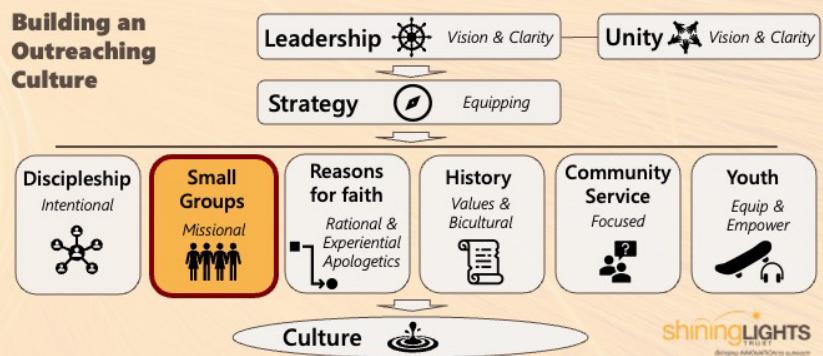


TOPICAL UPDATE

Outreach and SMALL GROUPS

Healthy outreach is the product of many things, not just one. This series looks at dynamics involved in building a healthy outreaching culture in a local church. Each article offers insights with practical action steps and support resources. This is about helping local churches to bear fruit.

Building an Outreaching Culture



Introduction A Church WITH small groups VS a Church OF small groups

The early church met in the synagogues (large groups) and from house to house (small groups).

- It was not a large gathering with some small groups. It was instead a church made up of small groups.
- Put differently, it could be said that Christianity started as a 'house church' movement.

History

At the time of Constantine centuries of persecution ended when Christianity became a state-sanctioned religion (The Edict of Milan - 313AD).

- 60 years later Emperor Theodosius made Christianity become a State Religion (The Edict of Thessalonica - 380AD)
- As a synopsis: From then onwards the larger gatherings became the primary focus — just as they remain in the West today.
- What is of note is that the Church thrived when meeting only in small groups – while it did not thrive so well when meeting only in large groups. When the small group gatherings stopped, or were diminished, something fundamental was lost.

Bible

My NIV New Testament has 57 'one another' statements -like love one another, pray for one another, etc...

- Being 'the Church' God wants us to be requires a context of relationship.
- Large group gatherings do not provide this in a manner fitting the 'one anothers'.
- Both large and small groups are necessary to apply these instructions.

Furthermore, there is an interesting pattern in Acts where there are initial larger gatherings and disciples were "added" (Acts 2:41-47).

- The Church then grows - and they meet house to house. The 'centralised leadership' of a few apostles was 'diversified' - releasing a multiplicity of leadership.
- Even those appointed to serve the poor started preaching - with outstanding results (Acts 6:1-7). Concurrently, many leaders needed releasing through the house churches - and the Bible articulates that the number of disciples then "multiplied" - vs being merely 'added' (Acts 6:7).



A cultural point of note: What is OUR weakness in NZ?

- Do you think it fair to say that our inherited 'church culture' is one that has under-valued the small group?
- What if this is one of our weaknesses as the NZ Church - to identify and bring balance to?

A specific and important question WHAT IS THE MISSION of the CHURCH SMALL GROUP?



The mission Jesus gave his Church (Matthew 28) is to make disciples of non-disciples.

By defining 'church' as 'congregation' in our minds, it is possible that we have limited our understanding of this instruction.

Of note, 'making disciples out of non-disciples' is not only the mission of the local congregation...

***... It is also the mission of every church small group!
This has significant implications***

(To clarify)

The mission Jesus gave us is therefore - by its very definition - not only the mission of every local congregation. It is also:

- The mission of every church small group
- The mission of every individual Christian
- And the mission of every Christian family.

A simple and necessary question logically follows regarding our many church small groups:

How might we restore the God-given mission of the church small group to our small groups?

Outreach as the CULTURE OF (rather than as a PROGRAMME IN) the local church

While our small groups could run an outreach programme every term - the reality is that programmes don't reach people; it takes people to reach people.

- The most effective outreach in a local church will come as a result of the MEMBERS becoming authentically 'evangelistic' in (a) who they are, and (b) together as a team.

The key to achieving an authentically evangelistic culture IN the members of the congregation is our leadership HABITS.

- Habits build culture - not programmes (though having good programmes certainly helps).

So, what HABITS might be able to help us 'reinsert' the mission of the Church small group into our local church's small groups?

FIVE leadership HABITS for church small groups to 'reinsert' their mission

1. **Identify your 'five'** (who, hindrances, interests - An annual habit)
2. **Pray for your 'five'** (A monthly habit)
3. **Testimony of conversations engaged** (A monthly habit)
4. **Socials - based around their interests** (A quarterly habit)
5. **Invitations to local and combined church** programmes/events/courses (Occasional)

Below resources explain the above.

This is achievable for any small group.

This doesn't require use of the regular Bible study / discussion time in weekly meetings - so all pre-existing (other) purposes of the group exists for can continue unchanged.

From a strategic point of view, we suggest that this answers the question this article is purposed to answer and as simply as possible in view of a minimum 'pace' of leadership direction required to actually catalyse outcomes.

**There is a difference between a church with small groups and a church of small groups. Our small groups aren't 'add-ons' to a church.
They are the church - and therefore need priority and also health as the disciple-making vehicle God intended!**

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Sermon Resource: The Biblical and historical basis for church small groups

"Intentional disciple-making through church small groups" Audio sermon by Dave Mann.

Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

- Audio file: 40min message
- Notes for pastor preaching
- Powerpoint (Content without design/images for your adaption)

From the SLT: Equipping video on this topic for small group leaders

This 16 minute video for church small group leaders articulates the above -though in different words. Can be found at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

Participant notes:

- Download to give each leader when they watch this
- ...to discuss and consider together how this might be sustainably applied.



From the SLT: Small group leader training...integration holistic growth with outreaching culture

Your denomination or church might have other small group training resources you use. The below is just an option - however it is notably one that is holistic - while INCLUDING the outreaching dynamic which is so often left out.

Personal note from Dave: In my prior assignment as a pastor in Singapore I gave intentional focus to learning about church small groups. Having been 'thrown in the deep end' in a very different dynamic of church I knew I needed to learn new things. The below resulted from this journey. To this day, the fifth year of applying the below teachings remains the most exciting thing I have ever touched in outreach. We grew through the small groups.

(Further comment on the thought behind what was and wasn't selected for this training, and why, can be found under 'The philosophy /thought behind this training' at AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups

People:

The following Kiwis have significant experience in small groups / small group church planting.

These pioneer-spirited church leaders are New Zealand heroes! You may know others in addition.

Robin Corner - worldwidecpm.org

Nick Klinkenberg - www.nickklinkenberg.com

Nick and Sarah Field - www.theway.co.nz

Tony Collis (catch from 22mins) - <https://youtu.be/Sl6nU5DtunY?si=uvo1GYtixnsjzOa0>



SUPPORT RESOURCES

Church small group leader training videos & guides:

Go to AllTogether.co.nz/small-groups for videos and participants guides.

Video 1 - 30 minutes

1. Three key goal areas — and how to achieve them through simple 'fringe' habits (because habits are what builds culture)
2. Programme flow and priorities
3. Discussion leading tips — Part I



Video 2 - 30 minutes

4. The essentiality of small groups to the function of the Church
5. Small group life-cycle
6. The essentiality of annual goals to life-changing small groups (including outreach goals)



Video 3 - 40 minutes

7. Discussion skills — Part II (group management)
8. Planning (putting it all to practice — to deliver measurable results).



Books:

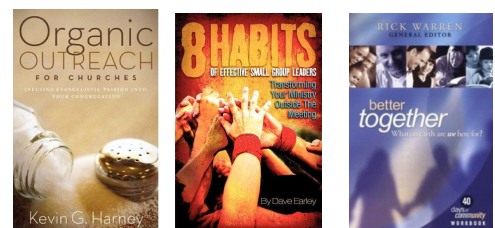
Generations for Life - by Tony Collis tony@hopelevin.org.nz

Elephant in the Room - by Dave Mann. See chapters 6 and 7. (Free PDF available on request to admin@shininglights.co.nz, or purchase in print from AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach)



Because We Care - by Dave Mann - See chapters 12 and 13. (Free PDF of book available upon request to admin@shininglights.co.nz, or purchase in print from AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach)

Organic Outreach - by Kevin Harney. A different approach to 'outreaching culture', though with the same founding understandings regarding 'culture'.
(AllTogether.co.nz/products/#outreach or search online)



Eight Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders - by Dave Earley. A review at AllTogether.co.nz/outreach-book-review-8-habits-effective-small-group-leaders then search online)

Better Together - by Rick Warren. A truly superb small group resource including book and discussion guides. This was created following the '40 Days of Purpose' material, which many churches have used. It is an excellent material that can help to gel a group together - and with a meaningful direction. Find online.

Where do we go from here - by Ralph Neighour. A paradigm book written in the 1980s about the then-exploding Cell Church movement of Asia. Find online.