

## Community Groups at St. Mark's – What Could They Be?

This summer, we want to prepare the St. Mark's community for the upcoming Fall Launch of our New Community Groups by sharing the *what, why, and how*. This week, we want to focus on the aspect of *what could be* regarding Community Groups.

Recently a visitor to Sheffield, England, took a tour of the city, with a member of a local church being the guide. As they traveled throughout the city, the guide pointed out things about the city, with special reference being given as to how community groups were impacting the city. In this case, the groups are called missional communities (MCs). As they were taking the tour, the guide would helpfully point out, "This is where an MC reaches out to parents with babies." Minutes later, while passing a park, the guide said, "This is where an MC meets every Saturday morning and reaches out to people who love this park and the outdoors." Still later, the guide said, "This MC is reaching the Slovakian gypsy population. Dozens of people have come to know Jesus." On and on the tour proceeded, with the guide showing the impact of MCs in the community.

The church that started these MCs is St. Thomas Crookes, in Sheffield. During one recent five-year span of time, this church experienced a 500% growth in membership. Please note that this is in a nation where Christianity has been in dire decline over the past five decades. While the numbers tell a part of the story, the impact of the Holy Spirit in this city in the hearts and lives of people who have a living and vital relationship with their Savior shows His power in profound ways. What this church exhibits is that people who celebrate life in community, and share Jesus together, may be able to experience a powerful movement of the Holy Spirit.

At St. Mark's we are choosing to know our missional communities by the term **community groups**. In one recent session at the community group leaders' training the participants were asked to name a focus of service for their groups. It was fascinating to hear some of the areas of focus. The focus areas include service to:

- Families with special needs children, with a focus of Special Olympics;
- Individuals dealing with cancer;
- Ministry to families who have adopted children;
- Providing emergency quilts to those with emergency needs;
- Service to military vets, and service to those presently in the military;
- Service to widows and to those who are alone; and
- Service to those who experience hunger, with a specific focus on helping at Feed My Starving Children;

It is exciting to think about where God already is working in the hearts of people around us. It is exciting to know that God is alive. He is working all around us. In step with the Holy Spirit, we can join Him in where He is already working. By His grace, we may be able to see a harvest for His Kingdom.

We invite you to pray for our community group leaders and for those considering being part of a group this fall. Leaders include: Dennis & Jane Gorski; Ernie & LoAnn Gaudette; Gene & Sylvia Hemmann; Bob & Joan Bauer; Jonathan & Julie Zimmermann; Dave Jeziorski; and Keith & Julie Wollenberg.

If you have any questions about community groups, please feel free to ask one of the pastors.