

GOSPEL COMMUNITIES

What are they?

What do they look like?

Why have them?

What Are They?

- A session organised group committed to spending time together during the week on mission with gospel intentionality. Gospel Communities draw in others to know and experience the shaping, transforming, re-forming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Or put another way: A Gospel Community has a common identity with a commitment to pastoring one another with the Gospel and working together to witness to Christ in their neighbourhood. The gospel community is the core unit of church life, the place where evangelism, pastoral care, discipleship and life take place during the week.

What Do They Look Like?

- They are not meant to be simply small groups or in-home Bible studies that meet once a week. They include these but are not only these. They are not about filling our diaries with extra commitments.
- It's learning to live our ordinary lives together as community during the week where we can practice the "one anothers" of Scripture. We care for one another, look out for one another, help each other practically. We're there for one another when we need help. We ask help from one another - and are not shy to ask! We cook for someone who is ill or struggling. We clean houses for those who need a break. We watch films together, eat together, shop together, look after the kids together, wash up together. It may include watching a football game together, meeting over coffee or tea, gathering weekly for a shared meal, a play date with kids, going to a concert together, painting a member's house, helping someone move, comforting them in a difficult time or rejoicing with them in a time of celebration. It may involve seeking advice in large decisions: what job to take, where to live, how to use our money. As any member of a biological family would ask for advice in these areas, so do we because we are family in Christ who extend and model grace to one another. Through this type of weekly living we express our identity as church family. We do this in front of a watching world and call people to join the community God is creating in King Jesus by the power of his life-transforming gospel.
- Example 1: Everyone eats dinner. A Gospel Community might schedule in a time during the week where they invite another family or person from church around. There they share food, share life, and learn to talk naturally about Jesus, the gospel, how it transforms their lives. A natural discipling environment exists to invite a neighbour/work colleague where they get to see how Christians live, hear how they talk, and observe how the gospel changes lives.
- Example 2: We all go out from time to time. A Gospel Community would aim to do it together with another family or person from church. Once again, a natural discipling environment exists to invite a neighbour/work colleague to see how Christians live, hear how they talk, how they interact with culture, and observe how the gospel changes lives.

Why Have Them?

- They help to apply daily & fulfill the "one anothers/each others" of Scripture (e.g. Heb 3:13; 10:24-25; John 13:34-35).
- They are faithfully consistent with our confessions, e.g. Chapter 26 Westminster Confession of Faith.
- They are a practical alignment of our congregation's vision and Presbytery's goals.
- They remind us of the heavenly reality of the togetherness of believers.
- They help us re-orientate our daily lives around the gospel in the fellowship/communion of believers.
- They become the central way Christians share life and do mission
- They focus on reaching the community/neighbourhood around them in order to share the gospel and it's effects together during the week.
- The end goal of gospel communities is to build relationships with specific people in a specific area in order to show and tell the good news of the gospel of Jesus.
- They help us counteract the "secular-effect" by soaking in the word and Christian community (Rom 12:2).
- They show the world an alternative community (i.e. Biblical/Christian) to the current community (i.e. Secular).
- They help us to disciple one another during the week by putting the "with me" discipleship principle into a community context.
- They help us to think biblically, live biblically, and re-evaluate what we do by asking ourselves, "can we do this better?"
- They help us make the most of every opportunity together during the week (Gal 6:10; Eph 5:15-16).
- They help us become more faithful Christians and witnesses during the week.
- They help us to serve others together during the week.
- They challenge complacent, self-indulgent living.
- They help us live the Christian life 24/7 rather than be content with an isolated Christianity limited to Sunday worship.
- They become the front door of the "church scattered" where as Lord's Day worship is the front door of the "church gathered."