

## **Pt 3 - COMMUNITY - Supportive Relationships**

### **... The Church as a Community**

#### **Acts 2:42-47**

When the early church began, it functioned as a community of Christ followers doing life together.

A church is like an extended family, there are lots of relatives and people to connect with but we need our own ‘*close-knit*’ family to do life together with.

How can we experience a real sense of community and belonging at WPCC?

### **... Begin by Building Friendships**

Close community doesn’t just happen. It has to be cultivated and nurtured intentionally. Intentional community is a core responsibility of being an active member of a church family.

Notice that the first believers at the church in Jerusalem started spending time with each other – over meals and in their homes (see again **Acts 2:42-47**).

### **... WPCC Ministry Principle**

- **Supportive Relationships**

A ‘*Programme shift*’ from events to relationships, being a caring community.

**John 13:34-35** *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.”*

(See also **Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:10; Philippians 2:3-4**)

### **... WPCC Core Values**

- **Community**

*We uphold the value and worth of all people and will maintain an environment of love, acceptance and forgiveness.*

**1 Peter 4:8** *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

**Ephesians 4:2-3** *Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.*

### **... Belonging**

*We believe that life change happens best in small groups, through accountability, a sense of belonging and knowing that others care.*

**Hebrew 10:24-25** *Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together. Let us encourage one another.*

**Ecclesiastes 4:12** *A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*

Genuine loving relationships provide the care that people need and the context in which life transformation can take place.

We want to be large enough to make a difference but small enough to really care. But how can we do this?

### **... Following the New Testament Church Model**

The New Testament church grew very rapidly.

**Acts 21:20** *When they heard this they praised God and said to Paul, You see brother how many thousands of Jews have believed and all of them are zealous for the law.*

The word used in the Greek “*murias*” which literally means “*tens of thousands*” Jews had believed in Jesus Christ.

In 20-25 years the Jerusalem church had grown from about 120 people up to 100,000 people.

This rapid growth of the early church raises at least two questions;

1. Where did they put all those people?
2. How did they care for them?

The early Church grew larger and smaller at the same time.

**Acts 5:42** *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

Notice that there are two types of meetings.

1. They met in the ‘*Temple courts*’ - a large group meeting.
2. And from ‘*house to house*’ - a small group meeting.

In the first 300 years of the early church, most of their church gathering (*community*) occurred in homes.

**Romans 16:5** *Greet also the church that meets at their house...*

Others examples: **Acts 2:46; 8:3; 16:40; 20:20; 1 Cor 16:19; Colossians 4:15**

## **... Building a Small Groups Culture**

As we increase our ministry reach across the Geelong and Golden Plains regions, embracing a culture of small groups is vital in creating authentic community.

Our goal is that the majority of congregational care at WPCC in each site will be achieved through our small groups.

We gain a sense of belonging when we are a part of a small group.

## **... The Purpose of Life Groups**

- **A Life Group is a CARE Group.**

*‘It is a place where Christians can gather together to care for one another through friendship, encouragement and practical expressions of love and kindness.’*

The mark of a mature church is the love that exists within that community. (See also **John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 13**)

- **A Life Group is a DISCIPLE-MAKING Group.**

*‘It is a place where Christians can grow together to become fervent followers of Jesus Christ through the process of discipline, teaching and mentoring.’*

A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ who is dedicated to becoming like Jesus in every aspect of life.

Small groups provide an environment of mutual support, ministry, accountability and training.

Small groups enable interaction, discussion and application of practical Christian life to occur in a safe open environment.

- **A Life Group is a *MINISTRY* Group.**

***‘It is a place where Christians can develop and use their God-given gifts and abilities to help others.’***

Small groups are one of the best environments for people to discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts for the benefit of others.

- **A Life Group is an *OUTREACH* Group.**

***‘It is a place where Christians can bring their friends, neighbours and relatives in order for them to experience the life that is in Jesus Christ.’***

Small groups provide the prayer, support, encouragement and accountability that is necessary for followers of Christ to be active in reaching out to those outside of God’s family.

Small groups are also the best way to assimilate new people into the church family.

## **... Conclusion**

We were created for community and God wants each one of us to experience the benefits of authentic relationships.

**Hebrew 10:24-25** *Let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together. Let us encourage one another.*

Involvement in a small group of Christ-followers makes an excellent contribution to our personal need for community and a sense of belonging.

How about becoming involved in a small group today?