



Parish Family

ST MICHAEL'S PARISH FAMILY GROUPS

SUNDAY 18TH FEBRUARY 2018 VOLUME 1

Groups

Families that gather together, stay together

Have you ever heard someone say "I wish I knew more people in our Church?" Perhaps it's something you've said or thought yourself. Or perhaps you have wondered how you could be more involved?

The Parish Family Group concept seeks to enable parishioners, both from the school and church community, to get to know other people from the same community in a deeper way. We are already part of a special Parish family and by forming groups within it, we give ourselves the opportunity to get to know people better.

A group strives to recreate the make-up of a natural extended family with all its different quirks and personalities. Those who join also are keen to provide their children with opportunities for Christian sharing, directly and indirectly. For as Jesus reminds us:

"Love one another as I have loved you".

To be involved in a Parish Family group, you don't have to be "holy". Many non-church members have found belonging to a Parish Family group is a great way of becoming involved in the faith life of their family.

Ideally, they are made up of around 30 members with a cross-section of ages and stages including one-parent families, single people, elderly and young. Everyone is welcome to join, from grandparents to babies.

How committed do I/we have to be?

A Parish Family Group is just like a normal family; the bonds that develop the feelings of belonging create a sense of responsibility for one another. As in any family there is sometimes the need for extra effort. As with all aspects of life, you reap what you sow – you will get from Family Groups what you put into them.

Proposed schedule

- **10th & 11th March**
Lizzie Wakeling, Parish Family Groups Project Officer will speak at all masses
- **Saturday 21st April**
Parish Family Groups Launch Session will be held in the Church Hall after 6 o'clock Mass

What happens in a Parish Family Group?

It's a good question and one that doesn't have a readily defined answer. Like every family, it's different!

Typically, groups gather once a month (e.g. picnic, BBQ, casserole and games night) to enjoy being with one another and gradually develop supportive relationships. Some get-togethers can be just for the adults (to give parents of young children a bit of breathing space) while others include everybody.

Every gathering is a special time to develop friendships and enjoy spending time together.

The groups work together to build the parish community by sharing experiences. This is a key way Parish Family Groups live the faith in the circumstances of everyday life.

Single? Bereaved? Already too busy?

The motto is “**A family for all**”. Family Groups provide an extended family for all who wish to belong: church-going or not. Parish Family Groups reflect the diversity of the parish they are drawn from. Everyone is welcome to join.

If you think you're too busy, consider it this way: do you actually spend your free time with your own family? We all have such good intentions!

Being in a Parish Family Group will mean that once a month you will be sharing an experience with your own family plus some ten or so other families.

How does it benefit the Parish?

Through the interaction with your Parish Family Group, you will also find you are bringing a happy, loving spirit to your parish. The Parish Family Groups operate within the parish and as such are responsible for promoting the life of the parish community.

Experience shows that Parish Family Groups are a great asset to the parish, since many people become actively involved in parish life.



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Where does it come from?

The Family Groups Movement was first identified as a valuable resource for parish community building, during the Listening 2004 consultation. In 2007 the Bishops' Conference's Marriage & Family Life Project Office invited Fr Peter McGrath to help launch several Parish Family Group pilots. Parish Family Groups are now running in 17 parishes across England and Wales. The Groups, established between 2007 and 2017, span the dioceses of Cardiff, East Anglia, Liverpool, Nottingham, Salford, Shrewsbury, Southwark, Westminster and Arundel and Brighton. A National Steering Group was convened in October 2014 to establish foundations for the Movement in England and Wales and to support and promote the development of new Parish Family Group pilots. The Steering Group is run by the Family Groups and supported by regional FAMILIAS (Association for Catholic Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Ministry) representatives and a Chaplain.



The Family Group parishes use their dedicated blog *Family Groups in England and Wales* as an online platform for sharing news, pictures, ideas and inspiration. <http://familygroupswales.blogspot.co.uk/>

The Diocese of
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