

# Renewal

Connect update - June 2020

# Connect

## The Next Steps for our Connect Groups for the remainder of 2020

### Stronger together

We are by no means clear of the pandemic storms globally, yet we are all finding ways to navigate through it. This means we have a little more time to put more thought into managing ourselves, our homes and our communities in these uncertainties. As with any storm, some people on the periphery were only marginally scarred, but there are those among us who were, and still are, at the centre of destruction, losing loved ones, losing income and therefore being confronted with a strong sense of despair. As a community we need to assess the damage on all fronts and reach out to those in need, not just as an initial response to a crisis, but with an ongoing intention to love and care even if the news seem to be getting weary and tiresome. Whether the needs are emotional, physical or spiritual, we need to equip ourselves and be ready to reach out and support or ask for support.

A strong awareness that has become apparent in this pandemic is that as a Renewal family, and a church family being part of a wider community in the heart of England - we aim to be stronger together, far beyond the dust settling on this disruption.

### Growth and Influence starts in small groups

When Jesus started out with His ministry, he did not start with a movement, a social media campaign or a global network. He started with a small group. Eating together and talking together with his close friends (John 21), discussing their futures; what they hoped for and the things they were challenged by. And together the disciples grew to understand the truths of God's Kingdom, learned to care for one another, were equipped to serve and grew closer to Jesus.

Although these disciples were from all walks of life, with different talents and skill sets, and completely different personalities and backgrounds, Jesus saw their potential and encouraged them to step out and feed and shepherd His people. And that is our commission. And that is what we will concentrate on, by not disregarding the importance of our influence as a small group.

## **Connect group strategy from now until December 2020**

A decision has been made by our senior leadership: Until such time we are ALL able to gather together again as a Renewal family, we will continue to gather in small groups and in various ways within the guidelines of our government.

Initially we were able to act upon the lockdown and take our church and groups online rather swiftly. As we now realise that it might take some time still to find the new normal, we are spending more time and thought into the process of meeting online and eventually in a safe manner as a smaller community.

We have learnt over the past months that just because we cannot gather together in large groups, does not mean we cannot gather in small groups. In fact, one key thing we have learnt during this time, is that it has never been more important to be able gather in small groups, and gather well and gather with purpose; gathering with others who know us by name, who know our circumstances and our challenges. It enables us to continue to support and encourage one another regardless of the circumstances and events been forced upon us. It enables us to continue to lift each other up in faith by God's word and pray together. These are the essentials for our spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing.

*Hebrews 10:24-25 MSG...*

*"Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going."*

He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.

In a world that is currently filled with fear, anxiety and uncertainty, we have a unique opportunity to BE the church. And we are confident that Jesus will be as present in our homes as He is when we meet together in all our locations.

## **What would our meetings look like up until December 2020:**

1. We will continue to meet online via Zoom, Whatsapp, FaceTime or Messenger Video Call, and keep phoning and emailing as you have done the past three months. Feedback suggests that having contact at least fortnightly is working well, but we also know some groups have weekly meetings which suit their needs.
2. If the weather is favourable for outdoor meetings, your group can arrange to meet in a park for a picnic or go on a walk maintaining social distancing and keeping numbers according to government guidelines.
3. Should restrictions be lifted by the government, and only if everybody in the group feel comfortable, a group may eventually decide to meet up in a home adhering strictly to the safety guidelines.

## **The Purpose of our Connect Groups:**

To 'BE' church and build the body through relationships.

## **The Vision for our Connect Groups:**

- To worship together
- To encourage in faith together
- To learn and grow together
- To increase hope, especially in challenging times, together
- To serve together
- To grow in relationship with Jesus and with each other, together

## **The Mission for our Connect Groups:**

- Building and strengthening our relationships irrespective whether we meet online or in person
- Serving to meet the needs of those in our group on a physical, emotional and spiritual level
- Bringing to the attention to leadership those in dire need