

## **Small Groups**

Dear Friends

This autumn a number of new small groups are starting. These will be in addition to a couple of the existing groups, as well as a bit of a mixing up of a couple of others where the leaders are stepping back to serve in different ways.

In the first couple of weeks of September you ought to be receiving an invitation from one of the small group leaders to be part of their small group this year. This may be the group of which you are already a part. If you don't get an invitation for some reason, please ask me and I will make sure you get one!

It is going to be up to each group to decide when and where and how often they meet. Some will meet in the daytime, some during the week, at least one on Sunday night. Most groups will follow the bible teaching from Sundays by discussing the passage further and helping each other to think about the difference it makes to our lives everyday, but some will decide to study other passages. Some groups may eat together - even sing together - but it will all be up to the group to decide.

But I would like to encourage as many as possible in our church to be part of a small group. It ought to be a basic part of our membership and partnership together we belong to a small group, both because it is so valuable personally and because it is part and parcel of 'being church'. Church is not so much the building we go to, the event we attend or the institution we're part of, but the people we belong to. The gospel message creates gospel communities which in turn demonstrate the power and reality of the gospel message, so being part of a small group is an opportunity to do that and for our love for the Lord Jesus Christ to be expressed and a love for others learnt

So why say 'yes' to a small group?

First because of what small groups should be like. Because the gospel message gives shape to a small group, they should be places where we are accepted and challenged - just as the Lord Jesus does for each of us; places characterised by humility, grace and thankfulness - in response to what Jesus has done for us; and places that are as mixed and diverse as God's people. In other words a small group should be a wonderful and exciting thing of which to be a part and I hope that through the year each of the groups will grow as they invite others to come and be part of them.

And then second because there are some things we can do in a small group that we can't necessarily do as a gathered congregation on Sunday or which we can do better as a small group. For example, a small group allows us to get to know some others much better and that means we can care, support, encourage, pray for and serve one another better too. It's all about doing life together, not just meeting up but belonging together. The stronger our small groups, the stronger, more caring and more effective our church will be.

So just say 'yes!'

With every blessing,

**Philip**