



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

Why Community Groups?

Our mission is **making disciples through worship, community, formation, and mission**, and one of our central activities for disciple-making is Community Groups.

So how do Community Groups help us make disciples?

One of the easiest errors to make about growing as a disciple is that it is essentially about learning more and more *content*. As important as content is, what's even more important in disciple-making is **Christ-centered relationships**. There are a couple reasons why:

First, in disciple-making **more is caught than is taught**. We learn as we grow in friendship and model for one another how to live as disciples. We all need a place where we can practice imitating Christ as we imitate each other (1 Corinthians 11:1). Over the long haul, who we relate to has more influence on our ability to live as fully devoted disciples than the amount of doctrine we have memorized.

Second, **growing as a disciple is not a linear process**. There is no cookie cutter pattern the Holy Spirit follows as he works with each of us. Each journey is unique and personal. Yet, no one can make the journey alone—and that's why Christ-centered relationships are so key. Everyone needs a place of love, support, connection, and even accountability to grow as a disciple. We need a group of other disciples who walk with us through the seasons of spiritual growth.

This is why we have Community Groups.

Elements of a Community Group

Community Groups create a place where members can practice Christian community. They're a place to grow friendships, pray, support, serve, and help each other grow in Christ. To do this we ask that Community Groups do the following three things.

EAT

An essential part of a Community Groups meeting is eating together. For some groups this will look like a potluck meal, for others it might mean snacks or dessert or even coffee at Panera because a group gathers there. Having food together is a simple thing but perennial God designed way people connect to one another.

PRAY

Each Community Group meeting will include a time of sharing prayer requests and praying together. Each Community Group is free to organize this in a way that serves the group best. Many Community Groups will find using the Daily Office a great tool for this.

STUDY

While a Community Group is not a Bible study in the traditional sense, every group is expected to have conversation around the scriptures. To facilitate this we will produce a set of conversation questions built around our Sunday Lectionary. The aim of this is: 1) to equip Hosts to lead a Bible based conversation and 2) to build commonality through our whole parish as we're all talking and thinking about the same things.

Different Community Groups will have a different balance between these three things. Some will focus on study, some on praying and some on caring. In fact, every group might emphasize a different aspect of group life at different seasons in their life.

THE 4 PRACTICES

This basic pattern creates a structure where The 4 Practices shape our Community Groups and our Community Groups help us live out The 4 Practices:

- We practice **Worship** by praying together.
- We practice **Community** eating and sharing life together.
- We practice **Formation** studying the Scriptures together.
- We practice **Mission** by helping each other be salt & light in our lives outside of church.

HOSTS/APPRENTICE HOSTS

Every Community Group is led by a host (or hosts). Hosts are responsible for leading, organizing and shepherding the Community Group. They may or may not lead Bible study, depending on their gifts and desires. Other members of the group can lead out in study. We have a separate document called How To Host a Community Group that details this ministry role.

TWICE A MONTH

Community Groups meet at least twice a month (but a group is free to meet more often if desired). We have a number of reasons for this:

- To make it easier to include a meal, which requires a longer meeting (1.5-2 hours). That's hard to do every week!
- We have other outlets for Community (e.g., Common Meal, Ladies Night, Etc.). We want to make sure members are able to take advantage of these opportunities as well.
- Frankly, to offer a sustainable and healthy pattern for our members lives.

EIGHT TO TWELVE

While we don't want to be rigid about size, in general a Community Group will have 8-12 members. This makes the group small enough so that members can know each other and large enough for the group to

support each other and have enough participants at any given meeting. Of course, each group will have its own culture so some might be as small as 3 or as large as 15.

DIVERSITY

There is no single pattern for Community Groups in terms of makeup. Some groups will be coed with kids while other groups might be men or women only.

OPEN DOOR

We ask that Community Groups have an open door policy of welcoming new members at anytime. We want to help all people who attend Saint Patrick's, especially new members, find a group. We will work with Community Group Leaders to find a group new folks can join. Of course when a group has reached its size limit it will not be required to welcome new members.

How to Start a Community Group

PRAY – Ask the Holy Spirit, “Do you want me/us to lead a CG?”

PRAY – Ask the Holy Spirit, “Who do you want me/us to invite to my/our CG?”

INVITE - Ask those who the Holy Spirit put on your heart to pray about joining your group.

MEET - Schedule an initial meeting where those who say yes can pray and organize how the CG will run.

ASK - How will we run our CG?

- What day will we meet?
- Where will we meet? (place can rotate if CG desires)
- How often will we meet? (Weekly? Twice a month? etc.)
- How will we eat? (Potluck? Snacks? Meet at Panera?)
- What will we study? (Bible book? Lectionary? Christian book?, etc.)
- How will we pray? (Daily Office? Free prayer? Echo app?)

PRAY – Ask the Holy Spirit, “Who will be my/our apprentice leader(s)?”

LAUNCH!!