



Weekly Newsletter: 3rd January 2023

Reflection: A Missional Home Group Is Launching in the New Year

By Joe Barnard

We have a wonderful challenge right now. There are multiple aspects of this challenge. One is that new people are coming to church, and the majority of them live on the Eastside of Edinburgh – not too far from the church building. The home groups we have had over the last several years are not able to cope with the potential influx of new participants. The groups on the Eastside of the city, in particular, are swelled to capacity. Thus, the first aspect of the challenge is figuring out how to create space to disciple these new faces so that they can shift from being repeat visitors to moving along a path that leads them closer to the centre of our congregational life.

A second aspect of the challenge is reaching the throngs of people around Montgomery Street who do not even have HEC on their radar. We are all very aware of the difficulties that come with being a gathered congregation. It's all but impossible to bear much witness along Montgomery Street when, for many, this location is a place visited once or twice a week for a limited amount of time. Thus, an additional need of Holyrood is finding creative ways to be more present in the church building. To some extent, missional events enable such presence. However, in truth, we need to find more consistent ways of keeping the lights on in the building and the doors open.

So, then, how are we going to meet this challenge?

A New Home Group

A year ago I spent an evening session of Equip talking about the need for a 'missional home group'. The idea is that rather than disrupt the whole structure of our home groups, we should consider launching a single group with a more missional focus. This group would have the flexibility to think creatively about how pull new people into a discipleship setting. This could be by planning a meal for students who have visited the church; this could be by running a Hope Explored course open to the wider community; or it could merely be by creating a more porous setting where people can come and go without feeling a burden of commitment. The idea is that this group would be able to experiment and adapt as needed.

I share this because HEC will be launching a missional home group in the church building in 2023. To form this group, Andy Scott's home group and my home group will be combining. My hope is that this new group will be able to advance the mission of HEC by doing three things. First, it will create a funnel for new people who live on the Eastside of the city and who want to move beyond mere Sunday morning attendance. Second, it will be a more flexible group that can think creatively about how to use the space on Montgomery

Street for outreach in the local community. But it will do one more thing – and this deserves a bit more explanation.

There is a further aspect to the challenge mentioned above. We are in a season of needing to rethink how we do youth ministry as a church. In spite of the outstanding work done by Andrew, Shelby, and Kat, the Bible Class has struggled to find time for much conversation or discipleship. The model of meeting right after the morning service is understandably difficult with so much hubbub in the church. A final dimension of the missional home group will be that Sunday nights in the church will provide a better time for teenagers to gather for study and fellowship.

How You Can Partner with This Group

Now, there are different ways for the congregation to react to the idea of a somewhat independent home group meeting in the church. One is to eye it with suspicion. A lot of us (not without reason) are sensitive to cliques forming in the church. I want everyone to know that this group is a missional platoon, not an inner circle. By launching this group, we are doing something as a church family to be more present on Montgomery Street.

Another way to react is with disinterest. Some members may feel disconnected from this new group – as if they have no stake in what this new group is doing. My hope is that we can avoid this attitude. I think that all of us feel connected to works in Japan, Singapore, Finland, and elsewhere – not because we are on the ground working alongside missionaries in these countries, but because we support these works regularly through prayer and friendship. Let's have the same mindset with the new home group. Rather than feeling disengaged, let's embrace this project as a church and support the work by praying for it in the same way that we would pray for a group being sent off to start a new evangelistic endeavour in a distant part of the world.

The final way of reacting is with excitement. Don't we all long for God to do a 'new thing' among us? What would we sacrifice in order to see regular baptisms happening in the church, new members joining the fellowship, and lives being transformed by the gospel? The missional home group is only one small piece of HEC becoming a more dynamic place of outreach and disciple-making. However, if we are willing to take this step together, I have no doubt that further gospel work will be on the horizon.

Holidays

Joe is on holiday this week and we're looking forward to David Meredith preaching for us on Sunday 8th January. For any urgent pastoral matters when Joe is away, please contact an elder or member of the Pastoral Care Team (Maureen Gowans, Elaine Harley, Alison Nelson, Alasdair Roberts or Liz Scott).

Christmas Appeal

The four projects that we are supporting this year are – The Bonar Trust, our missionary partners in North Africa, Queensland Theological College and the European Mission Fellowship. The total currently stands at **£12,998.75** and the appeal will be open until mid-January. Thank you to everyone for their generosity.

Warm Space



We're excited to be opening the church building each Monday between 12.30 - 4.00pm to provide a warm space for everyone. It will run from this Monday (9th January) until Monday 27th March.

The church will be set up in a café style and a work space area will be provided

with free Wi-Fi. Free tea, coffee and biscuits will be served.

This is open to everyone and is a great opportunity for us to provide love and care to the community around us in a time of spiralling energy costs.

Baby and Toddler Group

The Baby and Toddler Group starts back this Monday (9th January) from 10am until 11.30am.

Bethany Welcome Centre

Thank you to everyone for all your gifts of clothing and toiletries. They were delivered to the Welcome Centre on 22nd December and were immediately put out for guests to use. The Bethany Team were delighted and send their thanks.

A Thank You from James Stewart – Summer Appeal

I write to thank all at HEC most sincerely for such a generous gift. The generosity and support of HEC is really exemplary and so much appreciated. You can be sure that it will be put to good use, in due course.

Sorry for the delay in writing, but I only got notice of the gift within the last month or so. The UK office have been undergoing a number of considerable technical and personnel changes and I know for sure that other donations have been held up, partly because of this. Things are improving slowly and I was helping them out again just before Christmas, but with a long illness in one case, and a temporary interim Finance Manager, they will be stretched for a while yet. Do remember them in your prayers.

Wishing you all every blessing in all the many areas of work and outreach at Holyrood, in 2023, and thank you again for all your kindness.

A New Year's Message – Bob Akroyd, Free Church Moderator (Designate)

Taken from <https://freechurch.org/moderator-designates-new-years-message/>

Hope springs eternal in the human breast; Man never is, but always to be blest. The soul, uneasy, and confin'd from home, Rests and expatiates in a life to come." Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man

I think the poet Pope is onto something. There is something in the human heart – a longing, a hope that is kindled and rekindled. Along with faith and love, hope completes the three Christian virtues. This hope is not contingent upon circumstances but rather hope often arises contrary to human circumstances. Yes, there is a restlessness in this life as if we know this world is not our final home.



2022 has now drawn to a close. This year may have been a year of great joy for you. For me this year brought deep sorrow. Yet in the midst of sorrow, I was aware of God's goodness and countless blessings. I was also aware of the innumerable kindnesses shown from so many friends in so many ways. So I am sad and grateful; I am bereaved yet comforted. You too may connect with these contrasting experiences and feelings as you reflect upon 2022.

As 2023 dawns, there seems to be a mass of evidence to suggest that hope should not spring from the human heart. Genuine hope seems to be in short supply. Yet, somehow we approach this new year with an optimism, a hope, which is not rooted in this world. For followers of Jesus Christ, we have a hope that is not rooted in feelings but is firmly based on facts.

Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead. Paul describes these things as being of first importance. God is with us and God is for us. Hope spring eternal and the human heart rests secure in the promise of 'a life to come.' God has intervened in human history and in individual human lives.

If your faith, hope, and love springs from Jesus, you'll understand what I mean. Jesus defines who you are, gives purpose to life here, and guarantees life that is to come. If you are not trusting in Jesus, can I encourage you to commence this year with Jesus? May you trust in him by faith; may his love warm your hearts; and may his hope guide you through this year until you meet him in the 'life to come.' John Newton put it this way, 'Our righteousness is in Him, and our hope depends, not upon the exercise of grace in us, but upon the fullness of grace and love in Him, and upon His obedience unto death.' All that we are and all that we will one day be rests completely on Jesus.

I close with Paul's benediction, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' Romans 15:13

I wish us all a very Happy New Year. Your friend, Bob Akroyd

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). David Meredith preaching.
 - Home Groups – speak to your home group leader or one of the elders for more details.



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