

Small Groups... again

Philip writes:

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. There are now 7 small groups meeting at different times and places throughout the week. All would welcome any newcomers to join them, even just for a one-off to try them out!

Sunday Evening, at the Vicarage, led by Philip
Monday Morning (for women), in the Parish Hall,
led by Jo Virr, Susie Leafe & Naomi
Tuesday Morning, at the Library,
led by Brione Goodwin Hudson & Susie Leafe
Tuesday Evening, in Tywardreath, led by Wendy Richards
Tuesday Evening, in Fowey, led by Chris Edleston
Tuesday Evening, in the Parish Hall,
led by Brenda Sinkins & Al Tranary
Wednesday Evening, in Fowey, convened by Stuart Bradley

I would like to continue to encourage as many as possible in our church to be part of a small group. It really ought to be a basic part of our membership and partnership together, both because it is so valuable personally and because it is part and parcel of 'being church'. The gospel message will always create 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

Here is the experience of one of our church family to encourage you...

A pensioner's personal record to say, to whoever may read this, how joining a Small Group in 2002 enlightened, comforted and sustained me, and enabled me to meet the future with hope in my heart.

There it stood, in big, bold capitals, the edge of the paper frayed at the edges by the weather on a notice board in a dilapidated churchyard in Manchester: "You've fed the kids, you've fed the cat, have you fed your soul today?"

I thought it was enough that I'd had a good Christian family, upbringing and schooling. Marriage, children, emigration to Australia and LIFE happened after that unforgettable notice board. But His love never let go. I am afraid I did.

In times of deep sorrow, however, we pray for help and guidance. There were answers, but I did not hear them; my mind was not properly "tuned in" to what God wanted for me and my life, and in my unwisdom when solutions were not apparent, I despaired. I wanted what I wanted and tried to persuade myself they would surely be what God wanted also.

And then "this blessed plot - Fowey" drew me into the welcome of the Church; we are fortunate beyond our comprehension to have such care and help here. And yet, always the wondering, the

searching. As John Humphries said to Dr Rowan Williams in their discussion some years ago, “What is it that you have got that I haven’t got? Why can’t I have some?”!!

Had I not joined a Small Group, I may never have found out what “it” was. A warm, friendly fireside, a cup of tea and a cake, all the people there acquaintances, all of us with vary varied reasons for deciding to attend, much shyness. However, there was no pressure, no great, visible knowledge of others to make one feel inadequate, simply the social, pleasant company of like-minded Christians. Some were not even believers, just curious. Gradually, “slowly and silently”, the understanding and illumination of the Old and New Testaments led me to question myself as never before. “What was a born-again Christian? Why was I not reborn? Should I be? Was I praying in the wrong way, too selfish, too proud, too inward-looking?”

But no: - “Slowly, silently”, more powerful than the earthly friendships formed through the gentle teachings, week by week, year by year, the plain and simple exploration of His living Word revealed what had been sadly lacking. No drama necessary.

Christmas is almost upon us. We all enjoy our carols and the music at this time. When you sing “O little town of Bethlehem” this year, mark well the third verse: - “How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. So (thus), God imparts to us the blessings of His Heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek hearts will receive Him, still, (“silently”) the dear Christ enters in.” - “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit”; - the friendship and grace of Jesus Christ”.

As you recycle the “Briefing” this month, try not to recycle God’s offer to bring peace into your innermost soul. God bless your decision as you read this, which I write with much reluctance to bare my soul thus publicly, but with the sincere conviction that you will never regret it if you do decide to join a Small Group.

Ann Rickatson