

Illustration by Oli Winward

GRACE
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What is a Community Group?

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GCG Community Groups are communities of light scattered across Gateshead. Unlike a weekly Bible study meeting, Community Groups function like localised mini-churches in their area, focusing on discipleship, mission and sharing life. Above all, a Community Group is a mindset of 'my family' rather than 'an event'.

This includes group and one-to-one Bible study, inviting and including unchurched friends and neighbours in everyday life, and intentionally sharing and supporting each other as the people of Jesus.

Community Group objectives

Community Groups strive to find creative ways to do:

1. **Discipleship** — so that each of its members is able to study and apply the Bible in community;
2. **Share life** — to support and encourage one another each week;
3. **Mission** — through inviting and including friends and other unbelievers in everyday life.

Disciples, sharing life, on mission: that's a Community Group.

Family life

So Community Groups aren't a weekly event; they're more like a centre of gravity – a mindset of 'my family'. They are about *living life as disciples of Jesus on mission together*. This is both regular and irregular, scheduled and unscheduled.

It may include gathering for a meal together, watching a football game together, playing sport, meeting over coffee or tea, or gathering weekly for a shared meal followed by Bible study. It may materialise in a play date with kids or a group going for a country walk together. It may mean painting a Community Group member's house, helping someone move, comforting them in a difficult time, or rejoicing in a time of celebration. It may also mean identifying a particular need in your community that your group can meet.

People not a building

The church isn't a building, it's a people – God's people. As God's people we are to be living out the gospel in community and on mission. We are to be living out our ordinary lives in ordinary ways with gospel intentionality. We want to involve others as we make Jesus famous, loved, and followed. The Community Group philosophy creates multiple pathways for outsiders to be welcomed into the body of Christ; pathways that extend well beyond the front door of the church.

Everyday church

Our Sunday gatherings are like a front door into church; Community Groups give numerous 'side doors' into church; someone might come along to a barbeque, a games night, or a Bible study. We want to encourage everyone who comes through the front door also to go through the side door and grow amidst real Christian community. And we want to encourage everyone who comes through a side door also to go through the front door and grow through gathered Christian worship.

You can think of Sundays and Community Groups as 'big and small church'; 'Sunday church and everyday church'. Note that since the earliest days the church met at the 'temple' and also 'in their homes' (Acts 2.42-47).

Generally speaking, an invitation to a Sunday gathering is great for 'low-hanging fruit'; people with some existing interest in Christianity, who will happily come along to church. But involving people in Community Group life is great for 'high-hanging fruit'; people who may be totally unchurched, or suspicious or sceptical of church.

Practically...

If you're not in a Community Group and would like to know more or join one near you, please speak to one of the GCG leaders on Sunday or email info@gracechurchgateshead.org.

