

What is a Growth Group?

1 Overview

Growth Groups are small groups of 6-15 people who get together at least fortnightly, mostly in members' homes. We want to encourage every member of St James' & St Luke's to get involved in a group if possible.

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 (in loving God), Inwards (in loving one another and the whole church) and Outwards (in loving our community – and beyond).

2 How do Growth Groups fit with other groups?

Growth Groups material will be provided for **fortnightly** meetings. This provides some flexibility for what to do on the weeks in between. For example:

- Some groups may meet weekly – and use the alternate weeks to hold socials, invitational events, prayer times, book clubs or to split into smaller gatherings – such as prayer triplets or accountability groups.
- Some groups may meet fortnightly and give members the time to be part of a MAT (Mission Area Team) – or serve in another way within the church
- Some Growth Groups may use the Growth Group material for fortnightly meetings and stay together to organise MAT activities on the weeks in between. They can then welcome others to get involved in the MAT activities too.

Whatever format a group decides to take, what is important is that the aims and purposes of the Growth Groups are being fulfilled – growing Up, In and Out – and that the core material is being followed, so that we grow together as a church.

3 The Purpose of a Growth Group

There will be a mini-series of Growth Group Notes designed to help groups explore or re-assess their purpose, based on the Up-In-Out pattern.

- **Up**
 - Worshipping God together – in different ways
 - Praying together: listening and talking to God; praying for one another; praying for others
 - Getting to know more of the Bible and how to put it into practice in daily life
 - 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.
 - Encouraging one another in our personal faith and relationship with God – throughout the week
- **In**
 - Meeting fortnightly (or weekly). The fortnightly pattern of dates will be advised centrally to fit with teaching series and to give flexibility on the weeks in between.

- Ensuring everyone in the group is cared for and supported –including visiting or following up on missing people when appropriate. *Growth Groups are our primary means of pastoral care*
- Increasing honesty and openness –sharing joys and struggles in a safe and loving environment, respecting appropriate confidentiality
- Every member having a role within the group (hosting, leading worship etc) and contributing to the group
- Holding regular socials for the group (3-12 times/year), in addition to the fortnightly meetings
- Having effective ways of communicating with one another during the week – for encouragement and prayer requests (not gossip!)
- Caring for people 'linked' to the group, who can't (or prefer not to) come.
- Helping one another discover and use all our gifts – including developing new leaders
- Encouraging everyone to have a role within the wider church – and to get involved within it (worship, prayer, socials, evangelism etc)
- **Out**
 - Each member engaging in regular outreach within the community – as a Growth Group together or as part of a MAT or through church-wide events.
 - Encouraging one another to be salt and light throughout the week.
 - Inviting friends and family to social events
 - Each group organising a social event for the whole church & those outside the church, at least annually. These will be fitted together into a church-wide programme.
 - Supporting Alpha (catering, prayer, providing team members etc)
 - Having at least one specific link to an external organisation(s) for whom the group prays/supports (e.g. a school, relief organisation, mission partner etc)
 - Praying for friends/family/contacts to come to Christ and for outreach events

4 Pattern for Fortnightly Meetings

- Growth Group Notes will be provided for fortnightly meetings. These will link in to the Sunday themes –giving an opportunity to explore them further together.
- There will be deliberate spaces in the notes to allow groups the flexibility to use other material as they choose.
- 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 – encouraging people to have a go.
- 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
Updated 6/11/2018*