



The Episcopal Diocese of Newark
Congregational Life

Faith Groups

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Purpose of Small Group Ministry

To build trusting relationships with God and one another. When we meet each other in less-formal, honest, and compassionate conversation, we learn how to love better. This love is what will bring us into loving, liberating, and life-giving relationships with God, each other, and our own truest selves.

This is not new...

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; . . . ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts, 2:42-24, :47

Faith groups or “intentional small ministry groups”...

A simple concrete way to connect people more deeply to Christ, and to each other in Christian community by committing to meeting regularly and following set of basic practices together as the basis for meeting. These faith groups exist for no other purpose or content.

Low-risk, high-impact

- Small/Faith Groups are a low-risk, high-impact opportunity to seek, name, & celebrate what Jesus is doing in our lives & in the lives of people around us.
- Intentional faith-based small groups that include the offering and receiving of stories can play a huge role in addressing the cultural and spiritual hunger for relational intimacy.
- Provide an opportunity for regular encounter with scripture, within a group, outside of worship.

Fight Modern Loneliness

- Small Groups fight one of the fastest growing areas of concern for healthcare providers: “modern loneliness.”
- **Essential right now: May be the best way to keep people connected and growing in faith as we live in this pandemic, and beyond.**

At the foundation of modern society...

- Is the “small group.”
 - Most people define themselves to some extent in terms of the groups with which they are affiliated.
- We may be most familiar with groups formed to accomplish a task.
 - For example in our work lives, tasks and content, checklists and objectives
 - This model (task-oriented) small groups also exist in church lives
- An intentional small group, a faith group... *in and of itself* can enhance daily life.
 - Through small groups we are given the opportunity to build trusting and transformative relationships with God and one another through regular and authentic conversation, practice and prayer.

What they're not:

- Groups that meet for other reasons such as a role (Vestry or committee), task/ministry (choir) or specific content (book group or bible study), although those groups can have similar elements.
- A huge time commitment (they do require regular participation).
- Therapy, study or affinity groups.
 - Although people can be grouped by life stage
- Not “just another program.”
 - Part of being the church and being in the church.
 - We don't think of Sunday worship as a “program.” This isn't either.