

FBC COMMUNITY GROUPS A SYNOPSIS

Jesus has a compelling vision for reconciling people to God and one another. In Mt.16:18 the people of God are those who confess faith in Christ, the Truth and Rock of our salvation. In Mt.28:19, He gives us our mission to go and make disciples. In John 13:34-35, we find the glue that holds the gospel and the mission together: a transformed community filled with the supernatural love of God. The church will reach people and grow as we live the life of Jesus and authentically love one another. When that happens, people see and are drawn to it, as in Acts 2:42-47.

Community defined is living together the life of reconciliation to God through the gospel of Jesus Christ and loving one another in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. A Community Group is disciples who find their identity in Jesus, worship God together, learn His word, accept and care for one another, spur each other toward godliness, and own the mission to see more people know Jesus. It is a lifestyle of discipleship.

COMMUNITY GROUP VISION

The Community Group **VISION** is to practice a lifestyle of following Jesus and loving one another in local groups of disciples who get involved in the lives of

their neighbours to reach them with the gospel. We are putting teaching and discipling, shepherding and caring plus teamwork and mission into our Community Groups ministry.

COMMUNITY GROUP STRATEGY

We are given a **missional strategy** (Acts 1:8). The people of FBC come from all around Colchester County and beyond. The main emphasis to reach our region will be with mission-minded geographic Community Groups. Some will also be affinity groups that accommodate people with similar life-situations.

2Tim.2:2. We have a **coaching structure** that will equip the leaders, facilitate growth and uphold the beliefs, values and authority of the local church. Pastors and Elders shepherd group leaders, promoting godly leadership, fulfillment of group purpose, group teamwork and the networking of groups. Community Groups will be on-going just like a family: learning, caring and reaching out in a variety of ways during the variety of life's seasons.

This strategy should **inspire ownership** of the mission to make disciples. Ownership is inspired by lifting up Jesus through our weekly corporate worship. Ownership is inspired as group leaders lead from the edge - as a group making ministry decisions to reach people around you.

Ownership is inspired by raising expectations. We expect the priesthood of believers (1Pet.2:9-12) to be adequate to do the vine-work of the gospel, which is each one being gifted and equipped in Christ to teach someone, care for someone and reach someone. Vine-work is shepherding someone to be a faithful reproducing disciple of Jesus.

TEACHING and DISCIPLING

Because our faith is founded on the Bible, it will have paramount emphasis in our Community Groups. For some seasons the groups will be doing a sermon-based study. The great benefit of using the **Bible as our curriculum** is that everyone is looking at the same Bible text, yet at some different levels. During other seasons the group can choose what they want to study.

The **mature** in the group learn and contribute meaningfully to the discussion and aren't afraid to be real and transparent. The **newer disciple** has a hunger from God for the Word and learns from the teaching and discussion. The **non-believer** may be hearing these truths for the first time. God speaks through all these to their heart.

Study is just part of the group dynamic. Those leading in prayer bring awareness of God's presence. Those gifted with hospitality help create warmth. The social

butterfly introduces newcomers. God speaks through the compassion of the merciful. When we share struggles, and are prayed for, the visitor is impacted by our hope in God.

The Christian **friend** who invited them has a follow-up conversation. The group faithfully prays for them and invites them into what they are doing. They are cared for, taught, involved, and invited to church worship. One day they put their trust in Jesus! The group is now responsible for their discipleship and the original friend becomes their discipler: using church resources to help them grow, including them in the life and ministry of the group. Then they tell someone...

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER.

One of the vital functions of a Biblical leader is shepherding. The limits to **pastoral care** are directly related to 'span-of-care.' One person can only effectively care for a small number - Jesus set the precedent of 12. We are asking our leaders and group members to shepherd our people. Every member should be able to care for others, in the group and neighbourhood, with genuine empathy and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Special situations may call for other leaders and pastors to be involved.

Community Groups actively and graciously practice the '**one-anothers**'; we accept one another (Rom.15:5-7), we have equal concern for each other (1Cor.12:25), we comfort those in any trouble (2Cor.1:4), we carry each other's burdens (Gal.6:2), we love each other deeply (1Pet.4:8). In so doing we will fulfill the mandate Jesus gave in John 13:14-15, to wash one another's feet, and so manifest His life to the world (John 13:34-35). We care for one another and for those who live around us.

Sharing our lives is a powerful way to connect and grow as a group. Some groups share a weekly meal before study and prayer. Sharing our lives in a personal and meaningful way can transform and deepen our relationships. One way to enable this is to have each person share with the group something related to these type of questions:

- what has God shown you in His Word?
- how has God been at work in your life?
- what struggle are you going through?
- what opportunity did the Lord give you to influence others?

OUR MISSION TO THE LOCAL AREA.

Acts 13:2 calls us to ensure **Prayer** has priority in Mission. We should avoid the tendency to emphasize planning and minimize seeking God. Worship or ministering to the Lord means praise and worship in song, scripture, prayer and

fasting. Unless we devote ourselves to prayer, we can't expect much. We need to pray for unity, protection, for the Spirit to work community within us, guide us and convict the people we want to reach.

In Acts 13:1-3, we see God bringing together a **gifted team** to get something started. The Community Group is a gifted team that shares mission. First, we need to identify the gifts and callings of the group members, so we know the makeup of our team. Who the Lord has brought together in your community group will help shape the mission of the group.

Then, do **Missiology** - understand the local context. The early missionaries sought the Spirit's guidance and actively looked for opportunities. Community Groups should consider the natural rhythms and spaces of their neighbourhood: what activities and projects could individual group members and/or their families join in? Consider your calling in conjunction with the people and opportunities that already exist in the area and get engaged in what people are doing.

To understand the people in your vicinity, discuss and answer these questions:

- ✓ Who are they?
- ✓ Where do they hang out?
- ✓ What do they do?
- ✓ What do they value and believe?
- ✓ What are their spiritual sources?

It can be **difficult** for a group to find a way to do outreach together. One way to enable this is for the group to devote time for the members to get individually involved in some sort of local service. The group could choose to not meet one week a month so members and families can be given time and encouragement to serve.

We are encouraging a '**bite-sized**' concept of mission. Groups can grasp and realize the Lord's plan for their neighbourhoods more easily than for the region. Every believer has a part in it. After the group prays and does the missiology analysis, then they come up with a specific mission plan. The pastor/elder can help equip and resource, and perhaps suggest networking with another group on some things.

What we must do is build deeper relationships, invite people into our community of Christ, give the Lord time to work, and take the natural opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus. In Acts 16:14, they got down to the main business of sharing the gospel. Remember that while acts of love and kindness set the table for the gospel, only the message of the gospel can save a soul.

Ultimately this is the main goal of our Community Groups: sharing the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and making reproducing disciples. It will require a re-ordering of personal priorities so we can make time to make disciples.

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