



Special Edition: Covenant Fellowship Groups



Alexandria Presbyterian Church ~ June 2010

Upcoming Dates

Corporate Prayer
1st Sat mornings
3rd Wed evenings

PROTAS Costa Rica Fundraising Dinner
June 19

CFG Workshop
June 27

Vacation Bible School
June 28 - July 2

Progressive Dinner
July 17



Watching Over One Another in Love by Pastor Tom Holliday

Watching over one another in love. That is how John Wesley described the purpose of small groups during his years of Ministry. Church historians agree that his insight had a great impact on the growth of the Methodist Church. At the retreat last week I preached on Hebrews 3:13; "but encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." Wesley was wise enough to understand the meaning of this verse, and we would do well to do likewise.

Watching over one another in love. We all need people in our lives who do this. Daily. The epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to Christians who were going through hard times. They desperately needed encouragement to stay in the spiritual race and not give up. Not much has changed. Although our circumstances today are different from those days, life gets hard at times, and we all need people who will encourage us when we feel like giving up. Sometimes we just think that we know better than God. We can be deceived into thinking that we don't require encouragement, or certainly not on a daily basis. Perhaps every once in a while, or occasionally. I would suggest that the signs are there in our lives when we feel that we don't require what the Scriptures insist we do.

Watching over one another in love. It is reported that before someone entered into one of Wesley's small groups, they would be asked a series of questions to see if they were serious about living in mutual accountability. At APC we call

the small groups, Covenant Fellowship groups. The word covenant suggests that within these groups we do make commitments to one another. We covenant to walk with one another through life, to encourage one another daily. The encouragement takes place not only during the meetings, once a week, but often times outside of the meetings through phone calls, e-mails and visits. Community grows when God's people gather around his Word for the purpose of helping one another spiritually. Community grows as God's people simply live life together. On the APC retreat this year, I saw a motto written on a church van, the van of the Young Life group that was serving us at the retreat. The motto says it well: "living the call together."

Watching over one another in love. Living the call together. That's exactly what God calls his people to do in community with one another. We take this very seriously at APC. The gospel not only grows in community, the gospel shapes community. We will not accomplish what God has for us at APC apart from community. We are praying that God will raise up a handful of new Covenant Fellowship groups this fall. As our congregation continues to grow, we need to start more Fellowship groups to accommodate more people. If you are not presently in a Covenant Fellowship group, would you prayerfully consider joining one this fall? Would you prayerfully consider hosting one or teaching one this fall? Elder Jeremy Root would be encouraged to hear from you.



It Doesn't Take a Bible Scholar by Charles Mitchell

Tell me the truth: The first time Tom said, "Please open your Bibles to the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes," did you hesitate for a minute?

Oh man. Isn't that before Proverbs? I think so. Or is the one right next to Song of Solomon? (I mean, not like I read that...)

I did. And I'm a Covenant Fellowship Group teacher. Have been for two years. Are you scandalized?

It's easy to think CFG teachers are Christian all-stars who know their Bible perfectly, can recite what Calvin said about communion as opposed to Luther and Zwingli, and have the answer to any conceivable question.

If you are one of those people who knows exactly where every book is and has delved deeply into the Institutes—great! I wish I were you. But you probably know already you could be a teacher.

But it's a dangerous falsehood to think only these all-stars can teach, one that does harm to the church and to you.

The people I'm really talking to are the ones like me,

the ones who have considered leading a CFG but who feel under-equipped. If you are one such, let me ask you to consider stepping out in faith and serving, for two reasons:

First, APC needs more teachers, and it doesn't take a lifelong theologian. I'm living proof.

Second, you won't believe how good it will be for you.

Worried you won't have the answer to every question? Guess what—you won't! And it will be good for your pride to admit that. It has been for mine.

Fearful you don't have anything to say? That's the beauty of the church. Many godly folks smarter than you have lived, and not a few of them have written books. Read them, glean the most important insights, and pass them on. That, in a nutshell, is what I and every other teacher I know does.

True, this role isn't for everybody. God has to call you to it. But if he does, let me urge you not to resist on account of not thinking you're brilliant enough. If he wants to use you, he will equip you. If he can do it for me, he can do it for anybody.

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Alexandria Presbyterian Church is a welcoming community of believers, rejoicing in the gospel, transformed by its power, and responding with grateful hearts in service to our God and world. We long to taste the glory of God in such an astonishing way that the city of Alexandria will be drawn to the majesty and mercy of our great God. It is our desire that our worship will serve as an authentic model to our city of the possibilities for transformation of individuals, families, and a city encountering the glory and grace of God.

CFG Leadership Workshop—June 27th, 5-7pm

Who's Invited? All current CFG leaders and those interested in starting a new CFG. We'll even feed you...childcare provided. Sign up at the Information Booth in the Fellowship Hall.

What's the program?

- I. Philosophy of Covenant Fellowship Groups at APC
 - Why communities of few?
 - What's in the name?
- II. Anatomy of a CFG Leader
 - Basic leadership model—hosts and teachers
 - Becoming Hospitable Hosts
 - Becoming Teachable Teachers
- III. Mapping it out—Strategies for a "Sending" Church
 - How many groups?
 - Where is the need?

Current Covenant Fellowship Groups

Below you will find a current listing of APC's Covenant Fellowship Groups. If you would like to either visit or learn more about a particular group, please pick up a CFG brochure downstairs for information on how to contact the group leader (or if you have access to our website Member Area, you will find a more detailed listing).

Be aware that some groups stop meeting over the summer, have irregular schedules, or change locations so you need to call the group leader before visiting a CFG for the first time.

Sunday

5:00-7:00pm: The McGee group, Alexandria

Tuesday

7:00pm: The Streett group, Springfield
(starts with dinner)

Wednesday

7:30pm: The Mathew/Shen/Voce group, Washington, DC
(starts with dinner)

Thursday

7:00pm: The LeRoy/McDaniel group, Alexandria
7:00pm: The Mitchell/Balmer group, Alexandria
(starts with dinner)
7:30pm: The Hough/Root group, Fairfax

Friday

7:00pm: The West/Sterne group, Alexandria
7:30pm: The Allen/Brown group, Alexandria
7:30pm: The Stacey/Renenger group, Springfield
7:30pm: The Beckham group, Alexandria

Saturday

2nd & 4th Sats—5:00pm: The Eppright group, Waldorf, MD
(starts with dinner)

APC Giving at a Glance	YTD Giving (through 5/31)	\$506,536
	YTD Budget	\$481,755
	Difference	\$ 24,791 (+5%)

Myths About Covenant Fellowship Groups

1. **You have to be a Bible expert.** See Charles' excellent article on page one.
2. **Once you're signed up, you're in for the duration.** "I simply can't dedicate one night a week to a CFG. I need more schedule flex than that." It's true that each group 'covenants' to meet together regularly, but not all groups meet weekly and you are welcome to join any group for a season as your schedule permits. If you feel called to lead, split the teaching load by co-leading.
3. **I'm just too busy. This is Washington, DC after all.** This says you've gone through a mental calculus that puts the value of a Covenant Fellowship Group way down the list. Are you sure of your data? Ask around. Hear what those who are in CFGs say about them. I guarantee your perception of value will increase.
4. **CFG's don't go deep enough into the Word for me.** Digging deeply into God's Word is important for every believer, but so are the practical lessons learned in fellowship with God's people. Are you sure you're not limiting the Body to just the Head? See I Cor 12:17.
5. **I visited a CFG once, and it was closed.** It's a fallen world, and like any sin in the Church, a shame when it happens. But, each of our groups is intended to have an open door policy. If you feel the door was closed, let us know—but please don't use it as an excuse to stop trying.
6. **I don't know that I want to get that close—warm and fuzzy—with a group. I like one-on-one better.** We're glad you have a community of two. Excellent. But we're also convinced we need communities of a few—a mix of brothers and sisters—that we commune with in a more intimate setting and manner than Sunday allows. There are few places better suited to teach and learn about living in Christian community.
7. **Why do we need more CFGs? We have plenty already.** Not true. Read the article above. Demand has outstripped supply.
8. **That's a lot to ask—to lead a CFG, plus hosting it.** Then separate the two activities. Feel called to be a host or hostess? Great! Ready to dip your toe in the leading arena but not suited to hosting? That's fine, too. Let Jeremy Root know what you are willing to do, and he will play matchmaker.
9. **This is the myth that you get to fill in.** Whatever that is, we only ask that you test it on someone who is in a CFG. Let them try to debunk it.

Why Do We Need More CFGs Anyway?

You could look at our CFG brochure (on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall) and think we are in pretty good shape. After all, we've got a dozen groups going and nicely spread across the area.

But that assessment is incorrect.

APC continues to grow (thank you, Lord!). We are approaching 400 active adults, and want to have a CFG option available to all who desire one. Historically, about 50-60 percent of our active adults attend CFGs. We also have some geographies (e.g., West Alexandria, Shirlington) that are underserved.

If you do the math (assuming 12 participants per group), then we need six new groups for the fall.

Interested in helping to start one of these new groups? Join us at the upcoming CFG workshop, Sunday, June 27, 5-7pm.

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Holy Worship ~ 8:50am | Time of Fellowship & Coffee ~ 10:30am | Sunday School for All Ages ~ 11:00am
Communion Celebrated the Second Sunday of Each Month