

*Group Leader
Information Packet*

Purpose of 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. Groups exist as an invitation to live in fellowship and further relationships with God and community as followers of Christ.

Key Elements of the Groups Ministry

- A. Groups run from October-June
- B. Groups gather weekly or bi-weekly
- C. The goal of groups is depth of relationship with one another and Christ
- D. Small groups are led by a leader team consisting of a Host and/or Facilitator

Essential Ingredients for Group Gatherings

- A. Setting the table: Introductions, announcements, ground rules, attendance
- B. Focus time: This is where your specific group expression takes place.
- C. Hearing a group member's story: Until everyone has shared
- D. Prayer for one another: Providing requests + prayer time

Expressions of Groups

- Young Adult Groups: Fellowship focused around activities, a meal, etc.
- Bible Study Groups: Walking through specific book of the Bible or study guide.
- Sermon/Book Discussion Groups: A summary from the Facilitator or designee is shared to recap the sermon, followed by a discussion using questions sent from the pastoral staff as a guide. Or, following along a specific book together is another option!
- Fellowship Groups: Aimed towards conversation and learning each other's stories over food or a common activity.

Additional Expressions of Groups

- Moms of Preschoolers (MOPS): email kaitlinp@churchbcc.org
- Bethany Wilderness Ministry Groups: email nickr@churchbcc.org
- Support Groups: email philm@churchbcc.org
- MRJR Storywork Groups: email teylarg@churchbcc.org

Group Leader - Essential Duties

The goal of the Group Leader 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 (and missing folks followed up with)
- 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
- 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

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

General Requirements

- Attend leaders gathering
- Submit to input and leadership from Groups Leadership Team including occasional check-ins in person or via phone
- Abide by Group Leader Agreement

Facilitator Requirements

- Regular communication with Host, ensuring a team dynamic and that group is supported
- 9 month commitment (October through June)

Group Host - Essential Duties

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 a phone call or email to new group members with details for the next group gathering will serve as your first welcome.

General Requirements

- Regular communication with the Host, ensuring a team dynamic and that group is supported
- Hosts will model the sharing of their personal story (a guide for how to do this will be distributed at a later date)
- 9-month commitment (October through June)
- Attend leaders gathering
- Submit to input and leadership from Groups Leadership Team including occasional check-ins in person or via phone
- Abide by Group Leader Agreement (see final page)

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 provide 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 over 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 feels 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 October 9
- Break for holidays: December 4 through January 7
- Groups resume meeting: Week of January 8
- Group Participant Survey: May 21
- Groups wrap up: Week of June 11

Ongoing Resources

- Sermon-discussion questions will be emailed out by noon on Mondays* or can be found here: [Direct Access to Sermon Discussion Question Folder 2022](#)
- Audio and video of prior week's sermon can be found here: <http://churchbcc.org/westseattle/worship/sermons>
- Watch your inbox weekly for the 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 Megan Cowell, Director of Spiritual Formation at meganc@churchbcc.org

Other Bethany Resources include

- Pastor Prentice Park, Lead Pastor - prenticep@churchbcc.org
- Phil Maulding (philm@churchbcc.org), Care & Marriage Pastor
- Contact the "On-Call Pastor" anytime by calling (206) 524-9000

Group Leader Agreement

We live in a world of much individualism, loneliness, and a longing to see and be seen by others. To that end, we hope and pray that our Groups can meet these needs with the heart of Christ at the center.

As a church, we believe Groups will be the single best way for our attendees to

- Grow in their faith (we know this happens best in community!)
- 'Do life' with friends (in the joys, in the mess, and everything in between)
- Have a group of people they can depend on for prayer, accountability, and friendship.

We hope these groups will be a place of hope, compassion, and love but most importantly a space where the Spirit of God will move and transform.

Expectations

Leaders **ARE NOT** expected to do all the work in leading each session. Groups can share responsibilities with one another! Though expected to be the main contact with Bethany staff, leaders may facilitate discussions/activities every week or take on coordinating the shared responsibilities.

Leaders will ensure that members who sign up will be contacted within 48 hours, welcoming them and sending important group logistics (i.e. time/place/dates).

- **Leader Tip:** *leaders can/should elect a different person to be in charge of group communication i.e. sending weekly reminder emails and/or other important information to the group. Somebody with the gift of administration.*

Leaders are expected to take part in the life of the church. This means regularly attending Sunday services and participating in various community-building and outreach events.

It is important that groups/group leaders are not siloed, instead, they are aligned and working as part of an ecosystem for spiritual growth.

Be committed to your group by leading through June, being punctual and prepared, communicating effectively, and by praying and loving each person.

Requirements

Certainly, nobody is perfect but we hope that leaders will:

- Pursue spiritual practices, have a desire to grow in their faith in Jesus, and demonstrate Christ's love to the world.

- Be aligned with Bethany's [vision and mission](#). This includes not participating and bravely stopping gossip, slander, malice, and destructive behavior against participants, leaders, and staff.
- Be willing to have healthy, loving, and honest dialogue with church leadership should any conflict arise. Church leaders commit to this as well.

*Thank you again for stepping up to this very important role in such an important time as this. We truly hope to, not simply be a “church **with** groups” but a “church **of** groups”.*

We are confident that God will continue to use you and these groups to bring about great things for God's Kingdom. Lives will be impacted, the Spirit will move, and friendships will cultivate.

Key Dates for Small Groups this year

September 8 - 26	Group Facilitator/Host Sign-ups
October 9	Group Participant Sign-ups Opened
October 9 (week of)	Groups begin gathering
October 13	Group Leader Orientation
December 4-January 7	Groups break for holidays
January 8 (week of)	Groups resume meeting
February 5	Leaders Gathering
May 21 (week of)	Group Leaders & Participant Surveys
June 4	Leaders End of Year Gathering
June 11 (week of)	Groups wrap up meeting for the year