

Midweek Study Group Paper

Home Groups - Our Current Predicament

Discipleship is essential in the life of any church for pressing on towards individual and collective maturity in faith, and for equipping the saints. One form of such discipleship that has encountered mixed success is the Home Group (Small Group, Cell etc). There has been a dramatic resurgence in many churches recently who have acknowledged the Home Group as playing a central role in the building up of the church where believers receive Bible teaching, prayerful support and indeed, pastoral care.

St Andrews BC, could perhaps be considered a microcosm of the bigger picture, with a small number of House Groups progressing well, yet with a number that have come to a halt for whatever reason. The question is, are Home Groups working in St Andrews BC? Whether they are or are not, perhaps an alternative mode of discipleship might be sought to supplement current forms of discipleship in the church.

Suggested Trial

With the above in mind, the Leadership would like to undertake a trial-run of a new format for Midweek Study Groups which intend to provide a 'menu' of options for people to choose from, a menu that desires to provide something for people at various stages in their Christian development. It must be noted at this stage that these are not being implemented to replace Home Groups; they may indeed run alongside each other.

What is the new format?

Since 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month are church/prayer meetings, it is envisaged that the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of the month be set aside for the Midweek Study Groups.

Ideally, everyone participating would meet in the church fellowship room at
6:30pm - 7:30pm - For Dinner & Fellowship *then between*
7:30pm - 9:00pm - Divide into selected studies

Dinner & Fellowship

This is viewed as an ideal opportunity for those in the fellowship to get to know one another better. Eating together like this twice a month will aid attempts in bringing people together as a family, and pressing on towards unity.

This also provides another benefit of allowing non-Christians to come into contact with Christians over something as natural as a meal, assuming that one of the scheduled courses will be Alpha/Christianity Explored. Hopefully sharing in a meal will add to the evangelistic aims of such courses.

As has been noted from past events, the fellowship room will easily contain up to 60 people for dinner. The Holdsworths have been approached concerning the provision of soup and sandwiches for dinner, and they believe it is certainly possible, at a relatively low cost.

Scheduled Courses/Studies

Following dinner, it is envisaged that those present will attend one of a number of scheduled courses. These courses will have been advertised for a number of weeks prior to their commencement with people encouraged to sign up for one they want to go to.

Suggested courses include:

- Alpha/Christianity Explored (For non-Christians)
- Discipleship Explored (For new Christians)
- Network - Discovering Spiritual Gifts for serving in the Body of Christ
- Biblical Studies (Bible Books/Themes)

Who Will Lead These Groups?

This is an initiative we want the whole fellowship to take ownership of. This isn't something the leadership want to just arrange for you. This is your discipleship programme. What gifts and insight do you have? Can you share them through these study groups? Would you be willing to help lead and facilitate these groups, even if it's just taking one of the studies? We'd be delighted to hear from you!

How Long Will the Trial Run for?

Due to the suggested alternate week set-up, what would normally be a six-week course would last 12 weeks/3 months. This is seen to be a suitable trial period.

If there is a measure of success, there can be additional courses or studies planned. Some suggestions:

- Practical Christianity (exploring issues like hospitality)
- Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life (exploring the disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible study, serving etc.)
- The Marriage Course
- Doctrine / Systematic Theology for Starters (A set of studies exploring doctrine)
- Academics Anonymous (for those preferring a more intellectual approach & engaging with tough questions)
- Reformation Studies/Church History (excavating the depths of our Christian heritage - for inspiration!)
- Women's Bible Study Group / Men's Bible Study Group
- And more... (if you have any suggestions as to what you would like to see become part of this discipleship programme, you are welcome to send in your suggestions - we'd love to hear from you)