

FAITH GROUP FAQ'S

What makes a faith group a faith group?

Any church-based group, whether it is called faith group or not, should have a relational and formational purpose that differs from a group one could join outside of the church. Faith groups should enable people to explore the faith, grow in the faith, and build community. But what does that look like practically when groups can take many forms?

The most common types of Faith Groups are as follows:

- Affinity (Shared activity or hobby)
- Support (Shared life circumstance)
- Bible Study
- Missional (Shared calling or passion)
- Serve Team (Shared service at the church, like hospitality)
- Sermon Discussion

Each of these groups have a distinct focus that brings people together. For some, a mission around which to rally will be more compelling than a group that studies the scriptures closely. For others, a support group for a traumatic life event may be more relevant than a group that meets to do yoga. No one type of group is better than any other type. Each type of group represents different places along our spiritual journey where growth can occur.

The intent would be for each group to live into the faith group purpose above. So how do each of these different types of faith groups fulfill the purpose of a group to help people explore the faith, grow in the faith, and build community? To live into this purpose, each group will be asked to incorporate two essential elements into the rhythm of their gatherings:

- Reflection on Scripture
- Communal Prayer

We believe strongly that scripture and prayer are two regular rhythms that do more than any other spiritual activity to help people explore and grow in faith as well as build community. This can take many forms and will look different, for example, in a Bible Study versus a serve team. These don't have to be extensive by any means, but even a short devotional time can plant deep seeds in the heart and deepen the meaning of a shared activity.

How many people can be in a faith group?

Faith Groups may take different forms but are consistently made up of three or more individuals who are led by an approved group leader (see training). We do not necessarily believe 10-12 is the optimal number for the size of a group; the fact is that three people who commit to meeting regularly and growing in the faith together is a huge win. Similarly, having a group of 20 or more meeting at a house break up in smaller discussion groups can be very effective. For a larger group, however, additional leadership will be needed. A good rule for sustainability is one leader for every 8-12 group members depending on that leader's ability to shepherd.

Where do groups meet?

Groups typically meet on campus, in homes, or in public settings. Experience has taught us that the most intimate groups typically occur outside of the church building. Groups needing childcare may be able to meet on campus on a Wednesday night depending on available space in the building. Some space is also available on Sunday morning with childcare. But most groups will be encouraged to find a space in the community to meet.

When, how often, and how long do groups meet?

Faith groups ideally meet every week. Although every other week or monthly meetings are possible, it is seldom that consistent and deep faith growth and community building happen without adopting the group as part of our regular weekly rhythm.

Faith groups will have the opportunity to form and meet during four, 8-10-week semesters each year. This is for several reasons:

- It provides multiple on-ramps and exits for groups throughout the year. If a group isn't a good fit, there is a graceful way to leave and try something else.
- It gives every group and leader a break in the few weeks between each semester.
- A set period brings focus and tightens attendance in our groups.

Leaders and group members are free to continue beyond one semester and even to keep meeting during the breaks between semesters if they so choose. Group leaders and members may even want to consider how many consecutive semesters they want to meet.

One of our goals is to encourage group multiplication. Group leaders should always be on the lookout for potential emerging leaders in their groups. They should also be aware that groups go through seasons. It is completely normal, after some time, for a healthy group to split and become two groups or for it to disband with members finding or starting new groups. To multiply is to share the grace and love developed in a group with more people. It also enables people to grow in leadership roles within the faith group community.

What is the semester schedule for Fall 2019 – Summer 2020?

- *2019 Fall Semester:* September 15 – November 17 (10 weeks)
- *2020 Winter Semester:* January 22 – March 25 (10 weeks)
- *2020 Spring Semester:* April 15 – June 10 (8 weeks)
- *2020 Summer Semester:* July 8 – August 26 (8 weeks)