



Shaping Lifelong Faith

Overview

It is in the home that the education of the child is to begin. Here is his first school. Ellen White – *Child Guidance*

The home has the greatest impact on young lives; with few exceptions, if we fail to impact the home, we will never make a lasting impact on children. George Barna – *Raising Spiritual Champions*

Home Grown is a strategy being developed by the Greater Sydney Conference Church Resource Team that aims to have each home in our conference make changes to become a more positive environment for faith development. This strategy includes every person in our conference. Whether it be a family with children, young people flatting or a single person we believe every home can take at least one step toward being a more active environment for faith development.

What happens in the church family is the 'watering can' and while vitally important, what happens in the home is the 'soil'. We can develop bigger watering cans with more nutritious water however if the plant is not in fertile soil our efforts are somewhat limited. Keep in mind that in cases where children are in a home that is not a positive spiritual environment we need to do what we can with the opportunities we have. However, ideally, the home is the primary environment for spiritual formation.

We Believe

- That the home is the primary environment for faith development.
- Every home can take a step toward being a more positive environment for faith development.

- God never intended a family's faith to occur apart from local church engagement - however 'church/school' cannot do it alone.
- No home is the perfect environment and even in the perfect environment (Eden) the possibility is still there of choosing against God's way.
- Parents need churches that will help them know how to be spiritual leaders and where their children can really belong to a faith community.

What is the Strategy?

The Home Grown strategy is more a direction/concept/brand that many things we are already doing can be grouped under to emphasize the difference that activity makes to everyday 'home' life. It addresses the imbalance that has developed where people think 'church' and school are have the responsibility for spiritual growth when that role is primarily a function of what happens at home.

It is part of our overall conference strategy of growing in discipleship and will take each of our five focus areas and particularly look at how we can promote these values in the home. It is a strategy that we anticipate will be important for us to achieve Enablers 1, 2 and 3 of our strategic framework particularly. While we have focused a lot on what we can do in a congregation to promote discipleship, this strategy more particularly aims to impact the home level.

The strategy will include development of tools that help people analyse the daily patterns of their homes and determine their next step and shape an overall faith development plan for their home. It will then include electronic newsletters, electronic reminder tools, new resources and promotion of various existing resources to continue to promote the home grown message.

It includes synergizing strategies between conference departments to leverage impact from the energy the departments are already putting in.

Examples of how each department can be part of the strategy in addition to all promoting the overall concept.

- ADRA – Help homes with service project ideas and ways they can impact the world beyond themselves.
- Children's Ministry – Promoting and resourcing family worship ideas and providing faith development tools for parents and children.
- Communications – Promoting the overall concept and keeping up awareness
- Family Ministries – Marriage tools/resources, Resources for growing healthy family dynamics.
- Health – Promoting an holistic picture of health and next steps in terms of holistic health

- Personal Ministries and Sabbath School – Promoting ideas for serving, leveraging Sabbath school as an environment to encourage the process.
- Prayer – Promoting 'home grown' prayer resources/ideas
- Stewardship – Promoting discipleship in the context of family and next step in terms of stewarding of time, talents and treasure.
- Woman's Ministry – Promoting home grown values in this context and a positive picture of how women shape their home environment
- Youth Ministries – Leveraging existing programmes to promote positive steps at home. Promoting faith development at home with this age group.

Each department already does a lot of things that can be refocused with Home Grown eyes and each department can come up with additional ideas and strategies that move the conference forward in terms of the Home Grown strategy. The overall strategy will include conference departments, pastors and local church leadership teams combining ideas and resources to stimulate positive faith development in the home.

The Next Step?

While there are excellent tools, especially for nuclear families, that outline what it means to be a positive environment for spiritual growth, it seems many of these tools have limited impact and at best are used by people/families that are already moving in a positive direction. The Home Grown strategy attempts to break these tools down to smaller steps so that each home, regardless of its current point, can take one positive step. It is anticipated that this one step will provide a stepping stone that then leads to more steps. Each home will probably have a different next step.

Next steps may include.

- Eating at least one meal together as a family each week without the television on.
- Parents praying for the child as they drop them to school
- Parents praying in their drive way, to be an effective husband and father, before entering the house after work
- Developing in a particular heart building habit personally or as a home
- Using various resources for a creative home worship time at least once in the week
- Cutting back on screen time to create more 'together' time.
- Using a marriage resource to take a next step in the quality of their marriage,
- Having a prayer journal

There are as many ideas as there are people and each one step can be a starting point to moving in a more positive direction.

Home Grown Resources currently being developed.

- DVD that promotes faith development ideas especially ideas for next steps.
- CD that can be listened to in the car that promotes the strategy and stimulates thinking
- Table Talk box that stimulates faith development conversations at meal times
- Gracelink Extension Cards that help integrate the gracelink values into daily life
- Next step tool that helps families analyse their daily plan and leverage time for faith development.
- Planning process tool for church leadership teams
- Sermon outlines that promote the Home Grown values that can be used by pastors/elders/other preachers. that encourages people to put in place and try one step for a month.

Package for churches:

- Sermon outline they may wish to use
- Drama script promoting the home as a spiritual growth environment
- Video clips promoting the ideas
- Bulletin cover with information overview
- Banners/posters
- Resource box

Group		
Parents/Grand parents/Care-givers	<p>Information nights in regions and run through churches/schools</p> <p>Reminder prompting tools, electronic message, key tags etc</p> <p>Ideas for inclusions in school/church newsletters</p> <p>Planning guide for parents that helps them develop next steps in their context</p> <p>Toolbox of spiritual growth ideas, resources (include DVD)</p> <p>Website space for parents to access ideas and resources.</p>	
Pastors/Elders	<p>ICLD training units – also make the units available to Elders</p> <p>Book summaries and CD's outlining concepts that they can listen to in their cars</p> <p>Help develop visitation ideas with spiritual growth in mind.</p> <p>Link these tools closely with Discipleship toolbox so that they can see how and why it makes sense.</p> <p>Information for developing sermons that address the worldviews that negate spiritual growth in the home.</p>	
Departmental	<p>Work through CRT to develop overall plan that integrates all departments.</p> <p>PM/SS – Spiritual growth resources and Faith at Home spaces in Sabbath School groups</p> <p>S/Ship – Resources for addressing the consumeristic worldview.</p> <p>Family – Growing strong marriages.</p> <p>Youth – Resources for spiritual growth and addressing worldviews</p> <p>Women – Promoting family spiritual growth</p> <p>Health – Promoting faith at home as part of the CREATION health strategy</p>	

Children	Prayer reminders (777 concept) Resources for helping children develop their own spiritual 'training' plan.	
CM Leaders	Resources made available that they can give to parents Helping children develop their training plan Resources/articles they can use in newsletter etc	
School	Teachers who choose can work with Sabbath school leaders and children on training plan Help with promoting parenting information nights Ideas/tips in their school newsletters Promotion of faith at home ideas to children.	

Input:

How do you see this strategy working in our churches?

What ideas do you have for making this strategy more effective?

What resources do you believe are required to make this strategy work?