



### Step One: Have an idea.

As silly as it might sound, ministry starts with an idea. It might start with a need in the community that you think we could respond to better. It might be that something has changed in your life and you want to explore your journey with others. No matter what it is, pray about it.

### Step Two: Talk about your idea.

Talk to other church members at coffee hour or even at the supermarket. Share what you are thinking and see how many people share your interest.

### Step Three: Talk with your pastor.

When you have a small group of people (at least 3) with the same interest, arrange a time to talk to your pastor about your idea and what you hope to gain from this ministry. Depending how your church is organized, your pastor might direct you to the education committee — but start with your pastor for the next steps to introduce this idea into your church family and so that you have all the help need to formulate your idea so that you are ready for Step Four.

### Step Four:

#### Organize a first gathering of your new Small Group Ministry.

In the organization phase of your first gathering, focus on the details that need to be covered so that as many people in our church family know about this opportunity.

1. **Choose a day, time and place to meet.** This first meeting might be an opportunity for brainstorming or planning so that your first meeting date/time might change. Make sure that every one knows where and when to meet. Be sure to add your meeting to the church calendar so that a room is reserved, as needed.
2. **Publicize your gathering.** You might choose to write letters to anyone you think might be interested in such a group *or* call members, visitors and friends that you think might be interested *or* include announcements in the Sunday bulletin *or* compose a description of your group to the newsletter—who, when, where, what and why. In all kinds of announcements, be sure to include a contact person for anyone that might have more questions *or* create a poster to be hung in the church.

### Step Five:

#### Prepare for your meeting.

Some groups find it helpful to create an agenda with copies to be provided for any attendees. Whether or not an agenda is provided, it is worthwhile to plan how the meeting will unfold. Start with a prayer. Allow for short introductions, including names, why they are here and a fun fact. Make sure that everyone knows each other's names. Use the remainder of the gathering for activity, program or discussion. This time is the focus at is it is the common interest of the group. End the gathering with a brief "check-out" – each person responding to questions like, "How did this feel? What

did you learn? What will you take from this time together?” Finish the meeting with a brief prayer. However you decide to structure the meeting, be prepared with a loose plan to allow for the Spirit to guide you.

**Step Six: Explore the topic of leadership.**

In our overscheduled world, it is hard for many of us to imagine taking on another task. There may be someone that is interested in doing all of the logistical planning and organizing for the group. If so, bless this person and be sure to say thank you often. If not, this is a wonderful opportunity to explore what leadership is required in the group. For example: What are the tasks that need to occur before the group meets? How might decisions be made in the life of the group? Is it necessary for one person to do all of the planning or could this be creatively shared? Is communication important within the group or outside of the group? If none of the planning, organizing or communication happen, how will the whole group be accountable? Could the group reserve time at each meeting to do the planning for the next meeting? This conversation could happen with the whole group at the first or second meeting or could happen among a few members separately.

**Step Seven: Write a covenant.**

In the second meeting, spend some significant group time creating a group covenant. Ask people who they would like the agreement of the group to be in order for them to feel safe, comfortable and interested in participating. Put the answers on newsprint. Establish any “rules” for the group’s function so that all members feel safe. Ask for a volunteer to type the list and have it ready to distribute at the next meeting. Review the covenant as a group on a regular basis. It could be read it aloud at each meeting or shared in another manner. Reviewing this covenant reminds all members that they are responsible for seeing that the covenant is honored. There may or may not be a designated facilitator or leader, but all members should follow and be empowered to remind others of the group’s agreed-upon guidelines.

**Step Eight: Keep the Spirit alive in the group.**

Regularly communicate with group members and your church family by phone, email, newsletter, website, etc.. Revisit the covenant (as a group) if you feel the group has gotten off-track or needs revitalization or a new direction. Ask for help if any problems arise in the group. Pray. Have fun.

**Step Nine: Share your joy.**

Celebrate with your ministers and your church family the good news of your Small Group Ministry! Write something for the newsletter. Share the members of your group with the church office. Do whatever needs to be done to make it official and joyful.