**Report on Life Groups at Christ Church Downend**

Life Groups are more than ever, at the heart of Christ Church. From our Questionnaire in January 2018 we could see that 58% of people were in a Life Group of some kind. (At CCD “Life Groups” describes all the small groups we run: Home Groups, prayer group or special interest groups.) Those 58% of people are **more likely to be confident in identifying what God is doing in their lives, more confident in sharing and living out their faith, more confident in being part of the church’s mission, than those not in a group.** Of course they are, because helping each other to recognise what God is doing, and praying for more, is the bread and butter of all Life Groups. It reminds us of the importance of not forgetting to keep meeting together, as the writer to the Hebrews says.

Life Groups help us BELONG we are named and known and valued. Belonging, in turn, helps believe: as we experience God’s hospitality in making us part of his family, through the hospitality and concern of our fellow group members.

Life Groups help us CONNECT: we can share the highs and lows of life and celebrate the milestones with others. When we are absent, others notice and we are more likely to be supported during difficult times.

Life Groups help us SHARE our faith or make disciples: we can discuss our hopes and fears, pray for opportunities on our frontlines and report back.

Life Groups help us GROW more like Christ, or learning to be disciples: we spend time thinking about God, talking to him, learning his ways, wrestling with issues.

Life Groups help us FEED on Scripture: we learn from each other as we study God’s word.

Life Groups help us PRAY: we model prayer to each other, we pray for each other when praying alone seems empty or hopeless; we share answers to prayer and build up a picture of God’s faithfulness together.

**The Current Health of our Life Groups**

As shared above, 58% of those attending services on 6th January were in some kind of small group. But how many people are there in our church community? If we take the Church Directory as a guide as to the size of our whole community, the proportion is more like 30% although this document includes the house bound and those in nursing homes. All of these people are vital members of our community and there may be ways to connect them into a kind of Life Group. For some, however, the pastoral visiting and communion ministry headed by Kathy Prosser is a more suitable style of support. Also, our Directory contains some who want to keep a link to the church but mainly worship elsewhere. Our electoral roll has a similar cohort of people who are connected to CCD but not worshipping members.

I would like to calculate the percentage of people in groups so what we can measure our progress towards raising the percentage, but it’s proving difficult to assess accurately and I’m not there yet!

Easier to calculate is the number of people in Life Groups:

**153 people** are in a Life Group. (Including our 16 -20year olds.) Many of them are in at least one.

**There are 29 ongoing groups:**

11 Home Groups and 3 young people groups (14 -20 yr olds)

11 prayer triplets/triads

4 groups who meet for a specific purpose (Bereavement; Reading Group; Women in Work; Sanctuary for Carers.)

**Plus 4 short term groups (Bible Course)** so far!

**How can we get more people into Life Groups?**

Greater variety of opportunities- to suit different circumstances and learning styles

Bringing back the wanderers- those who used to belong

Developing Leaders – apprentices for the future; equipping and training

More groups: uniting round a common goal

Better publicity and accessible information

Personal invitation and visiting

Prayer! Pray with each group and leader

Greater fluidity – opportunities to move groups if desired, and culture of movement to make it easier to move if desired.