



What is a Growth Group?

1 Overview

Growth Groups are small groups of 6-15 people who get together regularly - mostly fortnightly, midweek in members' homes. We encourage everyone at Christ Church to be part of a group or at least linked to one.

Growth Groups are a core part of the church. Their aim is the same as that of the whole church:

- For the group as individuals and together to 'Love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength. And to love our neighbours as themselves' (Mark 12:28-31)
- To do this by encouraging the growth of the group Upwards (closer to God), Inwards (closer to one another and to the wider church) and Outwards (closer to our community).

2 The Purpose of a Growth Group

There is a mini-series of Growth Group Notes designed to help groups explore or reassess their purpose (May 2009). In it we used five principles 'A-E' (adapted from 'Cell Church' by Phil Potter), which expand a bit on Up-In-Out:

- **A**ll Involved (In)
 - Every member having a role within the group (hosting, leading worship) and contributing to the group
 - Helping one another discover and use their gifts
 - Encouraging everyone to have a role within the wider church
 - Getting involved in the wider activities of the church (worship, prayer, socials, evangelism etc)
- **B**ecoming Disciples (Up)
 - Deepening in prayer and worship together –including prayer for one another, as well as for others
 - Encouraging one another in their personal faith and relationship with God
 - Sharing personal stories of God and life.
 - Getting to know more of the Bible and how to put it into practice
- **C**reating Community (In)
 - Meeting regularly (normally fortnightly)
 - Holding regular socials for the group (maybe 3-6 a year), in addition to the fortnightly meetings
 - Ensuring everyone in the group is cared for and supported –including visiting or following up on missing people when appropriate
 - Caring for people 'linked' to the group, who can't (or prefer not) to come.
 - Increasing honesty and openness –sharing joys and struggles in a safe and loving environment, respecting appropriate confidentiality
- **D**oing Evangelism (Out)

- Inviting friends and family to social events
- Organising a social event for the whole church & visitors at least annually
- Supporting Alpha (catering, prayer etc)
- Having links to external organisation(s) for whom the group prays/supports (e.g. a school, relief organisation, mission partner etc)
- **Encountering God (Up)**
 - Meeting fortnightly (or weekly) for meetings –dates agreed by the group and circulated
 - Following the church-wide Bible-based notes which link to the Sunday themes
 - Focussed more on getting to know God than on knowing about God.
 - Praying and Listening to God

3 Pattern for Fortnightly Meetings:

- Growth Group Notes are provided for regular meetings. These link in to the Sunday themes –giving an opportunity to explore them further together
- The Growth Group notes generally follow a widely-used pattern of 4-Ws: Welcome, Worship, Word, What Next?
- The notes are intentionally written to make them easy to use by any member of the group –without expertise or much preparation
- Good practice is to share round the responsibilities for leading different sections on different weeks as much as possible
- Encourage different people to have a go at taking turns in leading different parts of the meeting, but don't pressurise anyone!
- Try to avoid getting into ruts, by trying some of the different suggestions for welcome and worship, but don't be bound by them
- Try and involve everyone
- Don't try and answer all of the questions!!
- Leave time to pray (or pray first... or spend a whole meeting in prayer!)

*Toby May
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