PODCAST 4
Thrive Stewarton

LEARNING RESOURCE FOR GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

As we spoke with Pete, Sarah & Lorna about Thrive Stewarton's story, several themes emerged which we have highlighted below. These themes may spark ideas, questions and learning for you in a wide variety of contexts.

THE CONTEXT: WHO HAS BEEN EXPERIMENTING?
Thrive Stewarton is a missional project in the Presbytery of the South West. Thrive aims to support 20s to 40s by providing a range of activities serving physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs, helping everyone to thrive. As a presbytery project Thrive started with a blank page and through listening, discernment and realism have grown step by step in partnership with the local community. With a focus on belonging, people quickly become part of the team and the queues at the door speak for themselves.

THE LEARNING: HOW THEY ENCOURAGED GROWTH
How? Discerning what to do

- ➢ Thrive started with over a year of listening to the local community, stakeholders, professionals, businesses, councillors, health workers. Pete says "you know what you know but you don't know what you don't know"
- ➢ They asked people about needs, aspirations, gaps and found that there was very little for the 20s-40s particularly young men and stay at home parents.
- ➢ They listened, they looked at data, they prayed and then they looked at what was achievable. Their first activity was a walking group because, it didn't need a big team, resources, buildings or money.
- ➢ They keep listening, always asking what would you like, what do you need?

QUOTE "For Thrive, there's been no 10-year master plan. This is all about listening and responding and discerning where God is maybe leading us into."

THE LEARNING: HOW THEY ENCOURAGED GROWTH
HOW? Faith as part of wellbeing

- ➢ Pete shares his idea about 'dwell-being' - highlighting the spirit in mind, body and spirit. The team are always ready to talk about the Christian aspect of well-being.
- ➢ All the groups and relationships are openly Christian from the outset and include intentional God moments
    - Pausing to pray together half-way through the walk
    - Faith conversations while gardening together
    - Prayers before and after every session
    - Bible meditations and reflective activities during café gatherings

- ➢ Focusing on mental well-being resonated with other agencies working in the community and also opened some secular funding options.
- ➢ People are curious and ask questions about faith, the team hope such conversations begin and are ready and willing to talk openly about their own faith.

GET CURIOUS What would a "dwell-being" group look like for you in your context? What does an "intentional God moment" look like?

HOW? Belonging as the beginning of a discipleship pathway

- ➢ Sarah shares the power of noticing the little things, when someone is late, or looks unsettled. The power of remembering the things people had coming up or the names of their families. In this way people feel seen and valued.
- ➢ The team talk about feeling loved, they feel loved by God and they want others to feel that too. It is that love that creates a community of belonging which people keep returning too and want to be help provide so they can in invite others to belong.

QUOTE "I think that the success of Thrive is it's not the number of people that come through the doors, it's the people that keep coming back through the doors."

HOW? Gentle pathways of discipleship are described

- ➢ Sarah talked about one-to-one conversations, noticing and remembering.
- ➢ Asking to pray for or with someone, relationships of belonging and trust are built.
- ➢ Spotting strengths, skills and gifts in others and helping them to recognise them too.
- ➢ Creating opportunities for people to use those gifts in teams.
- ➢ Giving people space to lead things, trusting them to 'step up' to the challenge.
- ➢ Providing a range of expressions that deepen in Christian content for people to opt into.

GET CURIOUS: THINK ABOUT YOUR Participation pathways – attending, belonging, helping, leading

GET CURIOUS: THINK ABOUT YOUR Fellowship pathways - personal mentoring, small groups, community gatherings

THE EXPLORING: **HOW MIGHT YOU TRY THIS WHERE YOU ARE?**

When was the last time you did a large-scale piece of listening outside of people connected to your church? How did you search out a wide range of people?

Thrive has shown that there is a way to be intentional with Christian content and be authentic and transparent while applying for secular funding. How could you explore this?

As a group share with each other a time when you really felt loved by God, what was that encounter like? How could you facilitate an opportunity for someone else to have a similar encounter?

Ask God to highlight three people to begin faith friendships with. Invite them to meet with you for a cuppa and a chat. Could you meet regularly?

What's nagging at you - what are the Needs, Aspirations and Gaps of the wider community?

How could you introduce God moments into all your outreach activities?

How ready and willing are your volunteers to talk about their faith if asked – how could you practice that so people feel more confident?

Pathways of participation, fellowship and discipleship are present but not pushed. For example, Baby Beats could lead to Bubble Church which has a deeper discipleship focus. Walking group can lead to Wellbeing Café and onto Thrive Collective (their fellowship meal and worship gathering). Do each of your activities have something to move on to that has deeper Christian content?

Pete talked about the 3ps Presence, Prayer, Partnership – are these balanced across your activities?
How could you equip your volunteers to remember small details in people's lives, do you make notes, have a team debrief, set development goals?

How could you intentionally increase the sense of belonging?

Volunteering on a team can be a powerful part of someone's journey to faith. Are there any barriers to serving on a team in your context? Has everyone been personally invited to do so?

The team joked that "everyone loves it when Pete is not there" this high level of trust allows others to rise to the challenge of leading, Hannah suggests that "sometimes leaders hold on too tight". Take a moment to reflect on this, are there places and spaces where someone could step back to help grow other leaders?

THE EXPERIMENTING: EXPAND YOUR RESEARCH...

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