

Small Groups at Carlisle Congregational Church

What are CCC Small Groups?

Small Groups are small Bible centered group gatherings that meet at least twice monthly for personal growth, accountability, study and encouragement. The idea is to provide small group settings that facilitate spiritual and individual character formation while also deepening community here at the Carlisle Congregational Church.

According to the Bible, God designed us to be men and women of exemplary character. He repeatedly commands us to pursue what is virtuous and shun what is evil. We need dependence upon the Lord, commitment to the Word, and one another to hear, discern, test, and obey God's truth. "As iron sharpens iron, so one sharpens the countenance of another." Proverbs 27:17

Underlying Assumptions behind Small Groups

We're all sinful and need forgiveness by God's grace through the cross. The Bible provides the framework for change and growth. No single one of us knows the truth completely. We need one another to hear, discern, test, and obey God's truth. God calls us to mutual love – with God, and with one another. God calls us to bear one another's burdens.

Small Group dynamics

- Groups meet weekly or at least twice monthly at a time and place convenient for each member.
- Preparation should be given to bible study or reading before each meeting
- Regular attendance is expected, and everyone is to be prompt - respecting each other's time.
- Groups will be "safe." Generally speaking, what is said in a group stays within the group unless permission is given to share.
- Groups will commit to meeting together for 6 months but generally not for longer than 2 years without reassessing goals and effectiveness.

Small Group Options

Smaller 3 to 4 member groups

For those desiring a smaller group to encourage and foster accountability on a more personal level. Since these groups have an emphasis on

accountability and are meant to confess and pray personal joys and concerns, men meet only with men, and women only with women.

Larger 6 to 10 member groups

For those desiring a larger group utilizing Biblically based study materials designed to produce spiritual growth. Because these groups are larger in size and different in function they can accommodate those desiring small group participation alongside spouses and other family members as well as coworkers.

Components of Small Group meetings

1. Prayer: thanking God for what He will accomplish.
2. Sharing: expressing the emotions or feelings each person is bringing to the group, hurts, joys as well as issues they are struggling or rejoicing in.
3. Bible Study: An examination and application of scripture.
4. Challenge Questions:
 - In what ways has God spoken to you (through Scripture, prayer or meditation)?
 - What temptations have you encountered since the last meeting? How did you respond?
 - How is God calling you to change? What disciplines or practices do you need?
 - What opportunities has God given you to serve people in need?
 - What opportunities have you had to share the gospel?
5. Scripture Memory/Reading: May be incorporated into the group's meeting.
6. Bearing Burdens & Correction: When a need is expressed, the group asks, "How can we pray for you?" When correction or rebuke is necessary members speak the truth in love with gentleness and non-coercion.
7. Prayer / Praise: End your time together by thanking God for His Word, for the work he is doing in each of us and praying for others in the Church and outside.

Such an accountability structure is an important practice.

How to join a small group

Anyone interested in joining a small group or initiating a new group can contact the elder for Discipleship or a pastor and express their interest. Groups can form at any time. The elders would like to be aware of what groups are meeting to be able to offer assistance and encouragement.