

Open Forum: Re-introducing House Groups

21st January, 2024

What are House Groups? (Introduction and Background)

Why? (Purpose)

- Deepening faith and discipleship, through study and reflection together
- Strengthening fellowship, through sharing and prayer
- Encouraging mutual pastoral care and support
- To further the ministry and mission of the church

Where? (Place)

- Groups to be organized on a geographical basis
- Meeting in people's homes. (Possibly one zoom group).
- Once a quarter, a central meeting for all house groups in church, with feedback

When? (Time and frequency)

- Every week, with the awareness not everyone will make it
- Some groups in the evening and some in the day time

Who? (Members and leaders)

- House groups are for all
- Mixed groups – may be with people we don't know
- 'Core' group who attend regularly, and 'Care' group of people who are linked to a house group and prayed for
- Leaders to be chosen by the chaplain. 2 leaders per group. To be trained and to meet regularly with the chaplain for support.

What? (Content of study)

- Different ideas: reflections on the readings/sermon from the Sunday with questions related to application in daily life; studying book of the Bible; themes; study courses.
- All groups to use the same material – helps keep unity.
- NB importance of feedback from groups on what works well and what is needed.

How? (Other practicalities)

- Format of sessions: to always include a time of Bible study, sharing and prayer, (perhaps 30 minutes for study/discussion and 30 minutes for sharing and prayer). Varieties of forms of prayer would be encouraged. A suggested outline for the meetings could be given out, but also flexibility.
- Safeguarding, boundaries and confidentiality: all leaders and hosts should do safeguarding training. Need to be clear ground rules re confidentiality.
- Open and outward looking: all groups should be open to new members and not 'closed' groups. Groups to be encouraged to have an outward focus – to do some community activity or support a charity, or do something together in church.

- Focus for unity: important that house groups contribute to the unity of the church rather than disunity!
- Review: groups should be reviewed regularly: how long have they been running, who are the leaders/members?

Next Steps

- Listen to questions raised today and in the coming weeks
- Send out a questionnaire asking whether people would be interested in joining a 'core' group (attending regularly) or as a member of a 'care' group. Ask questions re availability (day, time, and frequency)
- Depending on the results of the questionnaire, set up 2 or 3 'pilot' house groups in different geographical areas.
- Ask those groups to give feedback after a period of time and see if we can set up more groups

Helen Marshall, November 2023