

CLUSTERS as Missional Communities 2011

Clusters are ‘Missional Communities’ – groups of people who are living intentional, incarnational, transformative lives together for the sake of others.

We live in a constantly changing world – in the last decade in particular it feels like the change is accelerating. In an era of rapid change it brings greater urgency to the question: ‘What is church?’
So... Who are we together? What do we do? And where is this taking us?

Clusters are the rally point for how we, as St Paul’s people, live out our faith in tangible ways. We are aware that attending services is not enough to sustain a life of following Jesus, but many people are not sure what to do next. The Clusters provide ways to gather, grow, and be effective as Christians in a multi-layered community.

Clusters are initially a way to connect. They can form around a range of things – perhaps it’s a geographic area that people find themselves in, perhaps a stage of life where support is more helpful from others going through the same experiences, perhaps a shared passion, or various networks (ie social, workplace, etc). We expect quite a range of these, so that our Clusters reflect a healthy diversity and so that many different people can find a place where they fit in.

But they aren’t just a way to connect!

A key word in all this is **‘intentional.’** So more than just a place to gather, they are groups that have a sense of purpose. They recognize that in following Jesus we don’t just live for ourselves, but also for others. So whether those people are the ones in their local area, shared life stage, or engage in their particular passion – the Clusters are outward looking, and deliberate in communicating and living out the good news of Jesus.

The Clusters, in a whole variety of interesting ways, are tasked with the bringing together of everyday life with the presence and kingdom of God. It requires faithful listening to God, creativity and boldness, the empowering of the Spirit, and the support of one another. As we look at ways to further support and resource the Clusters, we are excited by the possibilities and where this will go, as each group finds their unique identity.

The Clusters aren’t merely a way for us to make a combined effort on something though; there is more to them than that. They are something people can be invited to join at any stage of faith, because they are designed for the **growth and transformation** of those involved. They incorporate small groups, where people can get to know one another more deeply, share their lives, support each other, pray together – all within the context of the wider vision of the Cluster and its purpose.

When do each meet? Some variations will occur, but we recommend they meet on an alternating cycle: so that you have something on every week at the same time, one week it will be as a Cluster together, the next week meeting in the smaller groups. This means a single time commitment per week, gives time to both gatherings, and of course you can always organize more activities outside that time for those who are keen and have the time.

Plus they have another layer, which we will be encouraging more people to take up this year, as it is very effective in helping us to grow as disciples – **Core groups**. These simply consist of three people who meet together once a week for 45mins. These groups provide a way for us to keep each other mutually accountable as we follow Jesus. With only three people in each, they are easy to organize, and their focus is simple: Regularly ask one another questions designed to keep us accountable to living faithfully and with purpose, be accountable to reading the Bible, and pray together specifically for those we hope to introduce to Jesus. These groups can grow organically – from three to four, and then become two groups of two, ready to have someone else join them.

Clusters, through their multi-layered approach to community, provide multiple forums for living and growing in Christ together: for being the Church.

It is important to resist the easy option of only ‘getting together’, instead remembering the broad and wonderful scope of what we are called to. Clusters foster passion and desire for intimate relationship with God, for giving oneself into the family life of the church, and for transformation of the communities we find ourselves in. As people commit to one another, and to the work of being and making disciples, we will grow holistically as individuals and as groups, propagating intentional communities through relationship and active discipleship.

Lastly, Clusters are not a service provided for us. They are us. They are gatherings of us. So don’t wait for conditions to look perfect before joining in or starting something. Find some people willing to make a commitment to one another, and become part of it. Add what you’ve got, who you are, to the mix. Let’s see what will happen.

Want to talk more about this? Give us a shout...
clusters@stpauls.org.nz (Dino & Richard)
(09) 3733 268