

IMAGO DEI

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Small Group Leader Guidelines

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WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Small Group Ministries of Imago Dei Metropolitan Community Church! We consider each small group leader to be a gift from God and look forward to working with you as a member of our team.

This Small Group Leader Guidelines is designed to provide guidance and help assure uniformity in the handling of small group practices. This handbook is not all inclusive and is intended only as a set of guidelines for use by the Small Group Leader, Small Group Coach and the Pastor.

All small group policies and guidelines are governed by the Bylaws of The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of MCC. Any policy in conflict with the UFMCC or Imago Dei MCC SOPs shall be superseded by those Bylaws or SOPs.

This handbook supersedes any previous manual or written or unwritten policies. Imago Dei MCC reserves the right to establish, administer, change or delete policies, guidelines and procedures at any time.

MISSION, VISION & CORE VALUES

Our Mission:

The mission statement confirms the reason Imago Dei MCC exists. It answers the questions, "who are we?", "what do we do?", "who do we do it for?", and "why do we do it?"

Imago Dei Metropolitan Community Church offers spiritual growth and Christ-centered worship to the Rainbow Community preparing people to share their God-given time, talent, and treasures with our church and world.

Our Vision:

The vision statement is a view of how Imago Dei MMC works when all the elements have come together and are working as intended. It answers the question, "What do we want to become?"

Growing with Christ! Lifting Up Community! Spreading God's Love!

Our Core Values:

Core Values are at the heart of Imago Dei MCC. They are what the church, its members and friends are committed to.

*Christ-centered worship
Stewardship
Discipleship
Respect for all people (multi-generational) and beliefs
Integrity, honesty, accountability*

SECTION 1.0 SMALL GROUPS AT IMAGO DEI MCC

“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.” John 15:4.

Jeffery Arnold in his book, *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities that Matter*, says when a church starts a small group ministry, there is an increased vitality that comes into the church. The reason for this is as people begin to develop a true sense of community within their groups and challenge each other to grow personally and spiritually, a new spirit begins to permeate the life of the church. When these groups come together for corporate worship, it is warm, genuine and exciting.

A healthy, growing small group ministry will produce a healthy, growing church. People learn to interact together in appropriate ways. Newcomers are welcomed and easily acclimated into the life of the church. Small groups provide a path for people on their spiritual journeys. They challenge people to grow spiritually and to think outside the box. Small groups provide a place where people can discover and develop their unique giftedness.

Forty five percent of Americans are in some form of small group. More than the 45% indicate an interest in joining a small group. Of these people involved in groups, 60% are church related. A large portion of the remaining 40% (not church related) are studying spiritual issues. People tend to move from group to group with no commitment. With no sacrifice or service, people are less likely to stay with a particular group. Few churches involve more than 5% of their congregation in some form of small group. In the UFMCC - most small group programs fail because of lack of support and training for the small group leaders. The ones that survive take an average of three tries to become successful. [All statistics, except those for UFMCC, are from the book by Jeffery Arnold, *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities that Matter*.]

People in our society today do not have the connection to the church as in the past. To get them interested in becoming part of a church, we can demonstrate the church is relevant to today. By offering a variety of small groups that meet people where they are, we can reach out to the community and invite people who would not otherwise come to the church.

Another benefit to the church is that people are nurtured and cared for in the small group, thus alleviating some of the care load of the pastoral staff. Yet, when it is necessary for the pastor to get involved, they have a line of communication to ensure people do not fall through the cracks.

The three essentials in a healthy small group are Bible Study, Group Building and Mission / Multiplication. All three are needed to stay balanced.

- To focus only on Bible Study will lead to scholasticism.
- To focus only on Group Building will lead to narcissism.
- To focus only on Mission will lead to burnout.

There is a game plan for the life cycle of the group where all of these elements are present in a purpose-driven strategy:

Bible Study: Growing with Christ!:

When the group is at Stage 1: The purpose is for the leader to share their spiritual story.

The greatest gift the leader can give a group is the gift of their spiritual story-the story of their spiritual beginnings, their spiritual growing pains, struggles hopes and fears. The Bible study is designed to help them tell their spiritual story to the group.

When the group reaches Stage 2: The purpose is to dig into Scripture as a group.

Group Bible Study is quite different from individual Bible Study. The guided discussion questions are open-ended. And for those with little Bible background, there are reference notes to bring this person up to speed.

When the group reaches Stage 3: The purpose is for the members to develop the habit and skills for personal Bible Study.

This is at two levels: (1) Personal – on their own, and (2) Group study with their small group. In the personal Bible Study, they will be introduced to skills for reflection, self-inventory, creative writing and journaling.

Group Building: Lifting Up Community!

When the group is in Stage 1: The purpose is to become a caring community.

In the first stage of the group, Group Building is the priority. Group Building is a four step process to become a close-knit group:

- The group leader shares their story.
- The group members affirm each other's story.
- The group leader shares their needs
- The group members pray for each other

When the group reaches Stage 2: The purpose is to transform the group into a mission-driven team.

The nine basic needs of a group will be assigned to nine different people. Everyone has a job to fill, and when everyone is doing their job the group will grow spiritually and numerically. When new people enter the group, there is a selection of ICEBREAKERS to start off the meeting and let the new people get acquainted.

When the group reaches Stage 3: The purpose is to move into discipleship with group accountability, shared leadership and depth community.

The group is reaching closure and the group building aspect will reach its goal with a “going-away” party. If there are other groups in the church in this program, the event would be for all groups. Otherwise, the group will have its own closing celebration and commissioning time.

Mission / Multiplication: Spreading Gods Love!

When the group is in stage 1: The purpose is to grow the group numerically and spiritually

The mission of the group is to bring new people into a personal relationship with Christ and the fellowship of a Christian community. In this stage, the goal is to invite new people into the group and try to double.

When the group reaches Stage 2: The purpose is to identify the Apprentice / Leader for birthing a new group.

In this stage, the leader will start dreaming about the possibility of starting a new group down the road. The questions at the close of each session will put the leader carefully through the dreaming process—to help them discover an Apprentice / Leader who will eventually be the leader of a new group. This is an exciting challenge!

When the group reaches Stage 3: The purpose is to commission the members of the leadership team from the group who are going to start a new group.

In six steps, the group will be led through a decision-making process to discover the leadership team within the group to form a new group. The six steps are outlined in the Guidelines available to your Small Group Coach.

SECTION 2.0 THE SMALL GROUP LEADER

A widespread misunderstanding is that leading and managing are one and the same. Up until a few years ago, books that claimed to be on leadership were often really about management. The main difference between the two is that leadership is about influencing people to follow, while management focuses on maintaining systems and processes.

Positional leadership doesn't work in volunteer organizations. Because leaders don't have leverage – or influence – they are ineffective. In other types of organizations, the person who has position has incredible leverage. For example, in the military, leaders can use rank and, if all else fails, throw people into the brig. In business, bosses have tremendous leverage in the form of salary, benefits, and perks. Most followers are pretty cooperative when their livelihood is at stake.

When people come together in groups, the group itself becomes an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts. The Small Group leader watches over the life and health of this new entity.

Without a leader, a Small Group is like a ship at sea with no captain. A ship without a captain is at the mercy of the prevailing current and is unable to prepare for what may lie ahead. However, a ship with a captain has its course mapped out, and there is always someone at the helm ready to respond if necessary. So it is with a Small Group. The leader serves the others in the group by working to chart the best course as they together pursue being God's people on earth.

A Small Group leader functions as a lay pastor, taking on himself or herself the responsibility of providing the primary care for the members of the group. Therefore, a Small Group leader exemplifies the following characteristics:

- *upholds the mission and core values of Imago Dei MCC*
- *believes and follows the God of their understanding*
- *understands Imago Dei MCC as a Christian church is central*
- *continues to grow in their faith*
- *cares for the well-being of others*
- *is able to set goals and work toward them*
- *demonstrates moral integrity*
- *listens to others*
- *is empathetic*
- *is willing to learn from others*
- *demonstrates flexibility*
- *respects others*
- *senses a call to serve*

The Small Group Leader oversees and coordinates small groups so that they will be able to successfully achieve their group mission. The Small Group Leader serves for a one-year renewable term and reports to a Small Group Coach.

Small Group Leaders need to be able to:

- Explain the small group vision as explained in Section 1.0
- Call and encourage group members whenever necessary

- Find an apprentice
- Pray and prepare for group meetings
- Notify their coach or staff of acute crisis conditions requiring response
- Develop and maintain an atmosphere in which members of the group can discover and develop God-given spiritual gifts
- Pray for the spiritual growth and protection of each member
- Refer counseling cases that exceed experience level
- Convene the group two to four times each month
- Recruit a host/hostess, when appropriate, and to see that refreshments are available and a venue is arranged
- Develop a healthy balance of love, learn, do, decide
- Assure God’s redemptive agenda via Scripture, sharing, prayers, songs and worship
- Assist the group in refraining from divisiveness or teachings contrary to church position
- Accept responsibility for group growth through the open chair strategy
- Regularly touch base with members outside the context of the group meeting just to say “Hi” and to see how they are doing
- Help the group form a covenant and to review the covenant periodically

A Small Group leader can expect the session and the staff to hold to the terms laid out in the Church’s Covenant. Every leader will be given a coach. This coach is someone whose ministry is to care for up to five leaders. The coach is charged with the responsibility of resourcing, encouraging, supporting, evaluating, challenging, loving and listening to the leaders in his or her care. Every coach is supported by a Church staff member. If leaders ever have a situation where they feel that their coach is unable to help them, the staff liaison is there to be of assistance.

Small Group Leaders are responsible for the following during the course of the year:

Annual Activities	
April	Attend Small Group Leadership training provided by a Small Group Coach.
May	Submit a Small Group Leader application to a Small Group Coach. Working with the Small Group Coach, choose small group content and group materials.
June/July/August	Announce your small group to the congregation and invite new members. Request completion of a Small Group Application from prospective group members. See Appendix B for the Small Group Application.
September/October	Hold your first small group meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Appendix D for a Meeting Preparation Worksheet that can be used for the first few meetings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the first two meetings, request completion of a Small Group Application from each attendee who has not previously submitted one. ○ At the first two meetings, work with the attendees on completing the Small Group Covenant. See Appendix C for the Small Group Covenant.
November/December	Assist the Small Group Coach in determining if it is time to identify an Apprentice Group Leader or to birth new group.

- In addition, the following **monthly** activities are completed while the group is in session:

Monthly Activities
Submit a monthly report to the Small Group Coach. See Appendix F for a sample Small Group Report Form.
Meet one-on-one with the Small Group Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invite the Small Group Coach for a monthly visit to the group. ○ Discuss people who are difficult with your Small Group Coach.
At the end of each group covenant, encourage each member to complete the Small Group Questionnaire as described in Appendix H.

SECTION 3.0 THE GROUP COVENANT

“Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?” Acts 15:10.

Conflict is not good or bad – it is neutral. The group leader should help the group create an atmosphere for healthy conflict. Keep the group a safe place – different opinions are welcome and disagreement is good, but it doesn't mean we judge the other. In the group's interaction together they should use "I" statements. Using statements like, "You know how you feel when something like that happens," is not nearly as powerful as, "I know how I feel when something like that happens," because we take ownership for our feelings. Rather than talking about our feelings we learn to feel our feelings. Also, group members are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own feelings instead of making them someone else's fault. If I am hurt because you were teasing me, I can be more effective by saying, "When you tease me I become hurt," rather than saying, "You hurt me." Our response to another person is a choice. The person does not "make" us do anything, rather we choose to do it. The key is to get people to give each other the space to be different and to have different points of view, yet continue being loved and accepted by the group.

The Biblical meaning of covenant and the modern definition of covenant are somewhat different. In the Bible God made covenants with God's people. Often these covenants were one-sided. God promised something and it did not matter what the people did, God kept the promise. For example, the rainbow is a sign of God's covenant with Noah not to ever destroy the world again with a flood. It does not matter what we do, God will stick to that promise. God made a covenant with Abraham to make of Abraham's seed a great nation. God has kept that promise to the Jews regardless of what the Jewish nation has or has not done. We as Christians are under what we call the new covenant -- the atonement of our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That is a promise from God. But we have to do something. We accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior. That latter covenant is more like the modern definition of a covenant which is, according to The American Heritage Dictionary, "A binding agreement made by two or more persons or parties..."

There are a number of reasons why it is important for small groups to have covenants. One reason is that the group leader can introduce some ground rules and get the group officially to agree to them. That sounds pretty controlling, but the leader knows some of the things that will make a group successful so he or she will have an edge over the others when it comes to writing a covenant. Some of the things are what were mentioned before – confidentiality, being non-judgmental, using "I" statements, etc.

The group might want to put the purpose of the group in the covenant. It is important that the group agree on the purpose of the group. For example, if you decide to have a Bible study will the purpose of your group be to meet together once a week for Bible study? I

hope not. Bible study is a means to an end. A better purpose might be "to grow in Christ and challenge each other to new depths of discipleship through studying the Bible."

Another reason a covenant is so important is that it will give group members a chance to say the things that are important to them. So, even though the group leader will have input, so does the group - and hopefully the covenant will aid in making the group experience more meaningful for everyone in the group.

The most important thing to remember about writing a group covenant is that decisions must be made by consensus. That means if one person in the group cannot agree to something, the group needs to keep talking about it and reworking it until everyone can agree. Effective small groups are not a democracy. A truly effective group will reach consensus in everything. This will take longer, and may require some additional training for group leaders, and maybe even for the group, but it will be worth it for the trust and intimacy that will develop.

It will take several weeks to complete a covenant. The group can be as creative with it as they like. If the group agrees, they can all sign the covenant and make it "official". They do not have to sign it, but they must all agree to it. They should all get copies of it. If group members start to slack off on keeping the covenant, the group leader may bring it back out and remind them of their promise. Remember, however, something could have been put into the covenant originally that the group finds they just cannot do. A group leader should not be afraid to revise the covenant if need be. He or she should be flexible and do what is best for the group.

SECTION 4.0 THE GROUP HOST/HOSTESS

"For the Lord your God is God of gods, ...and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger." Deut. 10:17-19.

Henri Nouwen's book "Reaching Out" is a fine description of this Biblical concept of hospitality. Nouwen reminds us that "hospitality" in the Bible reflects the conditions in the biblical world where motels and hotels were not available. In the Bible, God's people are taught to welcome the stranger, the alien, the widow, and the orphan into our midst, because God's people were once themselves strangers in a foreign land (referring especially to the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt). Nouwen says that such hospitality consists of these facets:

- Free and friendly space - creating physical, emotional, and spiritual space for the newcomer to join us
- Stranger becomes a guest - in that atmosphere of hospitality, the stranger is treated like a guest and potential friend

- Guest protected - hospitality requires that we offer protection or "sanctuary" to the guest
- Acceptance, not hostility - Nouwen reminds us that hospitality is based upon acceptance, not hostility, especially the kinds of subtle hostility which makes fun of newcomers or puts the newcomer into embarrassing situations
- Compassion - hospitality is basically a sense of compassion, a realization that we are more alike than we are different

As sessions progress and the group grows, you may select a host or hostess for the group. This can be rotated during the first few months of a new group to see who excels or shows a strong interest in the responsibility. Whether you rotate this responsibility or have a permanent host/hostess, you can make the following page available for them.

Small Group Host or Hostess

Summary: Provide a meeting place conducive for a successful small group meeting.

Working Relationship: The host or hostess works with the small group leader.

Necessary Skills:

- The ability to greet people with a smile
- An understanding of the environment necessary for a successful, distraction-free small group meeting
- The ability to keep noises, pets and assorted family members from interrupting the meeting
- The ability to delegate
- The ability to prepare a place for refreshments

Specific Responsibilities:

- Have a genuine interest in each guest and greet each person with a warm and ready smile.
- Provide a comfortable home with enough seats for everyone.
- Set up a simple refreshments table before the meeting, or have a place ready to put the refreshments that other group members might bring, including utensils, cups and napkins.
- Have extra Bibles and pencils ready for those who arrive without them.
- Wait until guests have left before cleaning up and rearranging furniture.
- Make sure people park in appropriate spaces.
- Communicate to the leader any special rules you have for your house (no smoking, etc.).
- Be sure and tell the leader or the group in advance if you are unable to host the group for any reason.

SECTION 5.0 THE APPRENTICE GROUP LEADER

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

According to John Maxwell, every leader’s potential is determined by the people closest to them. If those people are strong, then the leader can make an impact. If they are weak, they can’t.

An apprentice / leader is someone who agrees that in time he or she will step out into leadership. Historically churches have tended to ask only those who aggressively step forward to serve in leadership positions. Rarely have churches worked at developing leaders. The result has been that most churches experience the phenomenon where only 20% of the congregation does 80% of the work. This historical approach stifles the giftedness of 80% of the church’s population! In addition, the church has burned out many of their stand-out leaders by asking them to lead too many programs and too many people. Without some form of apprentice / leadership development, the church is constrained to overload its highly motivated, “here-I-am-send-me” leaders. The apprentice / leader model is meant to address these concerns.

The apprentice / leader is not an assistant. An assistant seldom has plans of stepping into the leader’s shoes. Instead, the apprentice / leader works alongside the leader, with the intent of one day becoming a leader themselves. Along the way he or she is experiencing on-the-job training, learning the skills necessary to serve a small group as its leader.

It is the responsibility of the leader to work with the Small Group Coach in identifying a apprentice / leader. The most important tools for the leader in this process are prayer and observation. The leader should pray, asking God to send someone whom he or she could mentor and train as a leader. Accompanying these prayers should be efforts to observe those who demonstrate signs of giftedness in shepherding, organizing, listening and faith. The one who is on time and who routinely prepares diligently for the group could be a candidate. The leader could also begin using the time before and after worship services, as well as various fellowship and educational events, to meet others in the congregation. As relationships are established, and the extent of a leader’s acquaintances are broadened, the opportunity for finding a suitable apprentice / leader increases.

Apprentice Group Leader

Summary: To assist the group leader in leading, facilitating and equipping the members of the group so that they will fulfill their group missions.

Length of Service: 2-4 covenants

Working Relationship: The apprentice leader works with the group leader.

Necessary Skills:

- Listening
- The ability to be a team player and work well with those with more small group experience and training
- The ability to explain the small group vision of our church
- A willingness to learn
- An understanding of the small group process
- The ability to ask for help if it is ever needed
- The ability to call and encourage group members whenever necessary
- The ability to invite new people into the group

Specific Responsibilities:

- Pray for members of your group.
- Be committed to living a Christian lifestyle with a daily commitment to prayer and devotion.
- Promote the concept of groups.
- Be prepared to help with the meeting in any of the following ways:
 - Help set up the room for the meeting.
 - Lead any part of the meeting the leader asks you to lead.
 - Help facilitate open discussion and honest sharing.
- Be prepared to lead your own group when you are ready.
- Meet periodically with the group leader to discuss the group.
- Attend any available training opportunity.
- Equip yourself to fulfill any of the responsibilities expected of the group leader.

SECTION 6.0 SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

Remember two things about leading a group discussion: lecture will kill a group and no one is the expert. Discussion will keep a group lively. The group leader is not the teacher, he or she is a facilitator. The more a group leader can draw out the group members to do most of the sharing, the more they will take ownership in the group. No one person in the group is an expert. The key is sharing, with responses based on people's experience and feelings, no right or wrong answers, and with everyone being affirmed for his or her input.

We generally know very little about each other. Have you considered how we strike up a conversation with a new person who comes to church? It usually goes something like this: "Hi, my name is Elaine, what's yours?" Tom Smith. "Are you new to Richmond?" No. "How long have you lived here?" Ten years. "Where do you work?" The phone company. "How did you hear about MCC?" I read the ad in The Gay Yellow Pages. "Well, it's good to have you, hope you'll come back." Thanks.

This gets really uncomfortable sometimes. It's a wonder anyone ever comes back to church. Can we start this conversation again? "Hi, my name is Elaine, what's yours?" Tom Smith. "Are you new to Richmond?" No. "How long have you lived here?" Ten years. "Oh really, well what's one thing you like about Richmond and why?" Well, I like the history here because I had an interest in history when I was in college. "Was that your major?" Yes. "How did you originally get an interest in history? (or "What is your favorite historical period and why?" or "How do you think we can utilize things that happened in history to help us be more effective today?")

As you can see the difference is in asking open-ended questions that get people talking about themselves. Stay clear of yes/no type questions or questions that elicit a one-word answer.

Most small groups use pre-prepared material with questions for the group discussion, but a group leader can develop a knack for thinking of good questions. There are three types of questions that will make the material being discussed become relevant to the group. The first type of question is called a warm-up question because its purpose is to start people talking. This is a general question, one that relates to a wide audience and often about a person's past. It won't take a lot of thought to answer it, but it will give the group some insight into a person's life or feelings. Also, the question should relate to the book, Bible passage or discussion the group is having. Be careful when writing these questions not to exclude people. For example, the group might be discussing the passage about Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well (from John 4:7-30). If the question is, "Can you think of a time when a stranger just started talking to you and what did you do?," you might exclude people who have never had a stranger come up and talk to them. However, you might say, "When you were growing up did you ever have visitors from another state or country come to visit? What was that experience like for you?" It

would be rare to find someone who had never experienced visitors. The warm-up question gets group members talking in a non-threatening way.

The next type of question is a seeking question. This question should ask something specific about the book, Bible passage or discussion. For example: in the woman at the well passage the question might be, "What do you think Jesus was thinking when he first started talking to this woman?" Here they are being asked to state what they think or feel about the story. It helps them get beyond the words. There are no right or wrong answers. Jesus could have been thinking about anything, we have no way of knowing. The key is to get people to think about the situation, get them to verbalize their thoughts or feelings, and it provides even more insight into their lives. Another idea for seeking questions is to ask them to describe the kind of day they think it was, the smells in the air, the textures represented and the sounds Jesus might have heard as he approached the woman. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, but it gets them into the story and helps them get their senses involved.

The last type of question is the application question. How can I apply this topic in my daily life? An example in the woman at the well passage might be, "How will you reach out this week to someone who is different from you?" This last question gets them to verbalize what they can do to put the discussion into practice. This is much more powerful than being told what to do. People receive insights on their own and decide to make changes in their own lives. This helps them live powerfully and take responsibility for their own life choices.

The mission of your group is the greatest mission anyone can give their life to – to bring new people into a personal relationship with Christ and the fellowship of the Imago Dei MCC community. The goal is to invite new people into your group and try and double.

A 3-part agenda is better than a loose agenda for beginning groups:

- Ice-Breaker: 15 Minutes
- Bible Study: 30 Minutes
- Caring Time: 15-45 Minutes

Those people who might be nervous about “sharing” will find comfort knowing that the meeting agenda has been carefully organized. The more structure the first few meetings, the better, especially for a new group. Some people are afraid that a structured agenda will limit discussion. In fact, the opposite is true. The Serendipity agenda is designed to keep the discussion focused on what’s important and to bring out genuine feelings, issues, and areas of need. If the goal is to move the group toward deeper relationships and a deeper experience of God, then a structured agenda is the best way to achieve that goal.

The Ice-Breakers are fun questions designed to warm the group and build understanding about other group members. These questions prepare the group for meaningful

discussion throughout the session. Appendix I has additional Ice-Breakers if the Bible Study being used by your group does not have one.

Effective leaders know that you first have to touch people's hearts before you ask them for a hand. You can't move people to action unless you first move them with emotion. The heart comes before the head. This principal is used in a small group setting through the time allotted to the ice-breaker.

All study should point us to action. Each session ends with a Caring Time of prayer and direction in caring for the needs of group members. Time is also provided to pray for the "empty chair." The empty chair is a visible symbol of the need for each group to lead someone new into relationship.

At each session the Leader should:

- Provide sign-in sheets to record attendance at the session. The form in Appendix F can be used as a sign-in sheet and facilitates monthly reporting to the Small Group Coach.
- Encourage and guide each group member in their own personal growth, including sharing faith, discipling and stewardship.
- Determine if the group can perform a ministry project. See Appendix E for a sample ministry project form.
- At the close of the session, complete the Meeting Format Checklist as described in Appendix G.

Bible Study: Growing in Christ

The greatest gift you can give a group is the gift of your spiritual story – the story of your spiritual beginnings, your spiritual growing pains, struggles, hopes and fears. The Bible Study is designed to help you tell your spiritual story to the group.

In the first stage of the group, the Bible Study is where you get to know each other and share your spiritual stories. The Bible Study is designed to give the leader the option of going LIGHT or DEEP, depending on the background of the people in the group. OPTION 1 is especially designed for beginner groups who do not know a lot about the Bible or each other. OPTION 2 is for groups who are familiar with the Bible and with one another.

OPTION 1: Relational Bible Study (Stories)

Designed around a guided questionnaire, the questions move across the Disclosure Scale from "no risk" questions about people in the Bible story to "high risk" questions about your own life and how you would react in that situation. "If you had been in the story..." or "The person in the story like me is ...". The questions are open-ended – with multiple-

choice options and no right or wrong answers. A person with no background knowledge of the Bible may actually have the advantage because the questions are based on first impressions.

<p>Option 1: <i>Light Relational Bible Study</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Bible stories • Open-ended questions • Share your spiritual story 	<p>Option 2: <i>Deep Inductive Bible Study</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Bible teachings • With observation questions • To dig into Scripture
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OPTION 2: Inductive Bible Study (Teachings)

For groups who know each other, OPTION 2 gives you the choice to go deeper in Bible Study, with questions about the text on three levels:

- Observation: What is the text saying?
- Interpretation: What does it mean?
- Application: What are you going to do about it?

Start the sharing with things that are easy to talk about and where everyone is equal – things that are instantly recallable – light, mischievously revealing and childlike. Meet at the human side before moving into the spiritual things.

Group Building: Lifting Up Community

A four-step process can be used in bonding to become a group: (1) input; (2) feedback; (3) deeper input; and (4) deeper feedback.

- Step 1 **Sharing My Story.** My religious background. My early years and where I am right now in my spiritual journey.
- Step 2 **Affirming Each Other's Story.** "Thank you for sharing ... " "Your story became a gift to me ... " "Your story helps me to understand where you are coming from ... "
- Step 3 **Sharing My Needs.** "This is where I'm struggling and hurting. This is where I need to go – what I need to do."
- Step 4 **Caring for One Another.** "How can we help you in prayer this week?" Ministry occurs as the group members serve one another through the Holy Spirit.

Group Building, especially for new groups, is essential. It is crucial for Bible Study in beginner groups to help the group become a community by giving everyone the opportunity to share their spiritual story.

Open-ended questions are better than closed questions. Open questions allow for options, observations and a variety of opinions in which no one is right or wrong. Similarly, "right-brained" questions are better than "left-brained" questions. Right-brained questions seek out your first impressions, tone, motives and subjective feelings about the text. Right-brained questions work well with narratives. Multiple-choice questionnaires encourage people who know very little about the Bible. Given a set of multiple-choice options, a new person is not threatened, and a shy person is not intimidated. Everyone has something to contribute.

Give positive feedback to group members: "Thank you for sharing ... " "Your story really helps me to understand where you are coming from ... " "Your story was a real gift to me ... " This affirmation given honestly will create the atmosphere for deeper sharing.

If the group is too large for sharing, take advantage of the three part agenda and sub-divide into groups of four for the Bible Study time. Count off around the group: "one, two, one, two" – and have the "ones" move quickly to another room for sharing. Dividing your group into sub-groups of 4-6 during the Bible Study can be a good idea. In sub-groups, everyone will have an opportunity to participate and you can finish the Bible Study in 30 minutes. In groups of nine or more, the Bible Study will need to be longer

and you will take away from Caring Time.

Mission/Multiplication: Spreading God's Love

To prove that your group is “Mission-Driven,” now is the time to start praying for your new “baby” – a new group to be born in the future. This is the MISSION of your group.

Here are three suggestions to help your group stay focused on your Mission:

1. **Empty Chair.** Pull up an empty chair at the Caring Time and ask God to fill this chair at the next meeting.
2. **Refrigerator List.** Jot down the names of people you are going to invite and put this list on the refrigerator.
3. **New Member Home.** Move to the home of the newest member – where their friends will feel comfortable when they come to the group.

If a new person joins the group in the third or fourth session, go back to an OPTION 1 Bible Study that allows this person to “share their story” and get to know the people in the group.

Bibliography

Elaine German, Building Caring Communities, <http://www.mccchurch.org/oldintranet/disciple6>

Serendipity House, Resources, <http://www.serendipityhouse.com/resources/>

John C. Maxwell, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

SECTION 7.0 LEADERSHIP COVENANT & VALUES

“For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.”

Titus 1: 7 - 9

People don't first follow worthy causes. They follow worthy leaders who promote worthy causes. Every message that people receive is filtered through the messenger who delivers it. If they consider the messenger to be credible, then they believe the message has value. Being a part of leadership in the Body of Christ is a sacred privilege and something that should not be taken lightly. The Bible has clear criteria for leaders. At Imago Dei MCC, we are committed to following these Biblical standards to the best of our abilities.

By accepting a leadership role at Imago Dei Metropolitan Community Church, I submit myself to the following covenant:

1. **Spiritual Growth:** Leaders are committed to grow as Christians through regular worship, personal prayer and increasing study. The Church must be led forward by Christians who are going forward into their relationship with God.
2. **Exemplify Positive Faith:** Things that leaders say to others should demonstrate their faith in God's grace by choosing to be constructive, supportive and positive. Leaders believe that God can change a situation and rather than simply complain or criticize; leaders pray and do what they can to make a difference. They do not talk about the problem with anyone who is not directly involved in the problem or its solution.
3. **Tithing:** Leaders make a financial commitment to the church. They lead the membership in developing a financial base to ensure future viability of the church. The membership has no reason to trust the leader's integrity if they are not being honest in their financial covenant with God.
4. **Praying:** Leaders regularly pray for the Pastor, the Board, the Staff and Leaders who are guiding the church. We should be able to count on the sustaining prayers of our sisters and brothers.
5. **Living a Morally Mature Life:** Although MCC is not in the habit of dictating how people ought to live, leaders understand that members expect them to be healthy examples. Leaders evaluate their behaviors in light of that reality and attempt to live in such a way that they are not stumbling blocks for others.
6. **Mutual Accountability:** The Bible talks about being submitted to one another in love (Eph.5:21). Leaders must be willing to receive instruction and even discipline from fellow leaders or those put in authority over them. It is healthy that everyone can be accountable to someone and willing to participate in a mature way in this process.

As a potential leader of Imago Dei Metropolitan Community Church, I am willing to participate in this covenant relationship with other leaders of this church. May God's power strengthen me to be faithful and may God's grace forgive me should I fail.

Signature

Date

In addition, the code of conduct in Appendix A encompasses the criteria of the Bible and UFMCC bylaws. Furthermore, they state ethical values in which we expect our leaders to abide.

Appendix A

CODE OF CONDUCT – Imago Dei MCC revised January, 2004

The following Code of Conduct, adopted by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), defines un-becoming conduct, disloyalty and dereliction of duty. It is the policy of Imago Dei Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) that elected officers, employees and ministry leaders subscribe to this code.

UNBECOMING CONDUCT:

1. Pattern of untreated public drunkenness or substance abuse which places a person's or congregant's safety in danger.
2. Misappropriation of church funds or property.
3. Misuse of the powers of the appointed or elected office for personal or sexual gain.
4. Any sexual relations with persons below the age of consent.
5. Non-consensual physical abuse or violence.
6. Sexual relations between supervisors and those they supervise or counselors and those they counsel.
7. Pattern of deceit or dishonesty.
8. Creating a person-centered ministry rather than a Christ-centered ministry, i.e. creating emotional dependency of the pastor, abuse of authority or divisiveness.
9. Knowingly violating the sanctity of another person's relationship covenant.
10. Inappropriate violation of confidentiality.
11. Sexual harassment, i.e. any sexually related behaviors that is unwelcome or offensive and which fails to respect the rights of others.

DISLOYALTY

1. Patterns of deliberate or malicious acts which damage or bring harm to a persons, a congregation or other church body within UFMCC.
2. Initiating or performing a ministry on behalf of UFMCC which is unauthorized and/or unaccountable.
3. Undermining the authority and ministry of the Pastor.

DERELICTION OF DUTY:

1. A pattern of ministry that leaves churches weakened rather than strengthened.
2. Leading a church into unreasonable indebtedness or breach of fiduciary duties.
3. Negligent supervision.
4. Failure to report acts of misconduct to the appropriate entities (authorities).

I pledge to uphold the Code of Conduct of the Imago Dei MCC as printed above:

Signature

Date

Appendix B

SMALL GROUP APPLICATION

The following application is completed by each prospective member of the group. New members who join the group after it has started are requested to complete an application also.



Small Group Application

Please answer the following questions about yourself:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Work phone: _____

How long have you lived in the area? _____

Are you a member of our church?

- Yes How long have you been a member? _____
- No

What activities have you been involved in at our church?

Have you been in a small group before? Explain your experience.

How did you hear about small groups at our church?

Why do you want to be in a small group?

Appendix C

SAMPLE GROUP COVENANT

The following covenant is discussed and agreed to by the group members at the first and second meeting of a new group. New members of the group are also asked to complete the covenant. Ask the group members to retain their copy with their group materials for reference at future meetings.



Small Group Covenant

A covenant is a promise made to another in the presence of God. Its purpose is to indicate our intention to make ourselves available to one another for the fulfillment of the purposes we share in common. If our group is going to continue, in a spirit of prayer, we will work our way through the following sentences. We will try and reach an agreement on each statement pertaining to our ongoing life together. We will write out our covenant like a contract, stating our purpose, goals and the ground rules for our group.

1. The purpose of our group will be:
2. Our goals will be:
3. We will meet on _____ (day of the week)
4. We will meet for _____ weeks, after which we will decide if we wish to continue as a group.
5. We will meet from _____ to _____ and we will strive to start on time and end on time.
6. We will meet at _____ (place) or we will rotate from house to house.
7. We will agree to the following ground rules for our group (check):
 - PRIORITY: While we are in this course of study, we give the group meetings priority
 - PARTICIPATION: Everyone is encouraged to participate and no one dominates
 - RESPECT: Everyone has the right to his or her own opinion, and all questions are encouraged and respected.
 - CONFIDENTIALITY: Group members will not repeat what is said in the meeting outside of the meeting.¹
 - LIFE CHANGE: We will regularly assess our own life change goals and encourage one another in our pursuit of Chris-likeness.
 - EMPTY CHAIR: The group stays open to reaching new people at every meeting.
 - CARE & SUPPORT: Permission is given to call upon each other at any time. Especially in times of crises. The group will provide care for every member.
 - ACCOUNTABILITY: We agree to let the members of the group hold us accountable to the commitments which each of us make in whatever loving ways we decide upon.
 - MISSION: We will do everything in our power to start a new group.
 - MINISTRY: The group will encourage one another to volunteer and serve in a ministry, and to support missions by giving financially and/or personally serving.

¹Group Leaders may consult with their Coach or the Pastor regarding pastoral needs of group members.

Appendix D

MEETING PREPARATION WORKSHEET

This worksheet will help you plan your first few meetings.



Meeting Preparation Worksheet

This worksheet will help you plan your first few meetings.

People: Who is coming? Why are they coming? What special needs does each person have? What are their prayer concerns? Have you prayed for your group?

Arrangements: What needs to be done to prepare for the time together? What arrangements need to be made about the room, seating, Bibles, refreshments, materials, etc.? Who is in charge of these arrangements?

Relationships: How will you help people feel cared for and caring? What will you do to help build positive relationships among the members of the group? (Ice-breakers, introductions, checking-in, name tags, Heart-warmers, etc.).

Study / Task: What steps will you follow to accomplish the task or complete the study? List the questions you will use and estimate the time for each one.

Prayer: What are your goals for the prayer time? How much time? What kind of prayer? Who will pray and when?

Time: What time is available and how will you divide it up? Do you have a meeting format? What is your "real" starting time? Your firm closing time? How will you move from each segment of your meeting into the next? Are you attempting too much? Too little? Have you asked anyone to take responsibility for various portions of the meeting?

Appendix E

MINISTRY PROJECT WORKSHEET

The following worksheet will be completed by the Small Group Leader with their team and reviewed with the Small Group Coach.



Ministry Project Worksheet

Name of Group: _____ Date: _____

Group Leader Name: _____

Use this worksheet to help your group brainstorm as you decide on a group ministry project.

1. Are we ready to work on a ministry project?

- Yes
- Not yet

2. What should our time commitment to this project be?

- A one-time project
- A set term project
- A continuing project

3. Who should we help?

- Each other
- People in our church
- People in our community

4. What kinds of needs should we meet in people's lives?

Stage of Life

Children
Teenagers
Young Adults
Middle-aged
Elderly

Basic Need

Shelter
Food
Clothing
Love & nurturing
Clean & safe environment

Special Conditions

Spiritually lost
Poor / Homeless
Physically disabled
Sickness
Emotional distress / grief

Take turns sharing your "passion" for the different stages of life, needs and special conditions that you chose. Share your ideas and dreams with the group and then work together to reach a consensus for a ministry project.

5. Discuss how you could do your project "in Jesus name". How can your small group represent your church as compassionate, Christ-like witnesses?

Appendix F

SMALL GROUP REPORT FORM

The following form will be completed at the end of each month by each Small Group Leader and reviewed with the Small Group Coach. The reports are summarized by the Small Group Coach and reported to the Pastor.

Appendix G

MEETING FORMAT CHECKLIST

Complete the following form at the end of each small group session. Discuss common responses with your Small Group Coach monthly.

Meeting Format Checklist

Use this checklist to determine which activities were included in the small group meeting format.

- Yes No 1. Did the meeting begin on time?
- Yes No 2. Was the meeting opened with prayer?
- Yes No 3. Were visitors and new members made to feel welcome and part of the group?
- Yes No 4. Was an Ice-Breaker used to get the meeting started?
- Yes No 5. Was the Ice-Breaker effective?
- Yes No 6. Was the room arranged in a way that encouraged group discussion?
- Yes No 7. Did the leader seem prepared?
- Yes No 8. Was the apprentice leader involved in leading the group in some way?
- Yes No 9. Was a Bible passage used as a basis for discussion?
- Yes No 10. Did all the members of the group contribute to the discussion?
- Yes No 11. Was practical application of the Bible discussion encouraged?
- Yes No 12. Did the group discuss who should be invited to the next meeting?
- Yes No 13. Did the group discuss the covenant?
- Yes No 14. Did the group discuss its ministry project?
- Yes No 15. Was anyone attacked, neglected or embarrassed?
- Yes No 16. Did the group have time of praise and worship?
- Yes No 17. Was the meeting closed with a time of prayer and requests for prayer?
- Yes No 18. Was the empty chair mentioned or prayed for?
- Yes No 19. Did the prayer time include prayer concerning application of the Bible passage?
- Yes No 20. Did the meeting end on time?
- Yes No 21. Did the group leader delegate meeting tasks to others?
- Yes No 22. Did anyone in the group share a story about his or her relationship with Christ?
- Yes No 23. Was there a time of fellowship before or after the meeting?

Appendix H

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Encourage group members to complete the following questionnaire at the close of a covenant or bible study series. Share the results with your Small Group Coach to determine if there are opportunities for your next small group covenant.



Small Group Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about your small group experience. By completing the questionnaire, you will help improve the small group program.

Your Name: _____

Name of Group: _____ Date: _____

1. As I see it, the purpose and goal of our group was:

2. We achieved our goals:
 completely Almost completely somewhat We blew it

3. In my opinion:
 Yes No Our group members have become good friends
 Yes No We have sufficient Bible study and discussion time.
 Yes No There is meaningful prayer time in our meeting.
 Yes No Our group has activities outside our meeting time.
 Yes No We frequently invite others to our group.
 Yes No We have worked on a ministry project together.

4. I found the approach to the meetings:
 Very helpful Irrelevant to my life Boring
 Intellectually stimulating Life-changing So-so
 New to me Challenging Other: _____

5. The most valuable thing about my small group experience has been:

6. If I were to suggest one thing the group might change, it would be:

7. My small group experience has influenced my relationship with Jesus Christ in these areas:

8. Would you recommend your small group to a friend? Why or why not?



Small Group Questionnaire

Appendix I

OPENING PRAYERS

Please feel free to improvise on these prayers. If one or two are favorites, you may use the same one for the opening of each Small Group session. Each prayer includes the open chair.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon us as we seek to understand your word.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. As the Creator you are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Creator, we thank You for bringing us together again, to study Your Word and fellowship together.

Anoint this message, and anoint our minds and hearts to receive Your Truths.

We ask You, Holy Spirit, to be our Teacher, and to guide us into all Truth.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. As the Creator you are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Our Deliverer, We come to you as a friend.

You have said where two or more are gathered, there You will be in the midst.

We believe You are here with us now and this is something You would have us do, and that it has Your blessing.

We believe that you want us to be real partners with You in the business of living, accepting our full responsibilities, and certain that the rewards will be freedom, growth and happiness. For this we are grateful.

We ask You at all times to guide us. Help us daily to come closer to You. Grant us new ways of living and of gratitude.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Inhabit our hearts, God of history, as you once inhabited human flesh.

Be here among us with all of Your wisdom, all of Your power, all of Your mercy, all of Your love, that we might learn to be like God from our God who came to be like us.

Visit, O Holy Spirit, this company assembled for prayer and praise. Through you, may we experience the power and wisdom of God's word.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are also lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Holy are You. Holy are we who are one with You forever.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Creator, thank you for your Holy Word which tells us of your great love and your great Salvation for us in Jesus, your Son.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us eternal life.

Holy Spirit, come and reveal more of Jesus to us day by day; come now and enlighten us as we read these Sacred Scriptures.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are also lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Wise and Faithful God, you lovingly abide in our depths. Awaken us to the beauty within and guide our steps as we journey together in faith.

Clothe us in strength and humility - strength to persevere when faced with challenges, and humility to admit wrongdoing when we have hurt others.

Help us be compassionate people of vision who care for and inspire others.

Liberating Spirit, thank you for the many gifts freely given. For the gift of each other, graced and precious creations entrusted to us. May we honor and respect each other, guide each other and care for each other.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are also lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Source of Transformation, fill our being with Your love. Bless our shared journey. May the conviction of our hearts and the witness of our lives transform the world.

Amen.

A Responsive Reading

Christ has no body now on earth but ours;

Ours are the only hands with which he can do his work,

Ours are the only feet with which he can go about the world;

Ours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world.

Lord, we offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are also lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Holy Creator, we come with hunger.

We come with thanksgiving. We come with eagerness.

We come with expectation. We come with delight in You and joy for the prospect of meeting You again face to face in Your Word.

We ask You to enlighten us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Feed us. Strengthen us.

Unfold some of the glories of Your grace.

Give us more of a spiritual grasp of it to see what You want to say to us, what You have for us, and what You wish to do in and with and through us.

We praise You for the riches of Your grace and ask You to unfold them this morning, for Your glory and for our progress in the faith.

We offer up our prayers for those who have no safe place to rest. No safe heart to lean on. You are Parent to us all. We are all brothers and sisters within You. Yet these people do not experience this connection and safety of belonging, of being loved, of being cherished. We offer You our lost brothers and sisters and ourselves, believing we are also lost and alone. We pray that these, our brothers and sisters, will experience being cherished, feeling safe, and coming home.

Lord, someone is missing from our group today. We have left an empty chair for them. Lord, send someone to them with the Word of God. You know who they will listen to. We claim this future member for the kingdom of God. We believe we receive his salvation and deliverance. In faith we praise You for it.

Amen.



Small Group Questionnaire

Appendix J

CLOSING PRAYERS

Please feel free to improvise on these prayers. If one or two are favorites, you may use the same one for the closing of each Small Group session. Each prayer allows for including the cares shared by group members.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Jesus, the Light of the World, may we begin to see the world in the light of understanding you give us.

As you chose the lowly, the outcasts, and the poor to receive the greatest news the world had ever known, so may we worship you in meekness of heart.

May we also remember our brothers and sisters less fortunate than ourselves.

O God, our heavenly Creator, the giver of every good and perfect gift, we lift up to you our voice of thanksgiving; we praise you for the life you have given us, and for the service to which you have appointed us, for the knowledge of your will, and the inspiration of your love. Hear now, your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

Lord our God, whose power is beyond all words to describe, whose glory is without measure, whose mercy is without limits, and whose love for us is beyond all telling: In Your kindness, grant to us and to all those praying with us, the riches of your compassion and mercy.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Lord, grant that we may always allow ourselves to be guided by You, always follow Your plans and perfectly accomplish your holy will.

Grant that in all things, great and small, today and all the days of our lives, we may do whatever You require of us.

Help us respond to the slightest prompting of Your grace so that we may be Your trustworthy instrument for your honor.

Creator of heaven and earth, you fashioned the power of human reasoning and of rational speech. Accept our praise that we offer in union with all creation, for all the power of heaven and earth acclaim and exalt you. Hear now, Your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

Holy and mighty God, you hear the beating of every human heart. May our prayers ascend before You like incense and may your loving kindness descend upon us like the dew of heaven to refresh and restore us day by day.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Loving Spirit of Wisdom, guide our thoughts and our memories.

In the light of your love, may we see what is important for us to remember,

what is important for us to hold to our heart,

and what we need simply to let go of,

for we trust you to be our guide even when the path seems unclear to us.

Loving God, as Jesus has taught us the importance of prayer, we come to you now with the petitions and praises that are living in our hearts waiting to be released into your care. Hear now, your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

God of healing, God of hope, we thank You for hearing our prayers, giving us comfort, and callings us to follow You.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

The time has come, O Lord, for us to leave this place;

Guide us and protect us and lead us in thy grace.

Where ever life may take us as we go our separate ways,

Help us share with others the things we've shared today.

Listening God, you know the secret of our hearts and sound the depths of our being.

Even Jesus cried out to you in fear and asked to be delivered from his fate, and yet he said: Your will, not mine. Hear now your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world, the shield of all who seek refuge, and the rock on which we can build.

Thank you for your support and for Your strengthening Spirit.

May the peace of God the Father and the love of Christ, the Son,

Guide us in the days ahead and strengthen us, each one.

May the blessings of the spirit fill us from within;

God bless us and return us to this fellowship once again.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Lord, help us please to always make a home for you in our hearts

and to receive within that home the neighbors and friends and especially the strangers whom we meet.

We are grateful that you are God and that you include us in your assembly, and in your love.

God of mercy and compassion, come and help us in our hour of need. You sent angels to Jesus to give him strength; reach out and keep us among your loyal children. Hear now your people's prayers....

{a moment of silence}

Holy and immortal God, you alone make us secure.

You know our weakness and our fear of falling.

Come to our assistance, fill our hearts with fresh courage, and give us strength and love to persevere.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Holy Spirit, we ask You to continue to be our Teacher, and to guide us into all Truth.

Anoint this Church, anoint the preacher and every word that is preached here, and anoint the minds of all who attend it.

God of our life, there are days when the burdens we carry chafe our shoulders and weigh us down;

When the road seems dreary and endless, the skies gray and threatening;

When our lives have no music in them, and our hearts are lonely, and our souls have lost the courage. Hear now, your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

God of our life, flood the path with light, turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;

Tune our hearts to brave music; give us a sense of comradeship with the heroes and saints of every age;

And so quicken our spirits that we may be able to encourage all who travel with us on the road of life.

Stay with us, Lord, as we go about our daily lives, our jobs, and doing all the things that we need to do.

Keep us safe and bring us together again next week.

We ask this in the Precious and Holy Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

AMEN!

GOD BE WITH YOU, UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

Lord our God, whose power is beyond all words to describe,

Whose glory is without measure,

Whose mercy is without limits,

And whose love for us is beyond all telling, hear now, your people's prayers...

{a moment of silence}

Lord our God, in your kindness, grant to us and to all those praying with us,

The riches of your compassion and mercy

For the sake of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Closing Prayer

{ask the members of the group to share their prayer requests and concerns}

May it be Your will, Lord, My God and God of our ancestors,

to lead us, to direct our steps, and to support us in peace.

Lead us in life, tranquil and serene, until we arrive where we are going.

Deliver us from every enemy, ambush and hurt that we might encounter on the way and from all afflictions that visit and trouble the world.

Bless the work of our hands. Let us receive divine grace and those loving acts of kindness and mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all those we encounter.

Listen to the voice of our appeals, for you are a God who responds to prayerful supplication.

{a moment of silence}

Praised are you, Lord, who responds to prayer. For the sake of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

May Your will be done in time and eternity—by us, in us and through us.

Amen.

Appendix K

ICE BREAKERS: Get Acquainted / New People / Session 1

When a new person comes to the group, start off the meeting with one of the ice-breakers on the following pages. These icebreakers are designed to be fun and easy to share, but they have a very important purpose—that is, to let the new person get acquainted with the group and share their spiritual story with the group, and hear the spiritual stories of those in the group.

I Am Somebody Who . . .

Rotate around the group, one person reading the first item, the next person reading the second item, etc. Before answering, let everyone in the group try to GUESS what the answer would be: “Yes” ... “No” ... or “Maybe.” After everyone has guessed, explain the answer. Anyone who guessed right gets \$10. When every item on the list has been read, the person with the most “money” WINS.

I Am Somebody Who ...

I AM SOMEBODY WHO ...

Y N M

r r r would go on a blind date
r r r sings in the shower
r r r listens to music full blast
r r r likes to dance
r r r cries at movies
r r r stops to smell the flowers
r r r daydreams a lot
r r r likes to play practical jokes
r r r makes a "to do" list
r r r loves liver
r r r won't use a portable toilet
r r r likes thunderstorms
r r r enjoys romance novels
r r r loves crossword puzzles
r r r hates flying
r r r fixes my own car

Y N M

r r r would enjoy skydiving
r r r has a black belt in karate
r r r watches soap operas
r r r is afraid of the dark
r r r goes to bed early
r r r plays the guitar
r r r talks to plants
r r r will ask a stranger for directions
r r r sleeps until the last second
r r r likes to travel alone
r r r reads the financial page
r r r saves for a rainy day
r r r lies about my age
r r r yells at the umpire
r r r closes my eyes during scary movies

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Press Conference

This is a great activity for a new group or when new people are joining an established group.

Press Conference

Interview one person with these questions.

1. What is your nickname and how did you get it?
2. Where did you grow up? Where was the “watering hole” in your hometown —where kids got together?
3. What did you do for kicks then? What about now?
4. What was the turning point in your spiritual life?
5. What prompted you to come to this group?
6. What do you want to get out of this group?

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Down Memory Lane

Down Memory Lane

Celebrate the childhood memories of the way you were. Choose one or more of the topics listed below and take turns answering the question related to it. If time allows, do another round.

HOME SWEET HOME—What do you remember about your childhood home?

TELEVISION—What was your favorite TV program or radio show?

OLD SCHOOLHOUSE—What were your best and worst subjects in school?

LIBRARY—What did you like to read (and where)?

TELEPHONE—How much time did you spend on the phone each day?

MOVIES—Who was your favorite movie star?

CASH FLOW—What did you do for spending money?

SPORTS—What was your favorite sport or team?

GRANDPA'S HOUSE—Where did your grandparents live? When did you visit them?

POLICE—Did you ever get in trouble with the law?

WEEKENDS—What was the thing to do on Saturday night?

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Wallet Scavenger Hunt

Wallet Scavenger Hunt

With your wallet or purse, use the set of questions below. You get two minutes in silence to go through your possessions and find these items. Then break the silence and “show-and-tell” what you have chosen. For instance, “The thing I have had for the longest time is ... this picture of me when I was a baby.”

1. The thing I have had for the LONGEST TIME in my wallet is ...
2. The thing that has SENTIMENTAL VALUE is ...
3. The thing that reminds me of a FUN TIME is ...
4. The most REVEALING thing about me in my wallet is ...

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The Grand Total

This is a fun ice-breaker that has additional uses. You can use this ice-breaker to divide your group into two subgroups (odds and evens). You can also calculate who has the highest and lowest totals if you need a fun way to select someone to do a particular task, such as bring refreshments or be first to tell their story.

The Grand Total

Fill each box with the correct number and then total your score. When everyone is finished, go around the group and explain how you got your total.

<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Number of hours you sleep	x	Number of miles you walk daily	=	Subtotal

<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Number of speeding tickets you've received	—	Number of times sent to principal's office	=	Subtotal

<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Number of hours spent watching TV daily	/	Number of books you read this year for fun	=	Subtotal

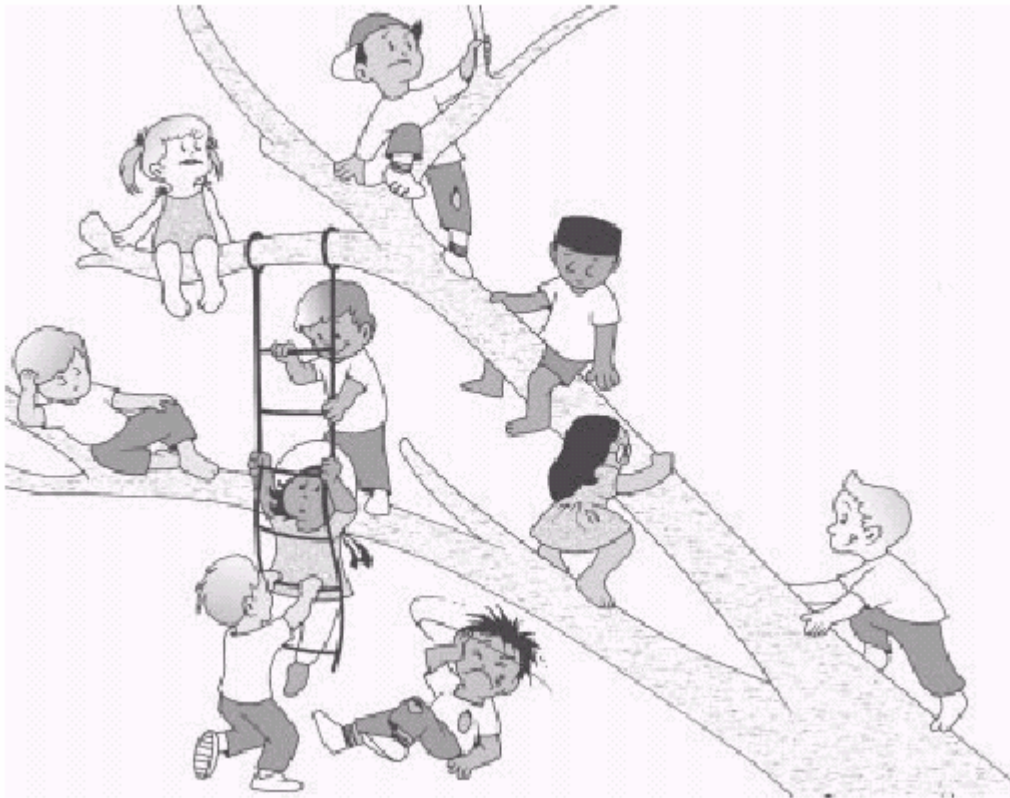
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Number of pounds you lost this year	+	Number of push-ups you can do	=	Subtotal

GRAND
TOTAL

Find Yourself in the Picture

Find Yourself in the Picture

In this drawing, which child do you identify with—or which one best portrays you right now? Share with your group which child you would choose and why. You can also use this as an affirmation exercise, by assigning each person in your group to a child in the picture.



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Four Facts, One Lie

Four Facts, One Lie

Everyone in the group should answer the following five questions. One of the five answers should be a lie! The rest of the group members can guess which of your answers is a lie.

1. At age 7, my favorite TV show was ...

2. At age 9, my hero was ...

3. At age 11, I wanted to be a ...

4. At age 13, my favorite music was ...

5. Right now, my favorite pastime is ...

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Old-Fashioned Auction

Just like an old-fashioned auction, conduct an out loud auction in your group—starting each item at \$50. Everybody starts out with \$1,000. Select an auctioneer. This person can also get in on the bidding. Remember, start the bidding on each item at \$50. Then, write the winning bid in the left column and the winner’s name in the right column. Remember, you only have \$1,000 to spend for the whole game. AUCTIONEER: Start off by asking, “Who will give me \$50 for a 1965 red MG convertible?”

... and keep going until you have a winner. Keep this auction to 10 minutes.

Old-Fashioned Auction

WINNING BID

WINNER

\$ _____	1965 red MG convertible in perfect condition	_____
\$ _____	Winter vacation in Hawaii for two	_____
\$ _____	Two Super Bowl tickets on the 50-yard line	_____
\$ _____	One year of no hassles with my kids / parents	_____
\$ _____	Holy Land tour hosted by my favorite Christian leader	_____
\$ _____	Season pass to ski resort of my choice	_____
\$ _____	Two months off to do anything I want, with pay	_____
\$ _____	Home theater with surround sound	_____
\$ _____	Breakfast in bed for one year	_____
\$ _____	Two front-row tickets at the concert of my choice	_____
\$ _____	Two-week Caribbean cruise with my spouse in honeymoon suite	_____
\$ _____	Shopping spree at Saks Fifth Avenue	_____
\$ _____	Six months of maid service	_____
\$ _____	All-expense-paid family vacation to Disney World	_____

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Places in My Life



Places in My Life

On the map above, put six dots to indicate these significant places in your journey.

Then go around and have each person explain the dots:

- the place where I was born
- the place where I spent most of my life
- the place where I first fell in love
- the place where I went or would like to go on a honeymoon
- the place where God first became real to me
- the place where I would like to retire

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The Four Quaker Questions

This is an older Quaker activity which Serendipity has adapted over the years. Go around the group and share your answers to the questions, everyone answering #1. Then, everyone answers #2, etc. This ice-breaker has been known to take between 30 to 60 minutes for some groups.

The Four Quaker Questions

1. Where were you living between the ages of 7 and 12, and what were the winters like then?
2. How was your home heated during that time?
3. What was the center of warmth in your life when you were a child? (It could be a place in the house, a time of year, a person, etc.)
4. When did God become a “warm” person to you ... and how did it happen?

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KWIZ Show

Like a TV quiz show, someone from the group picks a category and reads the four questions—pausing to let the others in the group guess before revealing the answer. When the first person is finished, everyone adds up the money they won by guessing right. Go around the group and have each person take a category. The person with the most money at the end wins. To begin, ask one person to choose a CATEGORY and read out loud the \$1 question. Before answering, let everyone try to GUESS the answer. When everyone has guessed, the person answers the question, and anyone who guessed right puts \$1 in the margin, etc. until the first person has read all four questions in the CATEGORY.

