

## St Stephen's Shottermill | House Groups

### IN: Loving our Church family

**IN:** *to love one another as Christ has loved us*

- ❖ Church = Community + Faith + Action
- ❖ At St Stephen's we are seeking to be a 'transforming community' in which we experience the transforming power of Jesus and in turn seek to take the transforming power of Jesus to others ie
- ❖ Church = A transforming community of people who are being transformed by experiencing and expressing the love of God
- ❖ The Bible gives us various metaphors for the church: The body of Christ – with Christ as the head (1 Corinthians 12:1-26 and Romans 12:3-21); a family – with God as our father and us as his adopted children (Ephesians 2:14-18); a royal priesthood – with Jesus as the high priest and living stones – with Jesus as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-10); a holy temple (Ephesians 2:19-22) and the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27, 32).

### I. WELCOME AND HOSPITALITY

- ❖ Our house groups need to be a place where people are welcomed and loved and where we simply share in one another lives
- ❖ to help people to **get to know each other better**
- ❖ to **create an atmosphere of openness and trust,**
- ❖ to make **new people feel at ease.**
- ❖ So there need to be time to talk, laugh and eat together

*Practical ideas for welcome and hospitality in our house groups:*

- ❖ **Refreshments** at the beginning and/ or end of an evening are an important part of our time together
- ❖ **Have meals together**
- ❖ Some weeks you could use an **icebreaker:**
- ❖ Ice breakers fall into two main categories: a) Getting to know you games e.g. Desert Island discs and questions; b) Fun games e.g. jenga; identify the person from the baby photo
- ❖ Eg where was your best holiday and why?
- ❖ **as time goes on** the questions **might become more searching** – asking about more personal issues e.g. What is your greatest regret?
- ❖ also as time goes on the group will want to **welcome others** into it

### 2. PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

- ❖ Our house groups should be a safe place to receive prayer and also to learn how to pray for others
- ❖ It is not our work it is God's and we pray in partnership with him
- ❖ *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."* Romans 8:26
- ❖ God's has given us various gifts of the Spirit that we can use when we pray – they are free, to 'each one' and for the 'common good' (1 Corinthians 12:7)

- ❖ They are tools for Christian living – need practice to learn to use them properly
- ❖ Often use different gifts together e.g. the gift of faith and knowledge as well as tongues and wisdom or discernment

*Practical ideas for praying together in our house groups:*

- ❖ Pray through the Lord's Prayer slowly, line by line
- ❖ Take it in turns to pray for each member of the group – but instead of asking them what their prayer needs are, simply spend time in quiet and ask God to give you a scripture, or a word of encouragement, or a word of knowledge for the person you are praying for. Then feed these back to the person and have scribe who will note down what is said so that the person has it to take away with them.
- ❖ Keep a note of prayers prayed and of answers to prayer

### 3. PRACTICAL CARE

- ❖ We all need to be cared for and through our house groups we can really learn what it means to love one another and to be the body of Christ so that house groups are **a place to love and be loved; to know and be known; to serve and be served**
- ❖ We need to notice when people are missing

### 4. EVERY PERSON COUNTS

- ❖ We want every person in the church to be able to use their gifts and talents to serve God, the church community and the wider world – to find their place in the body of Christ and to grow in faith through service
- ❖ House Groups are a great place to try out new things, to be encouraged and to discern God's will with the help of others

*Practical ideas for practical care and enabling all member ministry*

- ❖ Conduct a skills audit – find out who has what skills and what practical service each person can offer e.g. baby-sitting, fixing things, dog walking, shopping etc
- ❖ Exchange useful skills ie swap baby-sitting for fixing a tap etc
- ❖ Spend an evening encouraging each other – maybe write down what you love about each person and what you think they are good at – it is surprising how we are often unaware of our own abilities and others can point these out to us
- ❖ Use the every person counts form and discuss it
- ❖ Say hello to someone you don't know in church every week
- ❖ Invite someone or a family for coffee or a meal once a month
- ❖ Decide to pray for ten others in church every day
- ❖ Offer practical service through the gift centre

*Questions:*

- ❖ Look at some passages about the different metaphors the bible gives of the church: Which one do you like best? How does it apply today?
- ❖ What ways can our house group be better and serving each other practically?
- ❖ How can our house group serve the church?
- ❖ How can we be better at loving one another?
- ❖ Use some of the suggestions above

Danny Wignall, January 2008