

# FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT



## PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Please feel free to adapt any of the promotional materials contained in this section for use in your parish.

You are also invited to visit the Family Group Movement page at [www.catholicfamily.org.uk](http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk) which contains a link to the new Family Group Movement (England & Wales) resource DVD, additional information on Family Groups and a link to more news, pictures and stories from the Family Group parishes via their dedicated Blog.

For enquiries about Family Groups promotional materials and any additional resource requests please contact the Steering Group at [familygroups2015@gmail.com](mailto:familygroups2015@gmail.com)

## *Parish Family Groups – A Priest's Perspective*

**Fr. Pat Munroe**

Sunday, afternoon 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011 will forever live in the memory. In the cycle of nature winter had begun, however in St. Wilfrid's Parish, Northwich, it felt like the beginning of a new springtime. One hundred and twenty people had gathered for the launch of family



groups. Among them was Eric who was grieving the death of his wife Elsie; a few weeks earlier they celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of their marriage. He came along with his survival kit, a cylinder of oxygen, but in need of something more to find a fresh purpose in life. There was a longing for friendship and companionship;

somehow he found it that evening, with people he had never met before. Eric was not a catholic, his wife was, and he came to her Church searching for friendship and love, and found it in a ***family for all***, in which faces became names, friends you were meeting for the first time.

Eric joined one of the small family groups, where laughter, food friendship and fun brought a joy and happiness that he felt he would never again experience. In the few months before he died, the words of Jesus, 'Love one another as I have loved you' took on a fresh meaning not just for him, but for the parish community. It was a lesson on what matters in a community, especially a parish community that people look out for each other.



It never ceases to amaze me the amount of people in a parish who know people by sight, but not by name. It is a source of pastoral irritation when people are trying to describe someone they sit near at Church, see week in week out, and when that person is missing for a period of time, cannot give you a name or a way of contacting them. How can we say that parish is a 'community of disciples' that



belong to each other in Christ if we do not know their name or anything about them?

The Passionist Family Group Movement began in response to a need to create a true sense of community in fulfilment of Jesus' commandment for love and companionship in the lives of his

disciples, and as practised in the early Christian communities who made a great impression in the culture and society of their times. Christians are not meant to live as isolated individuals; the great paradox of our times is the perceived absence of such community that causes people to drift away, or do not feel the inclination to participate.

An ongoing feature of my priestly ministry is the desire to create and sustain the lived experience of parish community. In essence it is simple, in that Jesus shows us the way, but in practice it can be often difficult to bring about. In hindsight the problem can be more to do with complexity instead of simplicity.

What attracted me to the Family Group Movement, and still does, is its simplicity and being rooted in ordinary life. The aims are very simple, for people to get to know each other as members of the parish, to support each other, sharing joys and sorrow, building the Christian Community, as in the early Church: “Love one another as I have loved you”.



I have helped to initiate it in two very different types of Parish: St. Wilfrid's, a small town parish in Cheshire with a large influx of new families that came about with the development of new housing estates, and Our Lady's Stockport a large inner town with an ageing population of very committed people, and a younger generation for whom the term 'cultural Catholicism' maybe more apt. The common factor in both cases is one of quiet transformation in people's attitude to what parish is; an awareness to look out for new people, making them feel welcome and a greater response for appeals for help.



The motto of the Family Group Movement, '**A Family for All**' is in tune with the freshness of approach of Pope Francis in having a missionary approach in our lives as Christians, being welcoming and inclusive, whereby we create a sense of community in the Church, and a sense of parish within the community. An occupational danger within all of us, especially in the Church, is over emphasis on organisation that can easily stifle the spirit. What makes the Family Groups unique is that of *Movement of the Spirit over Organisation*.

Some years ago I was given a Lantern made of Pottery by my housekeeper in a small Cheshire parish. Whenever I light the candle in the Lantern, I am reminded of how much I learned from her to be a light of welcome and hospitality in the transformation of the Parish – **A Family for All**.

*Father Pat Munroe is Parish Priest of Our Lady and the Apostles Parish, Stockport.*







# **A Family for All**

**Where Everybody is Welcome**

**A Movement: God's love in action**

**About People and the Community**



**Family Group Movement  
England & Wales**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT**



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT ENGLAND & WALES



**‘An evangelizing community gets involved by  
word and deed in people’s daily lives’**

**Pope Francis**

**For more information please contact:**



The Rt Rev Peter Doyle, Bishop of  
Northampton, is Patron of The Family  
Group Movement (England & Wales)



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT ENGLAND & WALES



**‘This is my commandment: love one another,  
as I have loved you’ John 15:12**

**A Family Group is:**

- ♦ **A family**  
Somewhere we can share laughter and tears, ups and  
downs, food and fun through thick and thin
- ♦ **Where everybody is welcome**  
Inclusive and accepting, respecting differences: a family  
for all
- ♦ **A movement**  
God’s love, in action
- ♦ **About people and the community**  
Building a sense of parish in the community; community  
in the parish





***“The friendship, support, the wonderful feeling of togetherness and fellowship that we have experienced in Family Groups have been absolutely instrumental in keeping our faith on track” Tracey and Stephen***

## **What are Family Groups?**

Like a natural family, Family Groups are made up of people of all ages and circumstances who simply commit to meet regularly and get to know each other better. The groups are linked by a common faith bond but are not exclusive to Catholics. Many group members bring along their non-Catholic partners who are integral to the group’s success. Family Groups do not replace other groups in the parish but help their members develop genuine friendships and support networks and to build a sense of community in the parish and a sense of parish in the community.

## **Do you have to be in a family to join?**

No. Family Groups are a family for all irrespective of age or personal circumstances. Family Groups are made up of young, and mature, single, married, widowed, separated and divorced people, families with children and families without, who are

placed into a group of 20-30 members which grows over time as a family.

## **What do Family Groups do?**

Groups meet every four to six weeks for a variety of activities decided by their members. These are always low cost and include walks, shared meals, quizzes, film nights, games, parties and anniversary celebrations, music and themed events, fundraising, House Masses, Advent and Easter activities and occasional trips away. The groups often become a valuable source of parish outreach as well as offering support and fellowship to their own members.

## **Are there any rules?**

The concept of Family Groups is very simple. There are few rules beyond a commitment to know and love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. The groups need the visible support and encouragement of their parish priest to thrive but are run by volunteer group leaders and parish coordinators.

***“I can’t praise the idea of Family Groups enough and would encourage anyone who has the chance to start their own group, to do so. It’s a lot of reward for very little effort.” Fiona***



**Find out more about the Family Group Movement at  
[www.catholicfamily.org.uk](http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk)**



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT ENGLAND & WALES



**‘The parish is not an outdated institution.....it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community’ Pope Francis**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Please email the National Steering Group at:**

**[familygroups2015@gmail.com](mailto:familygroups2015@gmail.com)**

**Or your local contact:**



The Rt Rev Peter Doyle, Bishop of Northampton, is Patron of The Family Group Movement (England & Wales)



## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT ENGLAND & WALES



**‘An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives’ Pope Francis**

### A FAMILY GROUP IS....

#### ♦ **A family**

Somewhere we can share laughter and tears, ups and downs, food and fun through thick and thin

#### ♦ **Where everybody is welcome**

Inclusive and accepting, respecting differences: a family for all

#### ♦ **A movement**

God’s love, in action

#### ♦ **About people and the community**

Building a sense of parish in the community; community in the parish

## INTRODUCTION

Family Groups are drawn from the parish community. Like a natural family, Family Groups are made up of people of all ages and circumstances: young, mature, married, single, separated, widowed and divorced, who simply commit to meeting up once a month, to get to know each other better. Although Family Groups grow out of a parish community and are linked by a common faith, many group members bring along partners and friends who may not be so involved in Church. These people are integral to the success of a group. Family Groups have few rules beyond a commitment to know, support and love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. They need enthusiastic leaders and the support of the parish priest to thrive but activities are kept at minimum cost. Family Groups offer a great deal to parishes.

***“The friendship, support, the wonderful feeling of togetherness and fellowship that we have experienced in Family Groups have been absolutely instrumental in keeping our faith on track”***

Tracey and Stephen



## GETTING STARTED

Family Groups were first piloted in England & Wales in 2007 with the support of Fr Peter McGrath founder of the Passionist Family Group Movement. In 2014 a National Steering Group was convened for the Family Group Movement (England &

## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOP TIPS

### DON'T:

- ♦ Allow costs of events to deter members from joining in
- ♦ Worry if fewer people attend events than planned. Seek feedback from members and build on it next time
- ♦ Cancel meetings/events, except in extreme circumstances
- ♦ Repeat events for the sake of it. Challenge the group to come up with new ideas to keep the interest of the whole group
- ♦ Keep problems to yourself. Share with coordinators, leaders and/or deputies
- ♦ Let members drift off the radar. Keep in touch without harassing them
- ♦ Take any negativity from the group personally. Find a positive solution from them as a whole
- ♦ Let a clique or sub-groups develop. The group belongs to everyone
- ♦ Lose sight of the real purpose of Family Groups: bringing a sense of community to the parish, and a sense of parish to the community
- ♦ Give up!





## FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT TOP TIPS

### DO:

- ♦ Plan events well in advance & make sure everyone has the dates
- ♦ Keep events low cost so that everyone can join in
- ♦ Involve the whole group, including children, in planning events
- ♦ Ask group members to take the lead, in rotation, for organising events
- ♦ Organise monthly events no matter how many can/can't make it
- ♦ Plan a House Mass once a year
- ♦ Plan a weekend away (youth hostel, camping, etc.) Time and space away in different surroundings make such a positive difference
- ♦ Keep in regular contact (phone, text, etc.) with group members
- ♦ Contact group members who have not been to an event for a while as they may have clashing commitments
- ♦ Talk to the parish coordinators or fellow leaders/deputies if problems arise
- ♦ Consider offering members who lose interest, or drop out, for whatever reason, a transfer to another group (with co-ordinator agreement)



Wales) comprised of Family Group parish leaders, regional FAMILIAS representatives and a chaplain, all of whom are committed to supporting and accompanying other parishes as they explore and develop their own Family Groups. Before moving forward it is advisable for the parish priest and the pastoral team to discuss what their expectations are of Family Groups and what they hope to achieve by introducing the model to the parish.

## RESOURCES

There is a free **Family Group Movement Parish Tool kit** available to download at the Catholic Bishops' Marriage and Family Life website [www.catholicfamily.org.uk/projects/parish-family-groups](http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/projects/parish-family-groups) which provides step-by-step guidance for parishes as they plan, pilot and grow their Family Groups.

The kit includes an 'Initial Parish Expression of Interest Form' which the parish priest and their leadership team are invited to complete and email to the Steering Group at:

**familygroups2015@gmail.com**





## SUPPORT

A member of the Steering Group will be assigned to the enquiring parish and will offer telephone guidance and support to the parish priest and his leadership team before, during and after the launch of Family Groups. The Steering Group also has a network of volunteers who are members of Family Groups and will be happy to come to the parish and talk to the parish priest, leadership team and congregation about their experience of Family Groups.

***“Christians are not meant to live as isolated individuals; the great paradox of our times is the perceived absence of such community that causes people to drift away, or to not feel the inclination to participate”***

*Fr Pat Munroe, Chaplain of the Family Group Movement  
(England & Wales)*

## START UP CHECK LIST

- ♦ Find out more about the Family Group Movement at **[catholicfamily.org.uk](http://catholicfamily.org.uk)**
- ♦ Hear from the Family Groups themselves at their dedicated blog: **[familygroupsenglandwales.blogspot.co.uk](http://familygroupsenglandwales.blogspot.co.uk)**
- ♦ Discuss your hopes and expectations of Family Groups as a parish
- ♦ Download the free Family Group Movement Parish Tool kit at: **[www.catholicfamily.org.uk/projects/parish-family-groups](http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/projects/parish-family-groups)**
- ♦ Complete an ‘Initial Parish Expression of Interest Form’ and email it to the Steering Group at: **[familygroups2015@gmail.com](mailto:familygroups2015@gmail.com)**
- ♦ Build your Family Groups with the support of a Steering Group member & volunteers assigned to accompany you through the planning, launch and development of Family Groups
- ♦ Share the Good News with neighbouring parishes & connect with other Family Groups in England and Wales by posting news and pictures on the blog and supporting national Steering Group initiatives