

Development of the existing Housegroup Scheme at Saint Michael's, Bramcote to encourage and sustain further spiritual, pastoral and numerical growth.



Spiritual Foundations

Every church needs to assist its members to feel valued, loved and supported; fully included within the local community of faith.

For many church members, membership of a housegroup has enabled them to get to know one another better, grow in faith, ask questions and receive pastoral support.

Whilst every group is different, each one provides a marvellous opportunity for us to make new friends, deepen our existing friendships through mutual care and encouragement, and serve as a place wherein we might grow in our relationship with God, and accept the challenge to develop our faith. Housegroups also enable us to experience God's gift of the Church family in a smaller, more intimate, setting; something which often feels far harder to achieve in the context of Sunday worship. Solid and secure relationships are key within the Christian faith (*cf.* Mark 10:29-30).

Through membership of a housegroup, we have a chance to study and apply the Bible together, hopefully in ways which are personal and relevant to our everyday lives (*cf.* Colossians 1:28). By learning from the Bible, we hope that God is setting the agenda for us; both individually and as a group. We also have a chance to develop and deepen our Christian friendships.

Present Realities

We currently have around one third of our regular church members attending one of our existing housegroups. In recent months the number of new members has grown steadily with many currently, or previously, attending Christian Basics or Christian Discipleship courses. It is envisaged that such individuals should join existing housegroups, or form into new housegroups, upon the completion of these courses. The use of such courses will be further extended to assist those approaching the church for various occasional offices.

Our Vision

'Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.' (cf, Romans 12:4-5).

Being a Christian means being a part of the body of Christ – the Church – both locally and globally. However, it can often be difficult for individuals to feel that they belong, or find their place; whilst for others regular participation may simply not be possible owing to family or work commitments.

Whatever an individual's personal circumstances might be, our express desire is to see every regular member of Saint Michael's linked with a housegroup; whether or not they are able to attend on a regular basis. Clearly, active personal involvement is the ideal foundation for delivering social, pastoral and spiritual care for each and every individual. However, for those unable to participate in this way, we still hope to provide the means by which every member can be supported by a group within the church who, at the very least, will be thinking of them, and praying for them, on a regular basis.

The level of care provided by each group will, quite naturally, vary considerably from group to group depending upon the skills, talents and spiritual gifts of its members. It should be borne in mind, therefore, that this development to our existing scheme is **not** designed to provide regular social care or counselling services. There are numerous alternative groups and organisations, both within and outside of the church, which are much better suited to provide such services. Rather, we are seeking to provide basic support, through regular prayer, to every church member, regardless of whether they regularly attend one of the many existing housegroups.

Proposed Timetable of Events

May to August 2013

- (1) Further training for housegroup leaders:
 - Establishing appropriate expectations and boundaries
 - How to handle social, pastoral, and spiritual crises
 - How to manage prayer requests
 - How to handle requests for social or pastoral care
 - The need to maintain strict confidentiality
- (2) Allocation of church members to existing housegroups by the Clergy and Reader Team, together with the Housegroup Leaders:
 - Carefully matching individuals to existing groups
- (3) Communication of proposed changes to the existing scheme to the congregation through sermons, talks and web/printed media.

September 2013

- (1) Communication of membership allocations:
 - Informing individuals of their housegroup allocations.

October 2013

- (1) Implementation of the revised scheme.

Ongoing

- (1) Regular on-going training for housegroup leaders.
- (2) The provision of additional associated training courses:
 - Wholeness and Healing.
 - Ministry of Welcome.
- (3) An annual review of the membership of all existing groups, and the allocation of additional/new church members to the scheme as appropriate throughout the year.

Frequently Asked Questions

(1) Why the proposed changes?

The proposed changes to the existing scheme are designed to support every regular church member by praying for them personally on a regular basis. Naturally, if additional individuals decided to attend a housegroup, that would be a blessing to everyone.

(2) Will everyone be allocated to a housegroup?

Eventually. In order to provide a smooth transition, we will be allocating individuals in phases, starting this summer with those regular members currently living within the parish.

(3) What do I need to do to join the revised scheme?

Nothing at all. You will be contacted by a housegroup leader, or their deputy, who will advise you which group you have been allocated to, and how best to submit specific prayer requests, if you wish to.

(4) I already belong to a housegroup. What will I be expected to do in order to support those allocated to my group?

Whatever you wish. Aside from praying for people on a regular basis, how each group operates, or decides what to do, is entirely up to them. Some groups may wish to invite people to occasional social events (Bar-B-Ques, Christmas Parties, Outings etc.), whilst others may wish to offer more than that. There are no set requirements. Each group is free to determine what is most appropriate for them.

(5) Can I opt out of the revised scheme?

Rest assured that nobody will ever be coerced into joining or attending a housegroup. You may be invited to attend a social function from time to time, or asked whether you would like the group to pray for you regarding a specific matter, but whether you do any of these things will always be entirely up to you.