

A Priority

Homegroups are as important as Sunday worship. At St Peter's, Homegroups serve at the heart of the church. This means having a voice in the decision-making process and active participation in working out the church's ministry and mission. Involvement in a Homegroup is connection with the heart of the Christian community at St Peter's.

Distinctive Groups

St Peter's is a large and diverse church, so it is appropriate that there is variety among the groups. A group consisting of younger adults in their twenties will have a different character to one made up of more senior ladies. That is to be encouraged.

However, all St Peter's Homegroups share St Peter's core values and the following is held in common:

- The Homegroup Leader is appointed and authorised as a leader at St Peter's and is happy to be accountable in that role.
- The Homegroup seeks to be active within the church, supporting its vision and working to see it fulfilled.
- The life and routine of the Homegroup will include:
 - Bible application
 - Prayer
 - Pastoral support
 - Evangelistic outreach
 - Social activity
 - Practical support.
- The homegroup will model New Testament community life, where all believers take an active role as they explore Christian discipleship and faithfully share their lives and unique gifting.

If you'd like to get involved, just ask at a Sunday service, speak to John Divall (Homegroups Coordinator) or contact the Church Office. We'd love you to connect with this life-building ministry.



For more details contact:

St Peter's Church Office.

T: 01252 873647 E: office@stpetersyateley.org.uk
Chaddisbrook House, Reading Road, Yateley, GU46 7LR

*"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."
1 Thessalonians 5:11*

A Vision

Acts 2:42-47 describes a radical, renewed and rapidly growing community, bound in love, bold in faith. They met regularly in homes, supporting and sharing with one another as they had need.

In the New Testament we discover a Christian community that is:

- Growing rapidly
- Sharing the work of the church according to their gifts and skills
- Living adventurously by faith
- Giving of themselves and their possessions
- Demonstrating a distinctive Christian life-style

The New Testament reveals a broken hearted, open hearted and wholehearted church. It increasingly experienced God's Grace and lived to build his Kingdom. This vision of church remains ours today. To see it realised, we must continue to grow as a community with authentic Christ-centred friendships. There is no better way of achieving this than through Homegroups, so St Peter's is committed to resourcing and developing them.

Values

Life and growth are at the heart of the Good News we share at St Peter's. The parable of The Sower (or perhaps it should be The Seeds) makes it clear that healthy, enduring growth requires roots that go deep – not just a quick head count. Sunday Services are important, but it is possible to walk away, anonymous and with questions unanswered. Small groups provide an opportunity for real and meaningful relationships to form; for Christian discipleship to be explored; and for experience of living as a follower of Christ to be shared. This will help create a church that, like the early Christians, knows what it is to be broken-hearted (compassionate), open hearted (pioneering) and wholehearted (passionate). Such a church will naturally grow and have a transformational impact on the wider community.

A Strategy

Meeting as a congregation builds unity and provides an opportunity for celebratory worship, in a way that a small group never could. But the small group has its own strengths and here are some of them:

Teaching

As followers of Christ we want to understand more about how to live distinctive lives that make a difference. The preaching ministry plays an important role here, but people learn most effectively by discussing questions and sharing experiences together. Jesus was a great preacher, but he trained his disciples as they travelled together and shared both the routine and the adventure of life as a small group. A small group is still the best way to get to grips with the application of Christian teaching.

Pastoral Care

The biblical picture of the church is as a loving, mutually supportive community where everyone grows up in the truth and love of Christ, fulfilling their God-given potential. A few have leading roles, but as important as their role might be, growth happens through a mutual exchange of love and ministry between all the members.

The model of church that has one leader, from the platform of a Sunday service, running around meeting the needs of those that attend, is not only impractical but also without biblical foundation.

- In Acts 6, the task of caring for the widows was delegated so that the Apostles could concentrate on preaching the word and prayer.
- In James 5:14 the elders are called into a pastoral situation to perform a specific act of ministry (prayer for healing), not to give general pastoral care.

There is a role for those who have a leading gift and a responsibility for pastoral care. In a healthy Church though, experience would indicate around 80% of pastoral needs are met informally through mutually caring relationships of the kind found in small groups. It is only the more difficult or serious issues that need the attention of a specialist.

Evangelism

The most effective context for evangelism is, and probably has always been, personal friendships. The difference is that in the past other forms of organised mass evangelism were also effective. Today, what is seen as institutional Christianity rarely brings a challenge to an unbeliever's heart. It is the faith, life-style, or words of a friend that brings the confrontation with Jesus. And it is the small group that most effectively brings the support and encouragement necessary to help individuals develop challenging Christian life-styles and share their faith with others.

An invitation to a meal or some other social activity with other friends is a great place for evangelism to start. A Homegroup provides the context for creative ideas and for working together to make such events happen. They are fun, build and strengthen relationships and are opportunities for natural, relational evangelism.

Prayer

Jesus' prayer life was so dynamic that his friends asked him to show them how they could do it too. The words that Jesus taught them in response are said at most church services, but if we want to actively participate in prayer and to target the many specific issues that we all encounter in our lives, then prayer also needs to happen in smaller groups. Homegroups are ideal for this.

Work

Large groups of people can be difficult to organise and coordinate; individuals have limited resources and work in isolation; but small groups have the ability to work as a team. God has purposely built this into his Church by distributing gifts that work best when they are deployed in cooperation with others. So it is little surprise that homegroups work best when they function as a team.

Each Homegroup is encouraged to take a particular interest in an activity or area of ministry outside themselves. This prevents introspection and gives everyone an opportunity for active involvement in the church, in an effective and rewarding way.