuum left when the priests' visits became less frequent, and do much to strengthen the bonds of the whole parish community.

## KIT role play:

Here are some suggestions for practicing home visits. The key is to **listen, listen, listen**.

Hello Mr/Mrs .... (*Always call them by name so they know we are not total strangers*)

We are x and y from ----- parish. Did you receive a letter from Fr ----- a few days ago?  
(*If not, give them another copy*)

Is this a good moment to call? (*Dinner on? Baby in bath? If not, arrange another visit*).

We have your name on our parish records as Catholic – is that right?

*\*If they say they don't go to church, put them at their ease, let them know they still belong, ask if they miss it and, if appropriate, offer them information about KIT meetings.*

*\* If they simply say yes, assume they go to Church and proceed as follows:*

We have called because this is quite a large parish and it is easy for people to feel left out.

Is there anything you specially need from the parish at the moment? Information, help of any kind?

Are there any areas of parish life that you think are being neglected, that you would like to see more of, or less of?

Is there anything you would specially like to do in the parish and no-one ever asked you? – reading, welcoming, singing in the choir, helping with refreshments, lifts, counting money, helping young people in the parish?

We have brought you some information about the parish (*offer them prayer card, help lines, contacts etc. and a newsletter if they don't seem to have one*)

It is lovely to meet you! Please don't hesitate to contact us if you ever need information or help of any kind.

### **Some typical situations to practice:**

Mrs Green: (*a common response*) Thank you. No help needed at the moment.

*Response: Give literature. If appropriate comment on children, garden, dog etc. to draw her into conversation and establish a relationship.*

Mr Black: Has sort of lost the habit of going to Mass. Delighted to get the visit.

*Response: Ask if he would like to start coming again, or join a parish organisation or group. Does he know Catholics living nearby? Give him all the literature – especially KIT details, and note, after you leave the house, to send him a personal invitation to the next KIT information evening.*

Mr Smith: (quite angry) I am not interested, since they refused my son a place in the Catholic school, I assume because my wife is not a Catholic.

*Response: Apologise! Ask what his son is doing now. Offer him literature*

Mrs White: Husband not a Catholic and Sunday is their only family day together. But the children are baptised and she does say her prayers and has faith

*Response: Asks if she misses going to Mass. Draw her attention to any children's catechism/sacramental preparation classes if available in the parish. Give literature.*

Miss Brown: Usually goes to the 6.30 p.m. Mass but does not like to get involved. Doesn't know anyone and doesn't really want to.

*Response: Leave literature. Charge a team member to look out for her at next Mass.*

Mr Blue: Doesn't come to Mass any more as people ignore him and his wife – “We feel rejected”. Shows us his living room with Sacred Heart statues and candles.

*Response: Apologise! Suggest we meet them at church gates; give them literature*

Mr & Mrs Grey: In 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage. “We are told we are living in sin; we do not feel welcome in church”.

*Response: Apologise! Would you like to come back? Or join a small bible study group? (Show them diocesan tribunal contact details in their help lines list, if appropriate).*

Mrs James: very elderly; lives alone; cannot get to church any more but doesn't like to bother the priest.

*Response: Arrange visits from S.V.P. and minister of Communion and put her onto the telephone link for Sunday Mass if available.*

Mrs Jones: Child answers door; mother calls to bring us in; she is feeding a very disabled child. She doesn't get to Mass as child is noisy and she feels she is disturbing others.

*Response: Spend time listening. Give her details of carers' help lines and other families with disabilities. Find helpers for her so she can get to church when possible.*

## Information sheet 1: Vatican II

Throughout the Church's history, the popes have periodically called all their bishops together in council to discuss the issues and concerns of that time. For instance in 325AD the Council of Nicea finally defined the Nicene Creed that we recite in Mass each week and in 1545 the Council of Trent was called to deal with attacks on the Church during the Reformation.

The twentieth century saw enormous social, political, and economic change. The world went through two world wars and a great depression. People's lives and consciousnesses were changed forever. In 1962 Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council saying it was time the Church opened its windows to the world and let the Holy Spirit blow through. By the end of 1965, the Council had written sixteen significant documents that would change the way the Church related within itself and within the world.

- The first, and some would say the most significant change, was that the Church redefined itself as the "People of God" rather than a pyramid with the Pope at the top and the laity at the bottom, there only to pray, pay and obey!
- Lay people were encouraged to learn more about their faith. A new interest in scriptures and biblical teaching grew amongst the laity and today many parishes have scripture study groups.
- The altar rails that separated the priest from the people were removed as a symbol that we are all involved, not just the priest and the altar was moved from the back wall close to the people. The priest faced the people so that all could see and be involved in the ritual of the Mass.
- The language of the Mass was changed from Latin, which was the language of the Church, to the vernacular, in our case English, so the people could not only understand but also join in the prayers of the Mass and lay people led some of the readings and prayers.
- Lay people also began to distribute Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick and housebound. People were also given the option to receive the Blessed Sacrament on their hands rather than in the mouth.
- An influx of new hymns referred to the love relationship we have with God.
- We saw the introduction of the sign of peace, generally a handshake, given just after the Our Father, as a sign that being in a church community means supporting and caring for one another.
- We were encouraged to be in positive communication with the other Christian churches and other world religions, focussing on what we share in common rather than what divides us.
- Catholics were encouraged to be active in the debates within the scientific and technological world, particularly in bringing a moral and ethical perspective to the debate.
- Catholics are also encouraged to be active and outgoing bearers of the Gospel message, especially in situations of injustice and oppression.

The Catholic Church of the new millennium certainly looks different from the Catholic Church of the fifties and sixties. It is important, however, to remember that foundations of our faith have remained the same. We believe in a God who loves us passionately and unconditionally and who calls us to do the same in our family, our Church, our neighbourhood and the world. Together, we can make a real difference in our own lives and in the lives of all we touch.

### **Questions to consider:**

*How has Vatican II changed the role of the laity? Why do you think the Church made these changes?*

*Have these changes helped you to strengthen/deepen your faith? How?*

*How can we become more effective 'bearers of the Gospel message'?*

## **Information sheet 2: The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Read the Story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

Before Vatican II this Sacrament was called Confession and the faithful were encouraged to go weekly (grandparents will remember this as a Saturday job together with washing hair and darning socks!). The impression given was that in going to Confession sins were washed away and penitents made 'worthy' to receive Holy Communion the following day.

Today both the name and the emphasis have changed, partly to reflect the fact that we can never 'earn' forgiveness or worthiness but that God's forgiveness is always there, waiting for us, just as the father of the Prodigal Son waited so long for his Son to return home. All we have to do is to want to repent for our sins, to 'come to our senses' like the Prodigal Son when he longed for home once more.

The true riches of this Sacrament have been brought out in the new liturgy. As well as forgiveness and reconciliation with God it also offers us healing, freedom, strength and reconciliation with one another.

### **Healing**

Sin can be the result of many different factors in our lives – we can by nature be short-tempered, ambitious, mean or lazy. Perhaps we have been set a bad example at home or by friends, or been abused ourselves. We all need healing.

We can only become whole, and truly ourselves, through belonging to one another, because we are all parts, members, of the same body, The Body of Christ. 'We are all part of one another' (Eph. 4:25, and read chapters 5 & 6 as well for a list of sins!).

Sin damages our relationships with one another. 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' [1Cor.12:26]. That damage is a wound that hurts both us and the person sinned against, as well as Christ whose body we belong to. When we repent, the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps to heal our wounds and binds us together again, making us whole and stronger than before.

### **Liberation**

Sin is sometimes caused by addiction, to power, sex, drugs, wealth, comfort, all of which can sap our willpower. Our repentance is recognition of our sin and a cry for help. Thus the Sacrament of Reconciliation brings choice once more into our lives and helps to set us free from these addictions. 'Now you have been set free from sin and are the slaves of God' [Ro.6:22]. This can be sudden, but is usually a very gradual process!

### **Strength**

Left to ourselves we can be overwhelmed by the forces of sin and evil against us. But "With God all things are possible". (Matt.19:26). The power of this sacrament strengthens us to resist the temptations we face and to re-build relationships.

### **Reconciliation**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation strengthens our will and eases the way for us to settle disputes, reconcile differences, forgive one another and accept forgiveness.

Since Vatican II Catholics have been reminded that the sacrament of reconciliation can be celebrated:

- By individual confession (Rite 1)
- Within a Penitential Service (Rite 2)
- General Absolution (Rite 3) In case of grave necessity (if there is a shortage of confessors or where there is imminent danger of death)
- In the Sacrament of the Sick, in which all our sins are forgiven
- We can also acknowledge our sinfulness during Mass, for example at the Penitential Rite, during the Our Father and at the Sign of Peace; and Holy Communion 'strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this charity wipes away venial sins' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1394*).

**Rite 1**

Individual confession includes a greeting and blessing by the priest, who may also read from Scripture, followed by a confession of sins by the penitent, absolution by the priest and the dismissal with a blessing.

**Rite 2 Penitential Service**

The sacrament of Reconciliation can be celebrated in a special communal service, usually during Advent or Lent, when personal confession (often of just one sin) follows a liturgy with readings, hymns, prayers and perhaps a homily and a communal examination of conscience.

This Sacrament will often be an ordeal for us, because we find it difficult to admit our faults. But the forgiveness, healing, liberation and strength we receive more than compensate.

**Questions to consider:**

*If God forgives us anyway, why do we have to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

*How has your experience of this Sacrament changed over the years?*

*Have you been to a Reconciliation Service? Did you find it helpful? How?*

## **Information sheet 3: The Mass**

The celebration of the Eucharist, also called the Mass, is at the heart of the life of the Catholic Church. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. It is central to our identity and cannot be replaced. At Mass we are nourished through Scripture, through receiving Holy Communion and through the love and support of the faith community

The first Christians met in each other's homes for 'the breaking of bread'. Down through the centuries Catholics have continued to gather to celebrate the Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole of Christian life.

Pope John Paul II wrote in 1998, "Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, 'the Lord's day'". *Dies Domini* (14)

On Sunday the community gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. We listen and respond to the Word of God. The Eucharistic Prayer, which has its origins in Judaism, is the great prayer when we give thanks and praise to God. In Holy Communion though we are many in number, we become one body, because we eat the one bread of Life which is Christ. The Eucharist is not an end in itself but a stimulus to action, to go forth out into the world in the peace of Christ to live what we have just celebrated.

It is fitting that from this celebration, Holy Communion is taken to the sick and those unable to leave their homes. This action highlights the importance of the link between those unable to be there and the rest of the worshipping community.

### **The Order of Mass**

The Introductory Rites gather us together as a community and prepare us to listen to the Word of God and to celebrate the Eucharist. These Rites include the Greeting, Penitential Act, Kyrie, Gloria and Opening Prayer.

"The Mass is made up of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which are so closely connected as to form one act of worship. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is embodied and renewed." (Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass, para 10)

**LITURGY OF THE WORD:** We listen to God speaking to us through readings from Scripture and the Homily, and respond in our hearts and in the Creed. We bring to God our needs and those of the wider world in the Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions).

**LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST:** This follows a shape which goes back to the Last Supper. In the OFFERTORY bread and wine, symbols of our lives, are brought to the altar. In the EUCHARISTIC PRAYER these offerings become the Body and Blood of Christ and are offered to and accepted by the Father in one great act of thanksgiving. In COMMUNION we receive Christ's Body and Blood, re-affirming us as members of Christ's body, the Church.

The Concluding Rites close Mass with the challenge to be Eucharist to one another and to live out in our daily lives what we have professed in our celebration of the Mass, Christ's victory over evil, sin and death, and the Good News of our salvation.

### **Questions to consider:**

*In what ways could the liturgy of the word be improved in our parish?*

*What does it mean to 'become the Body of Christ'?*

*What is your experience of the Mass? How has it changed since you were young?*

## Information sheet 4: The Creed

<b>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen</b>	Source of everything that is good, everything we most long for. God created us to be one with him, with a thirst to share his life, love, peace, freedom, justice, beauty, truth, wisdom, goodness ..... 'Our hearts are made for God and we will find no rest until we rest in God' (St Augustine)
<b>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.</b>	Jesus is the Word of God, the image of God the Father, the human face of God. In becoming man he shows us what God is like in human terms.
<b>For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary and became man.</b>	Jesus is truly God and truly man and as such he is our mediator – our 'go-between'. Through Jesus we 'come to share in the divinity of him who humbled himself to share in our humanity'.
<b>For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfilment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.</b>	Jesus suffered and died for us and with us, because we suffer and die and cause suffering and death – he suffered and died for our sins: 'Whatever you do to the least of my brethren you do to me'. In rising from the dead he raises us up and enables us to share in his victory over sin and death.
<b>He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.</b>	If we have repented and chosen to put our lives into God's hands, then we will live for ever with him in his kingdom of justice, peace and love.
<b>We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.</b>	The Holy Spirit lives in us, teaches us about God, enables us to overcome our sinfulness and leads us to our home in Heaven.
<b>We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church</b>	We are the Church, the Body of Christ, as we all share the life of Christ in the Eucharist which makes us one with God and one with one another
<b>We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.</b>	Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins.
<b>We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.</b>	We believe that as Christ rose from the dead and lives for ever, so after death we will live for ever with the risen Christ.
<b>Amen.</b>	Yes! I believe this!.

### **Questions to consider:**

*What do God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit mean to me?*

*What does the Church mean to me?*

*Do you have difficulty in believing any part of the Creed? How and where can we find the answers to our questions?*

## **Information sheet 5: Justice and Peace**

*“He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and to set the downtrodden free” [Is: 61]*

This text from Isaiah is a call to all Christians, however poor, vulnerable, powerless, estranged or imperfect we are. We are all needy givers, broken healers, needy givers, powerless servants, pilgrim welcomers, sinful reconcilers, each of us needing help and support yet able to help and support one another, each in our own way.

We live in a world, in which millions of people suffer from deprivation, violence, oppression or prejudice, a world which thirsts for life, peace, freedom, justice and love. We tend to think that these problems are too big for us to solve. In fact, they are millions of little problems which can be solved by millions of people like us, each making a difference, by being kind, good listeners and non-judgmental to one another.

**What can we do?** There are many different ways in which we can help:

- The deprived need to be ‘filled with good things’. (*Mother Teresa once gave a starving family a bowl of rice; they immediately halved it to share with a family close by*). We can give a percentage of our income, buy ‘fair trade’ goods, hold or support functions for charity, simplify our lifestyle. We can support volunteers working in poor countries and also Government initiatives on aid, trade and debt.
- Victims of violence need healing, a place of safety, peace. We can listen to their stories, help to reconcile differences and settle disputes, support refuges for the abused, support or join peace movements.
- The oppressed need to be ‘set free, uplifted’. We serve them by trusting, respecting, affirming and listening to them, supporting those affected by addiction or injustice, joining Amnesty International, visiting/writing to prisoners
- Victims of prejudice need a welcome, love, a home. We can reach out in welcome to neighbours, colleagues, fellow church-goers, ethnic minorities, refugees, asylum seekers, travellers, smile at passers-by and support movements to promote equality.
- All of us need justice, our human rights to life, peace, freedom, equality, a home. We need to be aware of and respond to need, wherever we find it.

Life offers each of us a choice – to live by faith or fear. Fear tempts us to worship the false gods of wealth, strength, power and conformity which fail to deliver the guarantees we seek and which stifle our thirst for justice, so that the injustices of deprivation, violence, oppression and prejudice continue to cripple our world. Faith sets us free to share, heal, serve and love one another. By doing this we preach the Good News and create the will for justice, teaching ourselves and one another to live by faith in the God who guarantees for us a life, peace, freedom and love which the world cannot give and cannot take away

### **Questions to consider:**

*Share good ideas you have come across to help people in need.*

*Is your life governed by faith or by fear?*

*Which part of justice and peace work do you find most difficult? How can we, as a group, help to resolve these difficulties?*

### Useful addresses:

CAFOD, 2 Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London, SW9 9TY Tel: 020 7733 7900 email: website: [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

PAX CHRISTI St. Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, NW4 4TY Tel: 020-8203-4884 email: [paxchristi@gn.apc.org](mailto:paxchristi@gn.apc.org) Website: [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 17-25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA Tel: 020 7033 1500

CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE 9 Henry Rd, Manor House, London, N4 2LH Tel: 020-8802-8080 email: [info@carj.co.uk](mailto:info@carj.co.uk) Website: [www.carj.co.uk](http://www.carj.co.uk)

**APPENDIX A:**

*(See page 9)*

**Sample letter of invitation to join KIT Team**

*The Presbytery  
Address  
Phone number  
Email address*

*Dear*

**KEEPING IN TOUCH (KIT) - AN INVITATION**

*Our parish is about to embark on a new area of ministry which involves reaching out to and keeping in touch with all our parishioners, whether or not they go to Church. Your name has been put forward as someone who could make a valuable contribution in this field.*

*I am therefore inviting you to an information evening about the programme to be held:*

*on.....*

*in.....*

*at.....*

*At this meeting you can learn a little more about the work involved before deciding whether or not to commit yourself to joining the team.*

*Please could you let me or (parish representative – give contact details) know on the reply slip below by ..... whether or not you are interested in coming to the meeting.*

*We look forward to hearing from you,*

*(Signed by the parish priest)*

-----

**REPLY SLIP**

**\*I am able to come to the information evening**

**\*I am not able to come**

**\*I would like further details about KIT**

**Name:..... Tel:.....**

**Address: .....**

.....

.....

## **APPENDIX B**

*(see page 11)*

### **Letter of invitation to a KIT Information Evening**

*Dear*

*I am writing to invite you to an Information Evening about the KIT programme. (See attached handbill).*

*KIT (Keeping in Touch) is a new, lay-led programme which has been set up in this parish to offer our church-going and non church-going parishioners the opportunity to explore their faith once more. Here, in a series of about seven meetings, those who come can ask questions, raise issues, deal with difficulties and learn about today's Catholic Church in a relaxed and informal atmosphere without the need to commit themselves.*

*If you are interested we look forward to seeing you. If you would prefer a visit from a member of the KIT team, or would simply like more information about anything to do with church, please let us know on the reply slip below.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*(signed by a KIT team member)*

-----  
**REPLY SLIP**

**\*I am able / unable to come to the information evening**

**\*I would like a visit / information about today's Catholic Church**

**\*I would like further details about KIT**

**Name:..... Tel:.....**

**Address: .....**

.....

.....

**\* Please tick your choice**

## **APPENDIX C:**

*(see pages 12 & 13)*

### **Reply slip to letter/flyer on information evening inviting parishioners' attendance at KIT meetings**

I am interested in coming to a few meetings to explore my faith once more.

I understand that during these meetings I can ask questions and raise issues about the Catholic faith without the need to commit myself.

I prefer morning/ afternoon/evening meetings\*

I prefer Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday meetings\*

*\*(Please tick your preferences)*

Name: .....

Address: .....

Phone Number: .....

Email address: .....

## **APPENDIX D:**

*(see pages 11 & 16)*

### **Sample letter to all parishioners before a home visit**

*The Presbytery  
Address  
Phone number  
Email address*

*Dear*

*I am writing to you because I have become aware that there are many Catholics living in our parish who would welcome a visit from a member of the parish. KIT (Keeping in Touch) is a programme recently started in this parish to strengthen the roots of the whole parish community and to offer parishioners an opportunity, if they wish, to explore their faith once more.*

*During the next few weeks two members of the KIT Team would like to visit you to discuss any matter concerning the Church which you may wish to raise. If you would prefer a visit from me please let me know, and I will be happy to see you. If you do not want a visit (and we have no wish to impose on you in any way), please could you let us know by phoning or writing to me at the presbytery or to*

*Name/Address/Phone number of representative*

*Whatever you decide, you may find it useful to keep a record of us, in case you need information or help from the Church at any time, so please accept this bookmark with our prayers and good wishes.*

*We look forward to meeting you or hearing from you.*

*Yours sincerely*

*(Signed by parish priest)*

# KEEPING IN TOUCH

## A WAY BACK TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Are you, or do you know, a Catholic who is looking for a way back to the Church?  
If so, this programme could be for you!

COME TO AN  
INFORMATION EVENING  
ON

.....  
AT

.....  
TIME

.....

All welcome

# KEEPING IN TOUCH

has been set up in this parish to give Catholics an opportunity to explore their faith once more.

They would meet in a small group of about 10 people, including church-going as well as non church-going Catholics, in the friendly atmosphere of each other's homes.

The meetings will take place weekly for 7-10 weeks. During that time you can ask questions, deal with difficulties and learn about today's Church without the need to commit yourself. At the end of the programme there will be an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for anyone who wishes.

For further details contact

.....

or fill in and return the reply slip below

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Tel: .....