

## SMALL GROUPS

### PHILOSOPHY & APPROACH

#### 1- Definition

An intentional face-to-face gathering of a handful of people on a regular time schedule with the common purpose of helping one another to grow spiritually.

#### 2- How They Fulfill Our Purpose

- Our purpose- to develop disciples of Christ who love Him, grow in Him and serve Him
- Small groups would comprise, along with Adult Bible Fellowships, our strategy for helping people to grow in Christ- together they would be called Growth Groups
- Growth occurs through Bible study, prayer and fellowship. Fellowship is the practice of the “one anothers,” the sharing of our lives and caring for each other’s needs. This relational context for Bible study and prayer is what small groups do best

#### 3- Why Needed

##### a) Biblical reasons

- The Trinity- John 1:1; 17:5
- Jesus’ Model- His disciples- Mark 3:13-14
- The Early Church Model- Acts 2:46; 20:20
- Paul’s Model- ministered in teams; 2 Tim. 2:2

##### b) Cultural reasons

- Traditional support systems in society gone- extended family, neighborhood, secure job, neighborhood church
- Meets great need in “high-tech, low touch” culture

##### c) Ministry reasons

- Provide for relational ministry (one-anothers) not found in the worship services
- An excellent discipleship model
- An excellent evangelistic model

#### 4- Our Vision

- To understand discipleship more biblically, becoming a more relational church, not just program-oriented and content-oriented
- To offer as one form of growth groups to help people grow in Christ, the other being Adult Bible Fellowships
- Will continue and strengthen ABFs and allow people to choose one or the other as their preferred means of deeper growth in Christ
- Both small groups and ABFs will be under the same pastoral leadership and will not be pitted against each other

- To move from growth groups into serving Christ by encouraging groups to be serving in their neighborhoods as well as in community ministries like the Abel Center, Union Mission, etc.

## PLANNING

### 1- Kind Of Groups

- Types- will focus on geographical groups as the norm, but allow other types of groups to form as desired- men's, women's, singles, life stage, etc.
- Meetings:
  - a) Where- in homes (same or rotate), or at church- group decides
  - b) When- groups choose best time of week to meet- not Sunday morning or Wednesday evening
  - c) How often- weekly as the norm, but allow 3 or even 2 per month
- Duration:
  - a) Meet year-round for continuity, but give flexibility to adjust schedule in summer
  - b) Commit to a group for one year, then have option to change
  - c) Continue each group year after year with opportunity to birth a new group if get too large
- Meeting format
  - a) Refreshments & informal fellowship (15-20 minutes)
  - b) Bible study/discussion (25-30 minutes)
    - using approved curriculum
    - directed discussion, not lecture
  - c) Sharing time (15-20 minutes)
    - encouraged to share struggles, blessings, concerns, etc.
    - will grow as people feel more comfortable with each other
    - no pressure, people can pass if prefer
  - d) Prayer time (15-20 minutes)
    - for each other, special needs, church, lost, missionaries, etc.
    - vary approach- sentence, around circle, some lead, groups, etc.
  - e) Wrap-up (15-30 minutes)
    - any announcements
    - discussion of how to care for needs, ministry projects, evangelism strategies, missions projects, etc.
  - f) Assistant leader will monitor use of time and debrief with group leader to keep group on track
- Curriculum
  - a) Evaluate the many options- Willow, Saddleback, Lifeway, Family Life, AIG, Ravi Zacharias, Serendipity, Navigators, Inter-Varsity, web sites of publishers & churches
  - b) Vary the types- Bible studies, topical, video-based, sermon-based
  - c) Provide several options each year for groups & let leaders decide

what fits group best

d) Set a basic curriculum that eventually want all to cover

e) Build a resource library- consider keeping in a reserved section of library

## 2- How We Will Fill The Groups

- Geographical as the norm- neighborhood-based- better for travel, evangelism & ministry to neighbors
- Allow existing groups to be grandfathered in, as long as agree to fit into the small groups structure of leadership, curriculum, training, meeting format, etc.
- Allow for other kinds of groups as mentioned above
- Start-Up of groups:
  - a) Plot church membership/attendees into geographical areas
  - b) Pick leaders to head groups in various areas
  - c) Recruit/sign-up group members for month before groups start- start with people interested in each area & allow them to grow the group
- How deal with new members?
  - a) Direct to existing group in neighborhood if a good fit
  - b) Birth new group as grow with apprentice as new leader
- How large do we allow groups to grow?
  - a) Ideally, 10-12 people- promote this expectation with leadership
  - b) If larger, subgroup within the group- this is the exception

## 3- Recruiting & Training Leadership

- Host homes- ask for volunteers- train them how to host
- Leaders for first groups
  - a) Select capable leaders from each geographical area or announce for volunteers based on job description
  - b) Have a turbo group with selected leaders- Oct/Nov. 2011
  - c) In meetings, do training & then do a group experience
- Train apprentices in groups to start new groups
  - a) Group leaders suggest apprentices, pastor screens
  - b) Pastor will give basic training
  - c) On-hands training will be provided by group leader
- Provide ongoing training of leaders
  - a) Through regular leaders meetings (see section on accountability)
  - b) Offer training seminars twice/year at church- by pastor & other leaders
  - c) Offer 1 conference/year- Willow, Saddleback, or closer to home- decide what we will pay for

## 4- Accountability Of Groups

- Who will oversee ministry
  - a) An adult ministries pastor
  - b) Decide who that will be

- Periodic meetings of leadership- monthly with overseeing pastor, at least for the first 3-4 months; then quarterly
- Kinds of reporting will require
  - a) Attendance in group
  - b) Difficulties with group
  - c) Handling problem people
  - d) How often have met
  - e) Ministry or evangelistic efforts
- Dealing with problems
  - a) General problems in leadership meetings
  - b) Specific problems with individual leaders

#### 5- Children Of Adults In Groups- Suggestions:

- Child care at church if group meets on Sunday evening
- Individual families arrange for child care
- Exchange child care with another small group that meets on a different night
- Bring a sitter to the meeting and split the cost among group members
- Have group members take turns stepping out to watch the children- not a couple, but two same-sex spouses so one spouse is getting group time
- In neighborhood groups, ask a sitter to keep children at one house while the group meets in another nearby
- Each group should decide what works best for them

#### 6- Resources & Barriers

- How funded
  - a) Curriculum- church pays for leader material, members pay for book
  - b) Food- host and/or group members provide
- Historical reluctance- thorough education, vision-casting, prayer & keeping ABF option
- Sunday evening service- keep for the present, but allow groups to meet at that time

#### 7- Dangers To Avoid

- “This is better than Sunday morning!” – no, just different
- “Let’s start a new church!”
- “Did you hear about Mary?”
- “We don’t ever want to break up this group!”
- “We don’t want to let anyone else in”
- “We’re better than Doug & Betty’s group!”
- “I don’t like this as well as ABFs, do you?”

## **TIMETABLE FOR GETTING STARTED**

- 1- PRAY- about how and when to start- All through the process
- 2- Cast Vision To Pastors & Discuss- 2010
- 3- Cast Vision To Deacons & Discuss At Leadership Retreat- Nov. '10
- 4- Devote Vision Message To Small Groups (Announce 2 weeks ahead)- Jan. '11
- 5- Continue planning in pastors meetings- Jan.- May '11
- 6- Present details to deacons- June- Aug. '11
- 7- Get Adult Ministries Pastor in place and start specific planning- July – Aug. '11
- 8- Map out the church into neighborhoods & select leadership- July – Sept. '11
- 9- Preach Series on One Anothers to Set Biblical Foundation – Sep.- Dec. '11
- 10- Start Turbo Group with leaders- Mid-Oct. – Mid-Dec. '11
- 11- Recruit for Small Groups- Dec. '11 – Jan. '12
- 12- Launch Small Groups- Feb. '12