

House Group Notes

28th March 2017



Ichthus Values, Characteristics & Distinctives Session 8: Structure - Celebration, Congregation & Cell

Opening Discussion (or ice-breaker if you prefer):

What does being a part of Ichthus mean? How do you understand it so far?

Introduction

Last week we looked at Ichthus' constitution, or "make-up" of Fellowship, Training & Mission. This week we will be looking at our structure in terms of how we meet together for fellowship: Celebration, Congregation & Cell. We'll look at how these provide different settings, and how all three combine to make up the full expression of our fellowship together. We will also see how this structure both feeds into and flows out of our purpose in church life of Fellowship, Training & Mission.

Read the Ichthus statement (adapted from the vision & values on the Ichthus website):

CELEBRATION, CONGRE-GATION, CELL

Full participation in Ichthus life is found through three fundamental meetings:

- The monthly celebrations are where congregations may come together to worship, where God's truth and power are more fully manifest and where guidance and inspiration are given for the movement.
- Congregations are a local expression of the movement. They give opportunity for service and witness both to the body of Christ and the world, salting and lighting as Jesus says (Matt 5:13-16).
- Cells (homegroups) are linked to congregations and are occasions where lives are shared more meaningfully in homes or houses and support is found in one another.

Congregation

We call Ichthus Lee Green a congregation, rather than calling it an independant church ("congregation" simply means "gathering together"). We maintain these local gatherings of different Ichthus congregations rather than just becoming one massive church of hundreds of people meeting together.

Discuss: What is the benefit of keeping local congregations, rather than merging into one much bigger church?

e.g. local, accessible for newcomers, family-feel where you get to know everyone, more opportunities to grow and serve, concentrated local area to focus our outreach etc. (We also get inspired with ideas from the other congregations!!)

Read Matthew 5:13-16 as an encouragement.

Discuss: What is the purpose of our Sunday morning meetings?

e.g. build/deepen relationships, worship together, receive teaching, be accessible for new people,

welcome/provide for all ages etc.

Read Hebrews 10:23-25 as an encouragement.

Cell (a.k.a house group/homegroup!)

These are much smaller than congregations, and are always linked to a congregation. Our house groups are for regular congregation members only and we don't advertise them, as we recognise the need for safety as people open their homes. This is also to preserve it as a setting for deeper relationships with people we know, rather than a constantly changing group with lots of visitors.

Discuss: What is the purpose and benefit of house groups?

Celebration

Most churches have cells/homegroups of some sort, and most churches (but not all!) have a Sunday meeting altogether. However, our monthly celebrations with all congregations coming together are one of the distinguishing features of Ichthus. We see ourselves not as separate churches, but as local congregations that make up the Ichthus movement as a whole. Many churches choose to be part of local church networks as an expression of unity (we do this too!), but Ichthus congregations are far more strongly and closely linked than that.

(Explain to your group what happens at celebrations - longer time of worship, ministry opportunity, adult focus etc)

Discuss: What is the benefit of having celebrations?

e.g. setting focused more on seeking the Lord together rather than building relationships with each other so more direct "ministry" time, less concern to be accessible so longer worship, seek God for the movement as a whole rather than just locally etc.

Discuss: What is the benefit of this overall structure?

- Each different setting provides something that the other settings don't! This way, we get a balance of all of the benefits of each setting.
- It is this structure that facilitates our fellowship, training & mission (which we looked at last week). As individual churches, we would have limited resources and opportunities for fellowship, training & mission, but as connected congregations we can do and provide so much more.

Pray for:

- Ichthus as a whole, for us to know more of the Lord's guidance for us as a movement
- The Easter Sunday celebration
- Our congregation, with Matthew 5:13-16 & Hebrews 10:23-25 in mind!
- Our Sunday morning meetings
- Our homegroups