



Starting a Parish Small Group Ministry

Simple Process Logistics (It's deceptively simple - people are messy)

Pray ⇨ Invite Leaders ⇨ Form Leaders ⇨ Help Leaders Launch Groups ⇨ Pray, Discern, Invite, & Form New Leaders (often from your leaders' groups) ⇨ Ongoing Support/Communication with Leaders

“Intentional” / “Missionary” Discipleship Small Group Ministry

Cut through the buzz words to the deeper *Why*.

We don't do small groups for small groups' sake. They're just a context.

It happens to be a very powerful context--the context Jesus used.

But simply getting people together in small groups, doesn't move people to know Jesus and join in the adventure of following as his disciple in the Church.

Why? Programs don't make Disciples. Disciples make Disciples. We want to invite and bring all people back into relationship with the God who loves them.

The Steps

1. Pray & Discern - this is God's work in the power of the Holy Spirit!

- a. How's the Lord calling us? Is now the time?
- b. What might God be inviting us to do to prepare the ground?
- c. Who will we invite to be leaders and when will we start?

2. Cast Vision for as much of the parish as possible - If it's not on mission, it will not last

- a. Highly recommend Keynote Two: [True North with Pete Burds](#)
- b. Think small to think big. Form leaders in small groups and send them to others. Start with 12 and it will multiply.

3. Align Key Players if Possible

- a. Pastor(s) & Staff
- b. Super Volunteers, Lay Leaders, Councils, etc.

4. Discern Point Person(s) - Shepherd for Leaders

- a. Many parishes with successful parish-wide small group ministries try to make time for one of their staff to devote 12-20 hours per week to

- leading this ministry.
 - b. If your parish doesn't have staff:
 - i. We have seen pastors invest in 12 leaders and they have carried it from there.
 - ii. We have seen a team of 2-3 Super Volunteers carry it for the parish.
- 5. Discern First Group of Leaders (think 12)**
- a. Who are your FACT (Faithful, Available, Compassionate/Contagious, Teachable) Leaders
 - b. Identify as many as you can, then discern who to invite first.
- 6. Intentional Invitation to Initial Leaders**
- a. From Pastor is powerful, even if he's not leading the group himself
 - b. Alternately, from the leader of the training group.
 - c. In person, ideally with a little time to get to know each other before you ask.
- 7. Form Your Leaders**
- a. Ideally 12 weeks, but can do a crash course and then backfill their formation
 - b. Heart of Discipleship (Interior Life)
 - c. Living out our Discipleship ([Anatomy of a Disciple](#))
- 8. Your Leaders Start Their Initial Small Groups - best if timed with season Lent or Fall**
- a. Resources are tools. They are only as good as the leaders who use them.
 - b. Personal invitation from your leaders is best, especially if you do not have enough leaders to serve all who would sign up if you did a parish-wide announcement
- 9. Celebration and Huddle**
- a. Gather all leaders back together to celebrate and process
 - b. Aim for once a month, likely to be about 8 times a year
 - c. Getting 50% of your trained leaders is generally considered a good turnout
 - d. Provide deepening formation for your leaders.
- 10. Ongoing Discipleship Small Group Ministry**
- a. Groups run by original leaders and new leaders (personal apostolate)
 - b. Form new leaders once or twice a year
 - c. Regular Celebration and Huddle

Stories of what God has done with small group discipleship ministries in our parishes!