



SMALL**GROUPS**
ROADMAP

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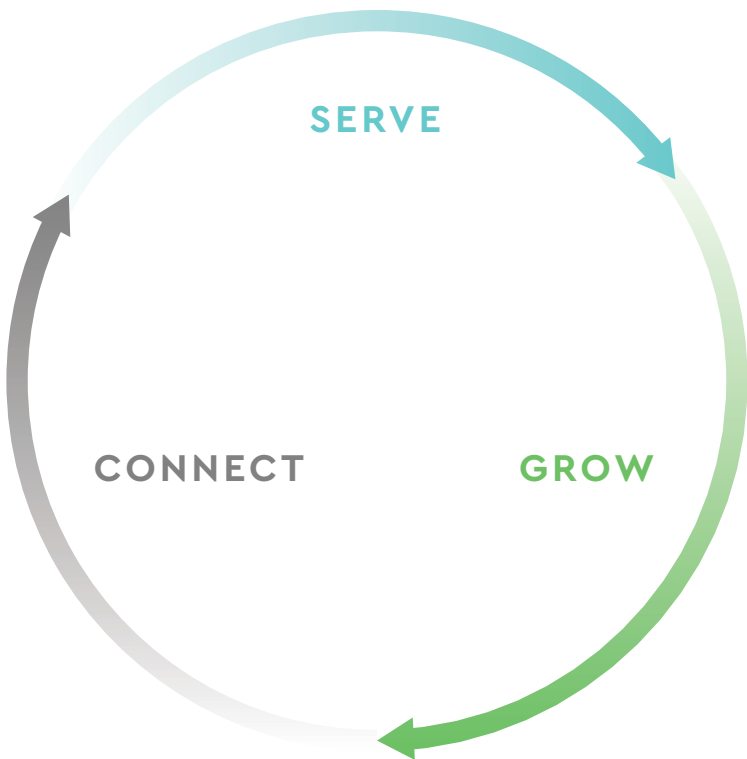
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ROADMAP



CONNECT | Our culture tends to foster shallow relationships, but God created us to be deeply connected to one another. During times of struggle and times of great joy, we long for others to share these experiences with, to walk with us, and to encourage us. Small groups create intentional space for those relationships to happen.

How do we do life together?

SERVE | As small groups grow closer together and in love with God and other people, they reach out in service to the world. When a group chooses to serve together, their bond with each other is strengthened & their relationship with Christ is deepened.

What is God calling us to do in our church & city?

GROW | As group members become closer followers of Jesus, they understand the need to share the life they have found in Christian community. We are called to invite others into the life experienced in small groups, so that more and more people may grow in love with God and other people.

How is God calling us to expand, grow, or multiply?

CONNECT

In the first six months of meeting (or longer), your small group will spend a significant amount of time simply getting to know one another. Culture tends to focus on and foster shallow relationships, but God calls us to be deeply connected to one another. Groups are made up of 6–12 people.

When God created humans, Scripture says God noticed that “it is not good that the human is alone,”¹ so God created a companion. At least 7 billion people later, we are still looking for companions with whom we can share life. Loneliness is a hot topic for researchers as increasing technology is linked to more isolated and lonelier adults. Small groups answer the epidemic of loneliness with Christian community.

Christian community not only keeps us from isolation, but it also provides opportunity for us to lift each other up, learn from one another, and invite the Holy Spirit to continue to do amazing things in our lives and our communities. The early church provides a great example of how Christian community functions best. Acts 2:42–47 describes a community that grew daily because of its actions. In Romans 12:4–5, Paul reminds the community of believers that “...we are one body of Christ, and individually we belong to each other.” In 1 Corinthians 12 it goes even further explaining the beautiful way God has created us uniquely to help support and lift one another up through our gifts. Small groups continually remind us that we belong to each other and to God.

During this first stage, we hope that your group will go beyond just being able to eat together or have a good time together. We hope your group will begin to share life and to sink into what it means to belong to each other as we follow Jesus. This means that you share your joys and struggles, your concerns and hopes, your journey with God. Sharing life begins with the study materials provided, but it extends after you have completed the study. If your group decides to continue meeting after completing the study, it is important for you to continue being intentional about growing together.

¹ Genesis 2:18

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Below are some typical questions that groups ask during formation. Once this stage of formation is nearing completion, the questions begin to change.

- **How do we do life together?**
- **How do we navigate conflict or make decisions as a group?**
- **How are we supporting one another or encouraging each other's relationship with God?**
- **How has God gifted you to help serve your group?**
- **How are we growing together?**

WAYS TO CONTINUE CONNECTING

The most common question we receive from groups is, "How do we structure our time after completing the study?" Below are a few suggestions, but if you need additional ideas on how to structure your time, please connect with Pastor Brandi or Pastor Kaitlyn.

Continuing "Checking In" – Your group may do this by sharing highs and lows, by asking questions about each others weeks, or by asking things about how the members have seen God this week. Another question groups often use is, "How is it with your soul?" You may spend all of your group time "checking in" during this stage.

Pick Up Another Study – The church is working to provide resources for you, but the small groups team is always happy to help you find something to work through together. You can go slowly, so your group still has time to connect with one another.

Practice Spiritual Disciplines Together – Pray, fast, read the Bible, or worship as a group. You can use your experiences of spiritual disciplines as a starting place for conversation.

SERVE

In the second six months of meeting (or sooner if your group is ready), we encourage groups to serve together. As we are spiritually fed and grow in love of God and other people, it is appropriate and necessary for us to share that love with other people. We do this by reaching out in service to our neighbors, to our city, to the world. After groups have connected with one another well, the natural next step is service.

By serving together, the bond within the group is strengthened and their relationship with Christ is deepened. Jesus sent his disciples and by extension all of us to make disciples of all nations, and Jesus modeled caring for the vulnerable in the way he lived.¹ First Methodist Houston is committed to serving the least, the lost, the lonely, the poor, and the neglected.

As your group enters this stage of formation, the small groups team has resources to help you structure your conversation about what you will do and how your group will do it. Please reach out to one of us for further conversation. Our Missions Team at First Methodist does an extraordinary job of connecting us with meaningful ways to serve. For more info please email pniz@fmhouston.com

¹ Matthew 28:19-20

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Below are some typical questions that groups in this stage of formation ask. Once this stage of formation is nearing completion, the questions begin to change.

- What is God calling us to do in our community?

- What does our neighborhood or church need from us?

- What is our group passionate about?

- How often will we serve as a group?

WAYS TO SERVE

There are many ways for your group to be in service to the community. You do not need to connect with one of the ministries of First Methodist Houston. You could do something evangelistic in your own neighborhood, such as throwing a block party or reaching out to your neighbors. First Methodist Houston does have a variety of service opportunities for groups. The missions team would love to connect your group with an area that you are passionate about. Their list is provided for you.

GROW

From the beginning, we encourage groups to understand the need to share the life they have found in Christian community. Small groups are formed to share their love for God and others through service and community, and we are also called to invite others to experience life in deep Christian community with us.

Growth as a group may mean that your group invites new people into the existing small group, or it may mean that a pair of your group separate to start a new group.¹ These options are part of a normal lifecycle for a small group.

The small groups team would love to be part of your discernment process. We have resources for your group as you have these conversations and consider how your group might invite others into Christian community. Please contact one of us as you enter this process.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Below are some typical questions that groups ask.

- How is God calling us to expand, grow, or multiply?
- Are there people in our group that feel called to form a new group?
- Is our group open to inviting others into the existing small group?
- How will we integrate them into the life of our group?

¹ Jesus sends disciples out in pairs to do ministry (Luke 10).

HOW TO GROW

Groups grow in two primary ways – the group opens to new members, someone feels called to start a new group.

As you consider your options, your group will want to think about timing. Typically, small groups launch in September and February. Your group may want to plan to expand during a launch period, so that you can attend the small group event and meet new group members.

Growth is a difficult process. It can be hard to open up your group after spending so much time serving and digging into each other's lives. Your group will want to be aware of this difficulty as you move forward. However, God's call to invite others into his kingdom and family is not a burden but a blessing. Think back to your first experience with a small group. You may have felt nervous and excited maybe even a little hesitant or scared, but God did powerful things through that experience. There are so many people who are still searching for a deep and meaningful community. Sharing what you've experienced with others has the power to bring new life into your group and radically impact someone's life. We want to help your group during this process as much as we can. There are resources available from the small groups team to make this process as seamless as possible.



MISSIONS

LOCAL SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

FMHOUSTON.COM/MISSIONS

NEIGHBORS IN ACTION

Faith-based community center in the Port of Houston

La Conexión | Bible Study (Kids): Build relationships with kids and help teach them about Jesus on Monday evenings 6pm-7:30pm!

Wednesday Bible Study (Middle School): Come hang out with our Middle School Students for Bible studies, service projects, and fun nights on Wednesday evenings 6pm-7:30pm!

Thursday Bible Study (High School): Come hang out with our High School Students for Bible studies, service projects, and fun nights on Wednesday evenings 6pm-7:30pm!

Thursday and Friday After School Programs (Kids): Come hang out and help our Port Houston Elementary kids with homework, reading and educational games on Thursdays and/or Fridays 3pm-5:30pm!

Nursing Home Visits: Once a month, join the Port Houston Moms group in serving at a nursing home nearby.

Community Center Cleaning: Each month the NIA community center needs a deep cleaning from the previous month's exciting programs! Bring your group.

Lifeline for the Homeless: Caring for immediate needs of our homeless brothers and sisters.

LIFELINE FOR THE HOMELESS

Caring for immediate needs of our homeless brothers and sisters

Collections: Together, collect clothes, shoes, new socks and underwear, grocery bag items, hygiene items or other specific needed items for our friends living on the streets.

Sunday Events: Plan an event for our Lifeline clients such as "Pizza & Bingo" on a Sunday afternoon following church service.

COVENANT HOUSE

Transitional program for homeless young adults

Monthly Bible Studies: Commit to teaching a Bible Study with the residents once a month for a year.

Fellowship Days: Plan a fun fellowship day with the residents of Covenant House such as game nights and cookouts on the weekends!

WESLEY COMMUNITY CENTER

Food Fair Sorting 9am-1pm: Every third Friday of the month, help Wesley Community Center prepare for their Food Distribution!

Food Fair Distribution 10am-12pm: Every third Saturday of the month, help Wesley Community Center distribute food to clients in need.

LIFE CENTER FOR THE HOMELESS

Housing and transitional program for homeless

Saturday Work Days: Pick a Saturday to bring your group out to Life Center to do some landscaping & light construction alongside the residents!

Weekend Fellowship Days: Plan a fun time of fellowship to get to know the residents of Life Center and their stories.

Sunday Lunch: Prepare and serve lunch to about 70 Life Center residents and their families after church at 3pm and spend some time getting to know them and their stories.

REFUGEE MINISTRIES

After School Ministry 4:15-5:15 p.m.

Each Monday you can help with homework, and get to know the kids through soccer and other outdoor games.

Sunblossom Mountain Ministry

Ask about how your group can be involved in children's ministry with the refugee children living in the Sunblossom Mountain Apartments. Opportunities are limited only by your creativity to provide fun game time!

"Faith in Full Action" (FIFA) 6:30-8 p.m.

Every other Friday night at the QMC gymnasium come play games, eat pizza and participate in a devotional with 15-30 refugee kids from our Sunblossom apartment ministry along with FMH kids and QMC kids. Volunteers are needed for adult supervision & van drivers each week to bring kids to this program.

"Kids' Night Out" (KNO) 6:30-10 p.m.

Every other Friday night at the QMC gymnasium. The kids have structured play and free play and they eat pizza. Join 15-30 refugee children from our ministry at Sunblossom apartments along with FMH kids and QMC kids for structured play, free play and pizza. Volunteers are needed for adult supervision and van drivers each week to bring kids to this program.

WHAM WEST HOUSTON ASSISTANCE MINISTRY

WHAM seeks to carry out Christ's command to love and provide for those in need. Volunteer as a group any day Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. preferably for a minimum of 4 hours; assistance might be needed in the pantry, straightening and stocking the resale shop or sorting donated items.

HOUSE OF AMOS

The House of Amos' mission is to provide assistance to people in need. They are open 9 a.m. to 12 noon Monday through Thursday, closed Friday and open Saturday 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Volunteers (individual or groups) are always needed in the pantry operation and the literacy program.

INTERESTED IN JOINING?

If your small group is interested in participating in any of these opportunities or if you would like more information, please contact Paula Niz at pniz@fmhouston.com

INTERESTED IN GLOBAL MISSION TRIPS?

Each year First Methodist serves the world through Mission Trips anywhere from 4-10 days long in places like Eagle Pass, TX Thailand, Cuba, Haiti and more!

If you are interested in joining a trip please contact Paula Niz at pniz@fmhouston.com.