

# SMALL GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR

'Small groups are the future of large CUs'

## **defining the vision**

Small groups are a vital element in a large CU as they are a place in which to cultivate deeper, accountable relationships and to study and apply God's word in a very personal way. There's huge potential in small groups, as the building blocks of larger groups, for community, growth and outreach. The core vision of small groups is to love God, love one another and love the world:

### **Love God**

Groups are God-centred, a place where we meet with and are transformed by Him.

### **Love one another**

Groups are relationship-based, a place where honest, trusting relationships are modelled and developed.

### **Love the world**

Groups are outward focused, encouraging a lifestyle that reaches out to others, sharing God's heart for the lost.

Alongside the above, small groups have six central values that help to flesh-out and put into practice the core vision. These central values are an attempt to distil what we see demonstrated in the early church. **(See Acts 2:42-47.)**

## ***Jesus at the centre***

*We meet because of Jesus, to know him better, to share him with others and for his glory. Jesus is the source of life and it is his presence that will create life in us, in the group and for multiplication.*

### ***Every member ministry***

*A place where people have the opportunity to develop their gifts and skills. Giving members responsibility for group activities promotes growth and gives them a sense of competence & being valued.*

## ***Ongoing discipleship***

*'Jesus at the centre' and the responsibility of 'every member ministry' promotes growth in individual and community life. The group becomes a place to work out beliefs, apply God's word to our specific situations and so become more like Jesus.*

### ***Honesty and openness***

*By modelling and encouraging honesty and openness we learn to share our lives, and build meaningful, accountable and loving relationships. This will take time.*

## ***Developing community***

*God did not create us to exist in isolation; we need others to encourage us towards growth, maturity and love. In a lonely and fragmented society, experience and participation in real community is vitally important in demonstrating the new community of the church Jesus has created. Discipleship is not about meetings and individualistic living, but inclusive community where Christian love is demonstrated within and outside the group. Again it takes time & flows from the other values.*

### ***Growth and multiplication***

*Groups are focused on evangelism, on sharing the good news, and seek to grow and divide as more people join and become Christians.*

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In order to ensure that we remain faithful to the group values, and *not* just for the sake of structure, there are **four elements** (or 'the 4 Ws') that some small groups like to include and promote in every meeting. The simplicity of this pattern is key and makes it easy to understand, delegate and evaluate.

**WELCOME** (*community – God's people*):

*Helps us to get to know and encourage each other, allows everyone to contribute and feel valued, develop openness and honesty and create a sense of belonging, as well as making the group welcoming to non-Christians.*

**WORSHIP** (*worship – God's worth*):

*Time to focus on God, who is at the centre of the group. Worship is about lifting our eyes off ourselves and up to God and giving him glory – it doesn't have to involve singing.*

**WORD** (*nurture – God's word*):

*Bringing our lives under the authority of God's word. Helping each other grapple with what it says, what it means and how that applies to our lives. This is about growth, building community around the truth, keeping Jesus central and being prepared for doing evangelism.*

**WITNESS** (*mission – God's work*):

*Having Jesus at the centre means wanting him to also be at the centre of other peoples lives – sharing Gods heart for the lost. The group should empower us to be witnesses through accountability, prayer and doing, and expecting God to use us to bring people to Himself.*

## **developing a vision**

In order to *lead well* and with **integrity**, it's important to **understand** and be personally **convinced** of the *role* and *importance* of small groups within the CU. You can only teach others what you already know yourself – the type small groups you cultivate in CU will reflect your own understanding of and vision for small groups. Hopefully, as you work on having a right and deep personal understanding of your area this will convince and envision you about it, which in turn can be **infectious!** So here are some ideas on developing a vision for small groups:

- \* You could read about small groups (a.k.a. house groups, home groups, cells etc.) & discipleship
- \* Share stories with other small group co-ordinators and small group leaders
- \* Try to develop a local as well as general vision for small groups

But as well as this *visionary* side to being small groups co-ordinator, there's also a highly *practical* aspect – it's important to **know** what the post **entails**, and seek to *fulfil* that with **excellence**.

## **defining the role**

There are three broad functions essential to the role of small groups co-ordinator: **strategy, pastoral care** and **organisation**:

- \* The small groups co-ordinator is key in determining the **strategy** behind small groups. Bearing in mind the core vision and values of small groups, the current
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situation in your CU's small groups, and with the help of the Committee and Staff/Relay, you are responsible for deciding how small groups would be best used in your CU this year. What would be the most strategic use of small groups in terms of teaching, time and venue, the way you mix and group people, and interaction with other areas of CU life? You can also use SLOBS strategically in envisioning and training the SGLs.

- \* The small groups co-ordinator has an important **pastoral** role in supporting and loving the small group leaders. Most small group leaders encounter a rough patch somewhere along the line, and some may even find their role or group difficult all year. In those situations, for them to know that quality time, a listening ear, wise advice and a praying friend are available will make a great difference. Plus, when the going is good, supporting the CU's small group leaders by staying in touch with them will provide opportunities for evaluation and feedback, and refreshing the vision and values of small groups. So do work out how best to maintain contact with each of you SGLs, and think about involving your IFES Ireland Staff and Relay workers in this.
- \* The **organisational** side of being small groups co-ordinator involves promoting and publicising small groups, putting people in groups, arranging SLOBS, finding leaders...

The role of small groups co-ordinator will of course look slightly different in each CU due to differing sizes, structures etc. But here's a fairly comprehensive list of what you might find yourself doing this year, or what you might want to consider getting involved in. A year in the life of a small groups co-ordinator...

(Table on next page)

### **a few resources...**

#### **Understanding the Bible and its message**

*How to read the Bible for all its Worth (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, Scripture Union, 1997

*According to Plan: the Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*, G Goldsworthy, IVP 1991

*Postcard from Palestine: a hands on guide to reading and using the Bible (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*,

Andrew Reid, Matthias Media, 1997

*God's Big Picture: Tracing the story-line of the Bible*, Vaughan Roberts, IVP, 2003

#### **Leading a Small Group**

*Leading Better Bible Studies*, Karen Morris & Rod Morris, Matthias Media

*Loving the Lost*, Laurence Singlehurst (on the cell movement and values)

#### **Commentaries**

No commentary series is consistently brilliant but some are generally helpful & reliable, such as: Bible Speaks Today (IVP), Crossway Bible Guides (Crossway), Reading the Bible Today (Matthias Media)

#### **Pastoral Care**

*What Could I Say?*, Peter Hicks, IVP, 2000

*What Could I Do?*, Peter Hicks, IVP, 2003

#### **www. Resources**

<http://www.biblestudytools.net>

<http://www.worldchristian.net/biblestudytools.html>

<http://www.ivpbooks.co.uk/>

<http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk>

<http://www.uccf.org.uk/cumovement/resources.asp> and [www.ifesireland.org](http://www.ifesireland.org)

**Finally, one invaluable resource: your Staff and/or Relay workers will of course be more than happy to help whenever they can!**

<b>when you start...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* complete the process of choosing new small group leaders for the coming academic year, ensuring you have enough help the new team of leaders to 'gel'</li> <li>* encourage all small group leaders to attend any training events being run for them, arrange these events if necessary</li> <li>* develop a strategy for small groups (in conjunction with the rest of the Committee): =&gt; what will you study? (Look at: what's been done before, what will be done in main CU meetings, what time will allow.) =&gt; where &amp; when will small groups meet? (Daytime/lunchtime/evenings? In halls/houses, on campus?) =&gt; how will people be allocated? (Finalists/departments/single-sex/mixed? etc.) =&gt; how will small groups interact with other areas in the life of the CU, especially evangelism?</li> <li>* develop a strategy for SLOBS/SALT – how can you use this to pass on the vision &amp; values of small groups, and to support the leaders?</li> </ul>
<b>in September...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* help the new team of leaders to 'gel' and encourage them to attend any relevant training events, arrange these events if necessary</li> <li>* make sure that small groups happen by publicising them from the beginning of term and encouraging people to sign up</li> <li>* publicise venues and times of group meetings and challenge the CU to get involved for fellowship, Bible study, prayer and outreach</li> <li>* allocate those who sign up to a group</li> <li>* get SLOBS/SALT up and running</li> </ul>
<b>before you finish...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* hold a collective evaluation of the year with all small group leaders</li> <li>* begin and co-ordinate the process of identifying new group leaders (Who is already leading others and encouraging them to grow as Christians? Who is committed to and passionate about Scripture, and serious about their own walk with God? Who is committed to small groups?)</li> </ul>
<b>throughout the year...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* support and love small group leaders... this pastoral side to the small group co-ordinator's role (often in partnership with your Staff or Relay worker) involves on-going communication with group leaders by meeting up with them from time to time both individually and together for prayer, evaluation, feedback and encouragement</li> <li>* co-ordinate and run SLOBS/SALT</li> <li>* be aware of Bible study resources available for small groups</li> <li>* give ideas for developing prayer, evangelism, world mission and community in small groups</li> </ul>