

# COMMUNITY GROUPS



PURPOSE AND GOALS

JANUARY 2020

## HOW DO COMMUNITY GROUPS FIT INTO OUR PURPOSE AS A CHURCH?

Community Groups (CGs) are intended to develop and grow us in Christian maturity. Our definition of maturity is:

As Christians, we have been given a whole new identity in Christ. We are being transformed into the likeness of Christ through a lifestyle of repentance and faith, enabled by the gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

So, Community Groups fit into the work God is doing, as he transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. The purpose, then, of having CGs is:

To see God's people deepen in faith, hope and love as we grow together in our knowledge of God's word and depend on him in prayer.

## HOW DO COMMUNITY GROUPS ACHIEVE THAT PURPOSE?

Community Groups seek to focus on the person and work of Jesus, as revealed to us in scripture. In placing God's word at the centre of the life of the group, our **conviction** is that group members will deepen in faith, hope and love.

- We grow in our capacity to trust God as we grow in our knowledge and conviction about his character. This growth in conviction comes as we deepen our understanding of his self-revelation, through his actions, his promises and warnings in scripture. That is, as we grow in our knowledge of God and his character, we **deepen in our faith**.
- We grow in our confidence that God will keep the many wonderful promises he makes to us in the gospel, as we see in Scripture the promises of God fulfilled in Christ. That is, as we grow in our grasp of the beauty and scope of God's promises to us in Christ, we **deepen in our hope** for the day when he will make 'all things new'.
- Our hearts are changed as we increasingly grasp the magnitude and depth of God's love for his people, ultimately made known to us in Jesus as revealed in scripture. That is, as we deepen in our comprehension of the gospel revealed in God's word, **we deepen in our love** for the triune God, and therefore also for his dearly loved people: one another.

As such, a group that meets with the word of God as the overarching priority will have two 'gospel-shaped' **outcomes**:

1. Growth in prayerfulness based on a deepening hope in God's promises, a desire for his kingdom to come, and a growing faith that God is eminently trustworthy in everything, and is good all the time.
2. Growth in genuine sacrificial love for one-another as a recognition of our unity in Christ, and seeing one-another as family, the children of God himself. In love, therefore, individuals take on the responsibility of sharing life in Christ, knowing, serving, supporting, encouraging, edifying, honouring and comforting one another.

### **CGs as the 'engine room' of the church**

The health of a church, the maturity of its people, depend on our continued growth in faith, hope and love. CGs are not the only means of Christian growth, but our conviction is that because they are the main context in which relationships at our church are intentionally oriented around the word of God, healthy CGs have flow-on effects to our lives, and our whole church. This is because CGs are able to thoughtfully apply truths of scripture to the **specific details** of our individual lives in ways that preaching cannot, as preaching by nature applies truths in general terms to a congregation.

If each person in our church is deepening in faith, hope and love, then we all grow in the ways we Magnify God with each area of life, the ways we serve in Ministry, are involved in Mission to the lost, and our commitment to being a Member of Christ's church.

### **WHAT DO COMMUNITY GROUPS DO? WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?**

Following on from these purposes, we can summarise our hopes that CGs have the following characteristics:

#### **Clarity on purpose - not (necessarily) uniform in approach.**

We want everyone, leaders and members, to grow in faith, hope and love. Having that purpose clear allows for great freedom in how groups do this.

Some groups may attempt to divide time evenly between bible time, prayer and community most weeks. Other groups may determine it wise to not have an even distribution of those three things every week.

Nevertheless, our hope for groups is that word, prayer and community each feature significantly in the life of the group, as each is God's gift to grow us to maturity.

#### **A place to belong - even if you don't 'fit in'.**

No group is the perfect mix of personalities and dynamics. This gives each person the opportunity to grow in love (and patience and forbearance) for those who are different to them. Groups model the inclusiveness of the gospel, as each person grows in love for their brothers and sisters in Christ, who may have little else in common.

This means groups are a place to love, and to be loved, to serve one another by being there for one another, and praying for one another where absences are unavoidable.

#### **Not 'intellectual' - but not 'anti-intellectual' either.**

Everyone can profit from engaging in God's word, but not everyone can profit equally from particular types of 'bible studies'.

The task of the leader is to care for their group by attempting to help each member grow in their knowledge of God's word as appropriate for them. CGs are an expression of our confidence that God grows people to maturity through his word; yet we do not simply seek bible knowledge as a goal in itself.

#### **Something to look forward to every week!**

There will be no perfect CG, but as we work towards these goals together, God will work amongst us. What a precious thing that there will be time regularly set aside to hear the voice of the creator of the universe who loves us deeply! How wonderful that we can pray together with expectant hope to the sovereign almighty God! What a privilege that God has gathered a people to himself that we can share our lives and joy in Christ, and spur one another on!