



Pastoral Care And Discipleship

Stepping into our destiny

Version 0.5, July 2010, Neil Townsend
The outcome of the work of the Discipleship and Care review team
(Greigs, Horswells, Neves and Townsends)

To follow Jesus – to love my neighbour – to make disciples

Wantage Community Church is called to be growing as ...

- A home for the lost
- A family for discipleship
- A base for sending

A key part of that is pastoral care and discipleship in the church. By those words, we mean:

- Pastoral Care is the thing that helps you stay internally healthy,
- Discipleship is what helps you thrive, become the best.

Vision

In the bible, and especially the New Testament, the main approach to these things can be summed up in two words, "one another". Far ahead of structure, responsibility or position the New Testament sees a people who selflessly and freely live for each other's good.

We aspire to ...

- Love *one another* (John 13:34,35; Romans 13:8)
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour *one another* above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with *one another*. (Romans 12:16)
- Let us stop passing judgment on *one another*. (Romans 14:13)
- Accept *one another* (Romans 15:17)
- Serve *one another* in love (Galatians 5:13)
- Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with *one another* in love. (Ephesians 4:2)
- Be kind and compassionate to *one another*, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

- "It is likely that we will need more small groups. Having prayed, who would you like to see leading a small group?"
- "Having prayed, who do you feel you would like your small group to be led by?"
- 1st September: deadline for handing the questionnaires in.
- September and first half of October: the team will determine the new layout for small groups and train the leaders. Existing groups will continue.
- After half term: The new groups start.

Discipleship

To bring significant change here at the same time would be foolish. The process for making discipleship available for all who want it is as follows:

- Summer: Neil and D clarify (with others) who they will disciple initially.
- Early autumn: Small group transitions going on, clarifying discipleship for those leading groups etc.
- After half term: Communicate more about the vision for discipleship and way it will work.
- December / January: start to implement the process.

Implementation

Oversight and points of contact

A care and discipleship team is being established to oversee Pastoral Care and Discipleship. The initial members will be the Greigs, Horswells, Neves and Townsends.

- The team will oversee Pastoral Care and Discipleship in Wantage Community Church on behalf of the elders.
- This team will gather the small groups leaders, disciplers, etc in appropriate formats for their support, encouragement and training.
- Every member of this team is available for anyone in the church to help resolve their questions about Pastoral care and discipleship.
- There will also be specific points of contact for newcomers, for finding a small group and for finding out what other resources are available both inside WCC and beyond us.

Small groups

We recognise that in order to move towards our aspirations, it will be helpful to allow some movement of our existing small groups. It may well be that we need more, smaller, groups to truly achieve the goals. To achieve this process in a way that respects existing relationships we plan ...

- July: explain the vision and plan.
- August: make available to everyone a questionnaire which will ask three questions. We can't promise to do everything everyone wants, but we do want to involve the whole church in the process:
 - "Having prayed, the people I would most appreciate being in my small group are (no more than 8!!) ...",

- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish *one another* with all wisdom. (Colossians 3:16)
- And so on !!!

We aspire for there to be no needs in our midst, whether physical, emotional or psychological, for example,

- Acts 4:32-35, "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

We aspire for every person to lay hold of their God given call and to help them towards that:

- Phillipians 3:12-14,17, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. [...] Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you."
- Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

We want to have the least structure that releases the most of that! Above all, we want to encourage, nurture and release the one another atmosphere. Small groups and discipleship are foundational to helping these happen in reality.

Small Groups

Small groups aim to ...

- a. Be a growing family in which every member feels valued.
- b. Be diverse: each group will naturally have its own flavour and it is healthy and natural for each group to gather people who might not normally have met outside the church.
- c. Have life outside of meetings.
- d. Have a leader (or lead couple) who ensures there is vision and plan to what the group does, aiming to bring out the best in each person, delegating to them and encouraging them to the call God has on them.
- e. Have a support person or couple for the leader and be training future leaders.
- f. Provide or ensure pro-active care for each member. (Ensuring this care is the responsibility of the leader or lead couple, but they can delegate it - an analogy for this type of care might be a good GP, who you can go to, who you know and who will check you're healthy, outside of meetings. Like a GP, they will seek to "refer" when they feel something arises which is "beyond them").
- g. Be clearly encouraging and supportive of evangelistic vision, it should either have a group outreach focus or clear strategy of encouraging group members to engage with the lost.
- h. Have an active social life, not least eating together in some way or other.
- i. Be aiming for growth and open to change over time.
- j. Be the right size for this to happen.

Discipleship

This is a couple to couple (or one to one) process ...

- a. It aims to seek God for the person or couple being disciplined and to push them into God for their growth in every area of their life.
- b. The goal is to see the person or couple being disciplined become the best they can be through encouragement, prayer, love, calling up, courses as appropriate and so on.
- c. The relationship will involve meeting regularly (and sufficiently frequently!), prayer, provocation, love, calling up, accountability.
- d. An ideal discipler is your small group leader. However, we need to be flexible in this regard and be open to others exercising discipleship in the church. This is healthy flexibility.
- e. It is biblically preferable and practically simpler for a couple to be disciplined by a couple.
- f. That personal discipleship should be reviewed on a regular basis. This is a healthy process encouraging the setting of more specific goals and ensuring that the relationship has life, and allows for change as appropriate. A discipleship relationship isn't for life!
- g. No one person or couple can effectively disciple with faith, passion and energy a large number of people. This means there is a limit to the number of people any one couple or person can disciple.
- h. To disciple someone
 - You must be actively disciplined
 - The couple or person discipling you must feel that there are no significant reasons why you shouldn't disciple someone
 - Someone must have faith to be disciplined by you