

What is a Home Group?

Home groups are the heartbeat of St. John's. *St. John's Wimborne*

Home groups are, in effect, like building blocks which together make up the larger church fellowship. *St. Nicholas' Church Nottingham*

By belonging to a small group, and meeting with them regularly, we can begin to feel that sense of belonging which is such an important part of the Christian life. Home groups are not just bible study groups or prayer groups, although both these things play a big part. It really doesn't matter if you can't form a beautifully worded prayer. Home groups are not about giving the right answer, or about a group leader telling the other members what to believe, but about growing together, learning to feel safe enough to express our doubts and fears, as well as share our joys. As we get to know each other better, we can support each other in so many more ways, enabling each member of the group to grow in their Christian life. *Christ Church, Dartford.*

Home Groups enable the church family to meet in smaller numbers during the week at different homes. This informal setting helps friendships to grow, and enables us to support and encourage each other as we learn more about our Christian faith and try to live it out. *Dibden Churches*

We encourage people to be involved with the group. Because of the comparatively small number in each group, friendships are generally built more quickly, people are "pastored"; gifts are used, potential leaders are trained; members' spiritual lives are enhanced and the Kingdom of God becomes stronger. *New Life Church*

5:11 - Sometimes this "code" appears in the Home Groups name. This comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:11 which says "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing", which is the spiritual aim of these groups. *Woodstock Road Baptist Church.*

The purpose of home groups is: serving, supporting and spurring each other on as we seek to live for Christ. *Barton Evangelical Church.*

Above are some views of home groups taken from other churches, all describe groups of people who meet regularly in each other's homes as the early Church did to explore the bible and deepen their understanding and faith. There are a number of Home groups currently running within and outside of our Parish. Each has its own style and strengths.

For the last eight or nine years I have been a member of the Palace Estate Home Group, we number eight to ten on average and meet approximately every three weeks. Over the years the frequency of meetings as varied (with some prolonged gaps) as has the membership of the group.

We take it in turns to host and lead the meetings and have a varied and flexible programme of study. We have always decided our own topics and are able to make space for topical discussions where a need is felt. We have worked through study guides and addressed individual topics.

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Example of recent meetings include:

Lesser known biblical characters such as Esther, Ruth & Joshua

Biblical Babies

Biblical women in art

Donkeys in the bible

Minor prophets: Amos and Jonah

A study guide to Ephesians called "Building a community in Christ"

Study of Timothy using the People's Bible Commentary by Dick France

A Christian Aid Lent course entitled "For love or money"

We have two social events a year a summer BBQ and a Christmas worship to which all members of our families contribute. We also join the annual communion service for Home Groups in the Church rooms (next one: Wed 27th August at 8pm).

From this Home Group I draw strength and support through personal difficulty, friendship, confidence to ask when I do not know, pleasure in shared learning, surprise at the hidden breadth of experience and knowledge of others and a secure environment in which to show my ignorance.

If you are interested in joining a home group modelled on this or on a more structured learning programme please make yourself known to a member of the education committee* or speak to a member of one of the groups. If you have past experience of a Home Group or have the skill and commitment to facilitate a new group, please make yourself know to us.

Donya Young

*Education Committee: Vicar, Curate, Ernest Yeo, (other reps to be confirmed)

Palace Estate Home Group: Sue & Mike Cox, Gerald & Margaret Elves, Alison & Nic Hodson, Jenny Lewis, Gill & Neil Thompson, Donya & Matt Young.

Babbacome Road: Mary Setchell (group leader), Jo Hammond, Peter Cheshire, Ron Finch, Alec Thompson, Frances Westerman and Veronica Mountford.

Emmaus Nurture Group: Margaret Elves (leader)

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