

*Small Group Leader
Information Packet*

Purpose of Small Groups Ministry

- Further inviting people to God, community and wholeness through gathering in fellowship, experiencing life together in study of the scripture and prayer for one another.

Key Elements of the Small Groups Ministry

- Small groups run from September-May
- Small groups gather weekly
- Small group “content” or “study” is sermon discussion based
- The goal of small groups is depth of relationship with one another and Christ
- Small groups are led by a Leader team consisting of a Host and a Facilitator

Essential Ingredients for Small Group Gatherings

- Setting the table (Introductions, announcements, ground rules, attendance)
- Sermon discussion (summary from Facilitator or designee + discussion using Pastoral staff generated questions as a guide)
- Hearing a group member's story (until everyone has shared)
- Prayer for one another (requests + prayer)

Facilitator - Essential Duties

The goal of the Small Group Facilitator is to steward a healthy relational and spiritual environment, enabling the group to grow closer to one another and Christ.

Facilitators set the table, lead purposeful discussion, model and encourage the sharing of personal stories, and foster a culture of prayer to God and for one another.

Setting the Table

In tandem with Hosts, Facilitators will ensure that:

- Group members are introduced
- Announcements from the church staff are shared
- Ground rules for discussion and sharing are communicated
- Attendance is recorded
- New group members assigned (as space allows) are welcomed and oriented to the group

Purposeful Discussion

- Facilitators, or a designee, will lay the groundwork for healthy and purposeful discussion by providing a summary of the prior week's sermon
- Using Pastoral staff generated questions as a guide, Facilitators will lead a discussion of the sermon and how it can be applied to our lives
- Facilitators will aim to be a conversation starter and not a conversation dominator. Asking good questions and modeling active listening and curiosity will help participants be drawn into discussion and will create depth, spiritual growth, and healthy group dynamics.
- Facilitators will steer the group away from divisive attitudes and discussions that threaten unity in Christ and distract from the goal of knowing and loving Christ and one another.

Sharing Stories

- Facilitators will model the sharing of their personal story (a guide for how to do this will be distributed at a later date)
- Facilitators will create a "schedule" for sharing of stories, ensuring each member has a chance to share
- Facilitators will check in with, coach, and encourage the member sharing their story each week in advance of the meeting
- Facilitators will guide and pay close attention to the sharing of stories portion of meetings, ensuring honoring of storytellers by the group and that stories are shared within allotted time

Culture of Prayer

- Facilitators will setup a time of sharing prayer requests, followed by prayer for those requests
- Facilitators will ensure that prayer requests remain confidential and are used to bring requests and one another before God
- Facilitators will follow-up on prayer requests that the group or Bethany's network of Care Ministries can support God in answering

General Requirements

- Regular communication with Host, ensuring a team dynamic and that group is supported
- 9 month commitment (Sept through May)
- Attend quarterly leaders gathering
- Submit to input and leadership from Groups Leadership Team including occasional check-ins in person or via phone
- Abide by Leadership Covenant

Small Group Host - Essential Duties

The goal of the Small Group Host is still vitally important during this time of virtual gathering:

1. To create a comfortable and welcoming environment as people arrive into the group.
2. To support the group structure, ensuring timely communication and keeping of relevant group information

Physical Environment (If we have the opportunity to meet in person in the future)

- Providing a clean physical space for the group to meet
- If a kid-friendly group, or a group with nursing moms, work with families to meet the needs of children and the group during meetings

Supporting Structure

- Communicating time and location of meetings
- Keeping accurate group roster with contact information
- Communication with Groups Leadership Team and church staff as requested
- In tandem with Facilitator, ensuring that new group members are welcomed and oriented to the group. Often via a phone call or email to new group members with details for the next group gathering will serve as your first welcome.

General Requirements

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Preparing for and Leading your first group meeting

Your first small group meeting can be a little scary for both the leader and the group members. The biggest goal of the first meeting is to begin to help your group get to know you and each other in a comfortable environment so that they'll want to come back the next week. How you do that is up to you but play to your strengths. How do you best put people at ease (asking open ended questions, laughter, other aspects of hospitality, etc.)?

Before your first small group meeting:

Pray:

- For yourself as a leader (host or facilitator)
- That God would equip both of you in every way necessary
- That your personal relationship with God would be vibrant
- That all the details will fall together perfectly
- That you will together provided a welcoming hospitable environment
- For each person in your group
- That they would come with expectation, curiosity and an open heart
- That they would experience God's work of transformation through the sharing
- For your group as a whole
- That a pattern of loving commitment, honesty and mutual acceptance would develop
- That God would accomplish His purposes through the group

Contact each member of the group and welcome them, communicating anything you want them to know in getting to the first meeting or about the first meeting.

Think through the group time and what you'd want to do (see below for some ideas).

During your first small group meeting:

Here is a general idea of how to organize your group time for the first week. The plan is for a 2 hour session and we'll break down the purpose of each section further below.

- Settle in, general chatter, beverages (share what's in your mug by having each person bring one to share about what they're drinking)
- Begin with a brief opening prayer.
- Ice Breaker Questions (approx 25 minutes)
- Go ver Expectations, administration items, etc. (10 min)
- Go through the Sermon Discussion (45 minutes)
- Prayer (30 minutes)

“Getting to Know You” Ideas for your First Group Meeting

It's important that no one feel like they have to talk about children they may not have or husbands and wives they may not have, etc., so some basic ideas that everyone can participate are:

- Share about yourself and your time and involvement at Bethany
- A Hidden Talent – everybody has a hidden talent
- Favorite park and why.
- Who is your hero?
- What's on your bucket list?
- If you could choose anything to do for a day, what would it be?
- What was the best and/or worst part of your summer?
- Favorite vacation ever?

Opening Prayer

Keep in mind that the group is new and may be intimidated. The leader or host should give a quick prayer blessing the time together.

Discuss (or set) expectations around small group time

Encourage your group members to:

- Attend consistently, be on time and come prepared with having watched each week's sermon
- Be willing to share at least one thing each week about what they have learned/what God has shown them
- Hold to strict confidentiality, nothing that is share in group is shared with outsiders without permission
- Be careful not to share personal matters regarding friends or family members without their permission
- Be sensitive to balanced participation from all group members
- Be diligent about ending on time.

Discuss Small Groups Format

- Setting the table (introductions, announcements, ground rules, take attendance)
- Sermon Discussion (summary from Facilitator or designee + discussion using Pastoral staff generated questions as a guide)
- Hearing a group member's story (until everyone has shared)
- Prayer for one another

Discuss expectations around prayer time

- As a group, decide how to handle prayer time and personal prayer requests:
- Explain that group prayer is a priority and that at least 15-20 min of time will be reserved for sharing and praying together each week
- Decide how you want to handle prayer requests (we recommend emailing them to the group during the week)

Discuss calendar

- Talk about schedule (meeting weekly and the time)
- Groups begin meeting: Week of September 13
- Break for holidays: December 13 through January 2
- Groups resume meeting: Week of January 3
- Group Participant Survey: May 9
- Groups wrap up: May 23 through May 30

Ongoing Resources

- Sermon-discussion questions will be emailed out by noon on Mondays* or can be found here:
<https://www.churchbcc.org/greenlake/worship/resources/sermon-reflection-questions>
- Audio and video of prior week's sermon can be found here:
<http://churchbcc.org/greenlake/worship/sermons>
- Watch your inbox weekly for the Small Groups Updates that will provide both announcements to share with the group and important information for Group leaders

For needs bigger than your group can take on:

The first step is to contact the Groups Leadership Team at: glgroups@churchbcc.org

Other Bethany Resources include:

- Megan Cowell – (meganc@churchbcc.org), Green Lake Groups Ministry Associate
- Don Riggs (donr@churchbcc.org), Care Pastor
(for practical, spiritual, or other needs)
- Phil Maulding (philm@churchbcc.org), Marriage Pastor
(for any marriage related issues)
- Contact the Green Lake "On-Call Pastor" anytime by calling (206) 524-9000

Getting Started Sharing Stories

A great way for a group to bond and members to feel known is through sharing each other's stories. Each group will be ready for this at different times and levels, but a great way to start is by interviewing a different group member each week.

This is a 10-20 min portion of your group where the facilitator or a designee asks some questions of a group member as a way for the group to get to know the individual better.

Think of it less as "sharing my life story" and more as a "deep ice breaker" that gives group member's context for one another and practice sharing about themselves.

Sample questions:

- Where are you from?
- Tell us about the family you grew up in?
- What is something you are passionate about?
- Given the choice of anyone in the world, who would you want as a dinner guest?
- If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
- If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
- Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time?
- What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
- What do you value most in a friendship?
- What is your most treasured memory?

Navigating Tough Conversations

Whether the topic is politics, discussing racial reconciliation, breaking up with spouses, discussion around covid response, or sexual orientation, all of these can create challenging conversations within the group. We can celebrate that we're all different and yet equally cherished by God and yet as leaders we want to provide a safe space to talk about hard things.

These are hard conversations, but they are real conversations and the community of God has nothing to fear in engaging with these types of conversations because it's the stuff of life and often times where our faith meets the day-to-day.

The solution to tough conversations is to have plenty of grace and a few clear guidelines of how we as a group have these sorts of conversations. In order to do this, we might need to build our skills at having tough conversations in this particular type of context.

Guidelines for both ourselves as well as group members:

- Use I statements- talk about yourself, your own experience, & let others share as they want to, or not want to.
- Don't interrupt- even to agree. Sometimes it's hard to share what we're really thinking so if someone is sharing, let them continue.
- Ask questions in order to understand, not to be understood. Help me understand, I think I get part of it but what about... Tone, Check your heart, if there isn't curiosity or a desire to understand then best to not say anything.
- Be present- really listen, no phones. Listen not only to what they're saying but also where they're coming from. What are they revealing about themselves? Their fears, their hopes, their understanding of who God is in the world.

Even when we don't agree with each other or there's tension we're okay. Most likely what we're discussing is not essential to faith and we can celebrate that we're a group of people who are different, yet joined by our mutual love of God, and in a world that is dying to have meaningful conversations we just did!!

Problem Scenarios and How To Navigate them

1. The Dominant Member

- Politely interrupt to ask: "What do the rest of you think?" or say "Let's hear from some others of you first?"
- Talk to them privately.
- Affirm them at the same time as talking with them.

2. The Eager Christian who "Shares" and uses the Bible too much

- (See #1)
- Clarify text and language used
- Express the fears/reactions group members may be experiencing.
- Talk to them privately after the meeting and affirm their knowledge while encouraging them to limit going too off track during discussion
- Ask them to help draw other people out

3. The Quiet Member

- Talk to them at the edges of the group, see if they can log on early or log on late to ask what they hope to get out of the time; what sorts of part of the study have stuck with them; what questions do they have? Etc.
- Where appropriate, make use of a comment or question they shared and ask them to repeat it.
- Affirm them and their contributions
- Have them read a scripture verse. (Ask ahead of time if this is OK)
- Ask them directly, but with an easy, open-ended question.

4. The Quiet Group

- Get them to write questions down.
- Have an icebreaker every week.
- Don't be afraid of silences.
- Don't fill silence with your talk: then they'll always stay quiet!
- Ask if your question makes sense.
- Avoid right/wrong questions or "threatening" questions.
- Ask questions to which you don't know the answer.
- Ask questions that allow or encourage "negative" responses, e.g. "What do you find hardest about prayer?" "What is the thing you fear most about sharing your faith?"

5. The Chaotic Group (Off the Topic)

- Keep one conversation going at once: call it out when the group is going too far off topic.
- Address topics that are raised, but don't stay off the topic too long.
- Suggest some reading and come back to the subject another time
- Where possible, be aware of topics coming up later in the course
- Continue having fun, don't clamp down on them too much.
- Aim to ensure a degree of helpful discussion and information.

6. The Group or Person who Concentrates on Personal Problems

- Be interested, sympathize, listen, pray for them (at end?) but...after a while steer the conversation to the topic or toward others.
- Offer to meet and talk to them during the week.
- Direct them to counseling or a needs group.

7. One Person becomes a Group "Project"

- Deflect attention from the person to their question/issue. Rephrase if necessary
- Find ways to affirm their contributions: don't let them get "corrected" or "straightened out" via other members.
- Direct questions to other people.

Key Dates for Small Groups this year

August 9	Small Group Facilitator/Host Sign-ups Start
September 6	Small Group Participant Sign-ups announced
September 10	Fall Leader Virtual Gathering: 7 PM -8:30 PM Zoom Link
September 13 (week of)	Small Groups begin gathering
December (details TBD)	Leaders Gathering
December 13-January 2	Groups break for holidays
January 6 (week of)	Groups resume meeting
February (details TBD)	Small Group Leaders Gathering
April 1 (details TBD)	Small Group Leaders Gathering
May 9	Small Group Leaders & Participant Surveys
May 23 (week of)	Groups wrap up meeting for the year

Leadership Covenant: Small Group Leaders

Bethany's leaders honor Christ and the Church community through their service by pursuing biblically upheld behavior, including but not limited to:

- Seek to increasingly represent Jesus Christ in your public and private life—including your financial choices, your sexual choices, the words you use and the activities you pursue.
- Committed to increasingly demonstrate Bethany's Core Values in all activities:
 - Authenticity and Humility
 - [Commitment to] ongoing transformation
 - Expressing God's Kingdom in daily living
- Remain respectful, courteous, and constructive in demeanor and communications with those inside and outside Bethany.
- Give and receive feedback graciously, and respectfully hold self and others accountable.
- Be aware of professional boundaries; being sensitive to the appropriateness of physical expressions of compassion or friendship.
- Promote transparency by meeting with congregants and colleagues in a public setting or in rooms with unobstructed windows or with the door open (1 Tim 3:2).
- Uphold the unity and integrity of the body, refusing especially to gossip, slander, mislead, or behave in any way that would create conflict between your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Abstain from excessive tobacco and alcohol use and both recreational and illegal drug use. In the company of vulnerable adults and minors avoid using all drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. (Please note: all smoking, alcohol, and non-prescription drug use is prohibited on all Bethany campuses.)
- Celebrate God's goodness and beauty throughout your life so that others know God through your witness.

I agree to adhere to these guidelines, and understand that failure to meet these expectations may result in no longer being permitted to serve in my role at Bethany.

(Name)

(Signature)

(GL Staff Signature)

(Date)

Bethany Community Church Confidentiality Agreement & Procedures - Volunteers

Serving at Bethany Community Church often involves being entrusted with confidential information. Examples of confidential information include the content of meetings, counseling sessions, contact, financial and personal information of attendees.

Confidential information relating to Bethany and the people who attend or serve here must only be used for church purposes and never communicated to unauthorized persons during or at any time following service at Bethany. Confidential information could be communicated via observation, verbally, and in written and digital messages.

If you are unsure whether specific information is confidential, ask your Ministry contact or Pastor. Also tell your team lead or Ministry contact immediately if you believe an attendee represents a threat to himself or others or to seek support in best serving the attendee, regardless of whether the information was disclosed in confidence. Those serving at Bethany who have access to confidential information are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. This includes:

- Church Council & Committees
- Deacons and Deacon Helpers
- Stephen Ministers
- Prayer Team and Prayer Chain
- Financial Peace facilitators
- Spiritual Journey facilitators
- Marriage and other Mentors
- Ushers
- Administrative volunteers
- Youth and College leaders
- Group leaders
- Other volunteers and leaders as identified

To ensure the protection of Bethany Community Church's confidential information and the privacy of Bethany attendees, I agree not to disclose confidential information obtained by virtue of my position at Bethany to other persons during or at any time after my service unless authorized or required to do so by law.

I understand that if I improperly disclose confidential information, I may no longer be permitted to serve in my role at Bethany.

Volunteer Name

Signature

Pastoral Contact

Date