



Developing our Church Vision – part 2

(September 2016)

In: developing our relationships within our church community

As we journey towards our destination of turning our church community inside out, we need help and encouragement from one another along the way. When God called us to be his sons and daughters, he also gave us brothers and sisters to love and care for. We are not meant to live the Christian life alone. We must deepen our relationships with each other, because it is through our love for one another that the watching world will see God's transformative power at work in us (John 14.35).

In recent years, we have worked harder at being *One Big Church Family Together* and living out the *One Another* commands of the New Testament. However, there is still much to do.

Over the next few years, we'd love the following things to be happening, by God's grace:

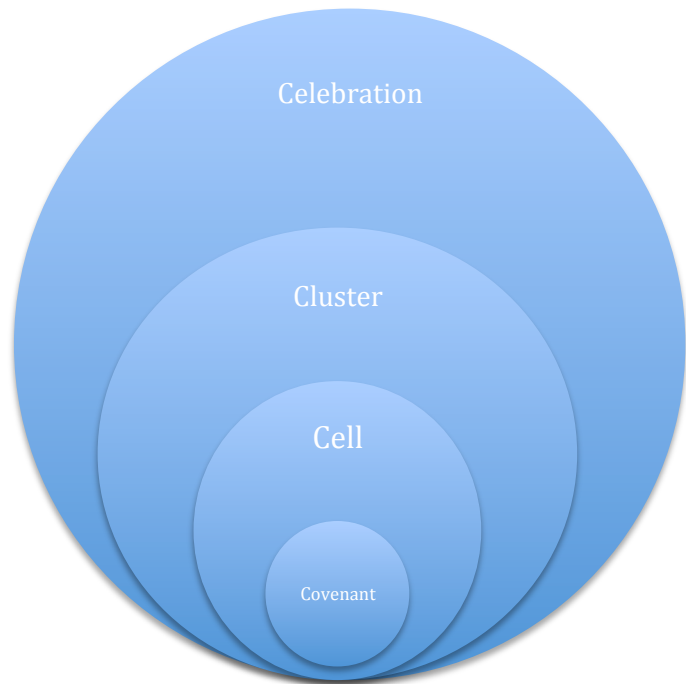
- A higher proportion of our church community will be in mission groups or cell groups
- More of us will commit to meeting regularly in groups of 2 or 3 for deeper prayer and accountability (see appendix)
- We will have a growing sense of responsibility for each others' discipleship – speaking words of biblical comfort and challenge, as iron sharpens iron (Prov 27.17)
- More of us will be in intentional mentoring relationships, as a way of discipling one another for Christian life and service at home, work and church
- We will have a clearer sense of how God calls us to care for each other, spiritually and practically
- Each of us will feel more able to offer pastoral care so that we see stronger pastoral care across the church, and especially in our mission groups
- Our central gatherings (eg Sunday services) will help us engage with each other (as well as God) more deeply
- We will feel more able to encourage one another in our central gatherings through sharing stories of what God has been doing in us and through us



Appendix: the four spheres of belonging

Social theory says that for human flourishing, we each need to belong in a variety of different size groupings.

This can be helpfully matched to the Christian life:



- We need to belong at a '**celebration**' level (eg 150+ people), such as a Sunday morning celebration. There are too many to know everyone else there. The only thing that unites us all is our love for Jesus. Bible teaching and sung worship often work best at this size. Newcomers can sometimes be missed at this size, or feel lost.
- We need to belong to a '**cluster**' level (eg 30-60 people) – a size of group where we can know most people's names, and recognise those who are new. This size group isn't as intimidating for newcomers as a celebration (which can be too big and overwhelming) or a cell (where they can feel too obvious), so mission can work best at this size. Some of our mission groups already work at this level a bit (eg the Beacon drop-ins, or Allsorts family meals).
- We need to belong to a '**cell**' level (eg 6-15 people), such as a cell group. In this size group, you know a fair bit about everyone – their job, some of their joys and sorrows, their family names etc. Pastoral care, prayer support and studying the Bible together often work best at this size.
- We need to belong at a '**covenant**' level (eg 2-3 people), such as a prayer partnership or marriage relationship (where both partners are Christians). You can be completely honest with each other in this size group, sharing very personal prayer requests, and holding each other accountable as you seek to become more Christlike.

These four spheres are not mutually incompatible – you can be part of a prayer triplet (covenant), which is part of a Bible study group (cell), which is part of a mission group (cluster), which comes along to St James' by the Park on Sunday mornings (celebration).