

NEW SONG

— CHURCH —

“Small Group Leader”

Training Manual

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Welcome to the Ministry

Small groups form an important part of all healthy and growing churches. Not only do they allow members to build quality relationships, they also provide a perfect opportunity for introducing family, friends, neighbors and co-workers to Jesus Christ outside of a formal church setting.

Nothing is more vital to the success of a small group than its leadership. The small group leader is the most strategic leader in the ministry. They are on the front line where outreach and spiritual training take place. This training manual will help equip you for effective ministry as a Small Group Leader.

Small groups are a place of mutual ministry among members where future leaders are developed who can care for others and train them in the faith. This ministry is at the very heart of the mission and vision to which God has called us.

Jesus had a compelling vision. He was looking for men and women who were willing to become His disciples and go into the world on His behalf (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8) Jesus saw thousands of neglected people in cities and communities who needed His love (Matt 9:36-38). He said, “The harvest is plentiful.” With His help, we will bring in the harvest together.

Welcome to the team,

NSC Staff

About Us

Our Task (Mission):

Leading broken people to become spiritually powerful, transformed servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Vision:

“To be an authentic Christian community reaching out to non-churched people with love, acceptance and forgiveness that they might know the joy of salvation and a purposeful life of discipleship”

Our Focus (Core Values):

1. To be a worshipping church devoted to prayer
2. Reaching out to non-churched people
3. Building the church one small group at a time

Deliberate Simplicity

We have committed to keeping things ‘deliberately simple’ here at NSC. *This page and these 5 things make up the most important content in this manual for Small Group Leaders to focus on, on a weekly basis:*

1. **Start meeting on time, and end on time** (and make sure the right things happen in the middle, as detailed out in “What Makes Group Meetings Successful” pgs 5-7)
2. **Identify immediately a ‘Leader in Training’** (this is the clearly identified person who will be preparing to lead his/her own group when your small group is ready to multiply)
3. **Pray over the ‘empty chair’ every meeting** (All our small groups have an empty chair in their small group circle that they pray over at the end of each meeting - this is a constant reminder of our mission to reach out to non-churched people and pray God would give us opportunities to connect with them and bring them to group)
4. **Facilitate conversation** (Small Group Leaders do 20% of the talking, this allows group members to minister to each other and to have more engaging conversation)
5. **‘Shepherd’ small group members** (Small Group Leaders accept the responsibility of ‘shepherding’ their small group members, this means overseeing the spiritual and physical care of group members)

What Makes Group Meetings Successful

1. Start on time, end on time.

This is a very important leadership goal. Groups that start late or last too long are most often not successful. Sticking to a ‘tight’ time frame produces groups that effectively minister to their members and bear long term fruit. Our small groups meet no less than 2x per month, weekly is ideal.

Time format for effective group:

A. Spend the first 15 minutes visiting and reconnecting (this allows a margin for those who may be running late)

B. Spend the next 30 minutes in bible discussion based on “Small Group Questions” from Sundays sermon outline. (This is where most mistakes are made. If too much time is spent here there will not be time for prayer and one another ministry)

C. Spend the next 30 minutes taking prayer requests, personal needs and for praying together (This is where most ministry takes place – be sure to allow enough time for this)

D. Fourth: If you have time left use it for informal conversation. (This can be for some, the best part of the meeting)

Example:

6:30 – Start time

6:30 - 6:45 – Visit and reconnect

6:45 - 7:15 – Study and discussion

7:15 - 7:45 – Prayer and ministry

7:45 - 8:00 – Closure

The number one reason for ‘host home burnout’ is the failure to consistently end on time.

2. An atmosphere of personal warmth.

People who meet together and share the joys and struggles of everyday life bond with each other. Everyone needs a place where they feel safe, accepted, and loved. This sense of mutual care and warmth for one another makes the fellowship of group life very enjoyable. Most groups go through 4 stages as they develop an atmosphere of personal warmth:

A. Trust building **B.** Transparency **C.** Truth Telling
D. Healing, restoration and Personal growth.

3. An opportunity to tell “my story.”

A small group is a place where we feel the safety and love to ask others to listen to our story. Personal vulnerability opens each other up for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of group members. Below are the 4 levels of communication:

A. Acknowledgment **B.** Information level **C.** Feeling or opinion level **D.** Share my needs/vulnerability level.

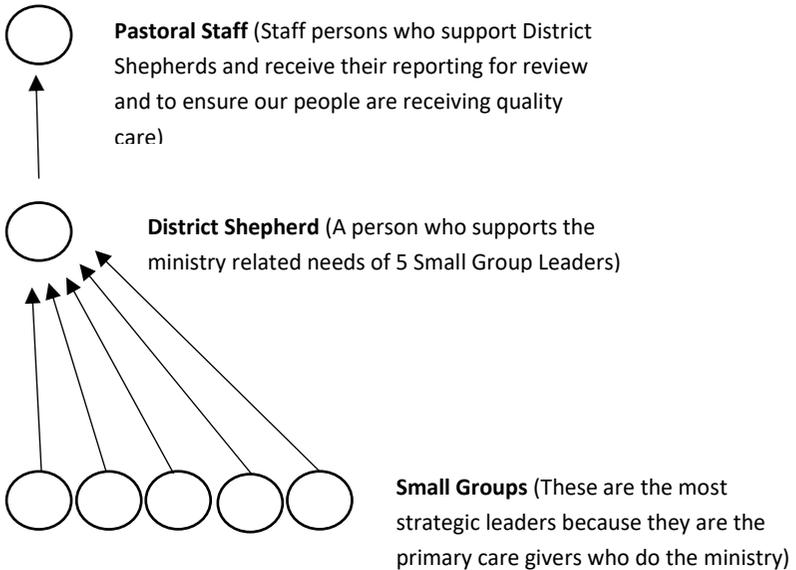
4. Ministry to one another in prayer. A successful meeting is one where the members feel like their needs were met. The primary way this happens is when the group members pray for each other. This opens up our lives to the realm of the supernatural power of God. A touch from God through another's prayer is a powerful experience.

5. Meaningful connections between meetings.

What happens between meetings knits people together. Needs don't just arise in our lives on the night our group happens to be meeting. The unexpected and unwelcomed can happen at any time. Being able to reach out to one another during these times by phone, or in person knits our lives together in love and genuine caring

Leadership Structure & Reporting

Small Group Leadership Structure:



Support/Reporting System:

Each Small Group Leader will be able to give a bi-monthly report to their District Shepherd (they will get ahold of you). Usually this happens over the phone but can happen via e-mail or in person.

The role of the District Shepherd is for support/encouragement/prayer and accountability. Your

District Shepherd is your greatest fan as a Small Group Leader and will be excited for you and your group to succeed. They are also there to help you solve any problems you may have. Most importantly, they will be praying for you on an ongoing basis.

These are some questions your District Shepherd will ask you:

- a. How are you doing in your personal world?
- b. How did your last group meeting go?
- c. Did you pray over the empty chair?
- d. Do you have any exciting stories to report?
- e. Are there any problems you need help with?

Why Have a Support/Reporting System:

In Luke 15:1-7 Jesus tells the story of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep who are safe and goes and searches for the one that is lost. A good shepherd counted his sheep every evening when they returned to the sheep fold. This way, if any were missing, he could go and search for them and save them from harm.

Our bi-monthly reporting system is about caring for the “sheep” God has entrusted to our care. Reporting is about caring for people.

Your District Shepherd creates the most important link at New Song Church when he/she contacts you. We are committed to supporting you as you lead your group.

What is a Small Group Leader?

A Small Group Leader is an individual who takes responsibility to convene a group of ten or less people. The role of the leader is to oversee the on-the-job training of an emerging leader (Leader in Training, 'L.I.T') while facilitating an environment in which group members can care for and minister to one another (as detailed out in "What Makes Group Meetings Successful" pgs 5-7). The Small Group Leader is connected to the larger ministry of the church through a District Shepherd.

A Small Group Leader is:

1. Someone who encourages and enables group members to discover insights and build relationships
2. The facilitator who stimulates relationships and participation by asking questions
3. An affirmer, encourager, challenger
4. A person who prepares a Leader In Training in order to multiply the ministry. By doing so the leader:
 - a. Invites team ministry
 - b. Promotes spiritual gift usage
 - c. Puts ministry in the hands of the people
 - d. Enables the church to reach a larger harvest

A Small Group Leader is not:

1. A person with all the answers
2. Responsible for everyone having a good time
3. Someone who does all the talking
4. Likely to do everything perfect

The Importance of the Leader **in Training**

We all understand the law of gravity. It is at work at all times in all places. We must constantly contend with it. There is never a time when it is not in force. We must learn to work with it in order to function successfully in this world. That is the way natural laws are, they treat us all the same, no exceptions. One of the “laws” of small groups is that **“The number of leaders will determine the number of groups.”**

Like the law of gravity this law makes no exceptions. You simply cannot have groups in the absence of leaders. Being a Small Group Leader is not a difficult or complex task. It does not require in depth knowledge in any field nor does it require extra organizational skills beyond what the average person already possesses. What is required is a willing heart and a good connection to a District Shepherd who can provide coaching and support.

As groups grow they have the opportunity to multiply. From a biblical standpoint, the multiplication of Disciples is clearly the will of God. The key to this multiplication rest not in the growing size of the group but in the presence of a new leader, referred to here as the Leader In Training. In reality it would probably be better stated as Leader In Waiting, because it really doesn't take a whole lot of training to be a Small Group Leader. Once you have seen a couple of meetings take place and asked a few questions you probably have all the training

you need to get started. It is a lot like parenting, you grow as you go.

These are the characteristics of a Leader In Training:

1. They have already made a decision that when the time comes they will lead a group. The Leader In Training role is not that of an assistant who enjoys helping but never intends to lead.
2. They have already emotionally accepted that the relational network as it presently exist will be changed when the group is ready to multiply and they are comfortable with that.
3. They are spiritually pointed in the right direction and are willing to be coached by a District Shepherd.
4. They understand and are committed to the ministry of New Song Church.

10?

Safety in the number

Why groups of 10?

1. Groups of this size are small enough to give genuine care to each member of the group.
2. Groups of **10** are big enough for building meaningful relationships.
3. When groups grow larger than **10** it is difficult for everyone to have a chance to share. Some people will become spectators instead of active participants.
4. When groups grow larger than **10** the leader will become overburdened. This causes the leader to quit the small group or it will hinder the life of the group.
5. When groups grow larger than **10** they become “leader centered” instead of “one-another” focused.
6. Every group of **10** is different but if you have children, limited parking or seating anything over **10** usually will cause you to burst at the seams.
7. Groups of **10** provide a family type relationship within the group, which make our lives more meaningful in “one-another” care. Thus a group of **10** sustains a positive environment.

How to start a new group

You can do it!

1. **Make a decision that only you can make.** The Small Group Leader is the most strategic person in the church, you will have personal impact on the lives of the people in the church. You might not feel qualified, but it is people like us that God wants to work through. The power to act is never released until a decision has been made. Will you make that decision to allow God to lead through you?

2. **Building a team is the key to success.** Either through your connections or with the help of a District Shepherd at New Song Church, you will need a Leader-In-Training and a Host Home. That means before you even begin you will have a team of 3 to help you. These are people in agreement with you in the vision of our Small Groups and the Mission of our church to ‘Lead broken people into becoming spiritually powerful transformed servants of Jesus.’”

3. **If you invite them they will come.** Invite people to join your group. This is a prayerful group process looking for who God wants you to connect with for this group. Do not be discouraged if it takes time for your group to grow, pray for the empty chair and let God amaze you with His faithfulness. Your persistence will pay off, God works through the faith of His people.

New Song Church Terms

What does that mean?

Every home, family, business and church have terms or tribal language they use to identify what they mean when they say certain words, here are our terms.

1. **Small Group** = A Christian community of 3-10 individuals organized around a self-replicating, lay leadership structure that has the clearly defined purpose of loving a new person to Christ while they live out an authentic expression of Christian love to one another.

2. **Small Group Leader** = An individual who takes responsibility to convene a group of ten or less people. The role of the Leader is to oversee the on-the-job training of an emerging leader (Leader in Training, 'L.I.T') while facilitating an environment in which group members can care for and minister to one another.

3. **Small Group Ministry** = Community of Christ followers that gather in groups of 10 or less to take seriously the commands of Jesus to love one another and obey the Great Commission.

4. **Leader** = A humble individual who can relate in a healthy manner with his/her peers and who takes responsibility for achieving results.

5. **Types of Leaders** = Small Group Leader (SGL); District Shepherd (Coach/Pastor); Division Leader (Full time church staff)

6. **Leader in Training** = An individual who has apprenticed himself/herself to an active Leader in order to learn the skills necessary to effectively convene a group of his/her own.

7. **Empty Chair** = The chair that a small group prays over each week signifying that there is room in their group for a new person. By faithfully praying over the empty chair a group keeps the Mission and Vision God has given it alive.

8. **District Shepherd** = A Leader of fifty (Coaches five Group Leaders) a critical role of being the pastoral, relational, informational, motivational link between the Group Leader and the Division Leader. Responsible to assist Small Group Leader in the effective multiplication process of their group.

9. **Division Leader** = A Staff Person (or one appointed by the Staff) who sees to it that the right relationships are supported, maintained, multiplied and promoted within their Small Group Division. They execute structure and give meaning to the work of others.

10. **Division** = A network of 5-10 District Shepherds and the groups under their care that are supported by a Division Leader.

11. **10/10's** = As Leaders our personal relationship with Jesus is of utmost priority. We spend 10 minutes alone with God in the Word and 10 minutes alone with God in prayer, daily.

12. **One Another Ministry** = Simply put, to be willing to be used by God to serve ‘others’ here at New Song Church in all aspects of ministry life, personal life, and time.

13. **Host Home** = A person or person’s willing to open a space, home, or location to allow a Small Group to meet. This is a vital role for Small Groups!

15. **We Give Our Ministries Away** = No matter what role we have been given, we are people preparing to give our ministry away by training others to take our place. When we give our ministry away, God gives more. “Growth of any kind is impossible without change.”

17. **Disciple** = **A.** Growing knowledge of the bible with personal application **B.** Sharing their faith with others **C.** Cultivating a private prayer life with God **D.** Loving others where they are at in recovery **E.** Serving others.

Special Acknowledgment

Steve Mason was the founding pastor of Christ the King Community Church in Bellingham, WA in 1988. He was a certified community college instructor, business owner, and administrator of a private school. In 1996, Steve received his Doctorate of Ministry from Northwest Graduate School in Kirkland, WA. Steve became the lead pastor of Christ Community Church in Bellingham, WA in 2012 before passing away February 4th 2017. Steve also had a very active international consulting ministry in the fields of small groups, assimilation, church growth and conflict management. Steve counseled Campus Crusade for Christ International Leadership Academies, as they were an avid ministry to implore his methods. The vision of small groups was an essential necessity for healthy church growth in Steve's eyes "Being good at being small" was a consistent theme for the service of caring for one another as a growing healthy church, and for neighborly, community driven outreach evangelism. Our small group training manual (and overall vision) is heavily influenced by Steve. We are honored with the insight and wisdom passed on to us, we hope to capture this training, to grow it into a greater tool to disciple God's people at New Song Church.