

Small Group Ministry

HOW DO WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS AND OUR GROWTH?

One way to gauge how your small group is doing is to think of the life cycle of a plant.

- **The seed or seedling.** The beginning of the group where everyone tests the environment and conditions. Like seeds that don't germinate, some groups don't even get started. It's the wrong time, the conditions aren't right, or the mix of people doesn't work.
- **The Tender Shoot.** As the group grows, it requires protection, nurture and TLC. Members are getting acquainted and determining if they can feel safe with each other. They begin to know each other on a deeper level, sharing concerns and praying for each other's needs.
- **Thriving Plant and Healthy Roots.** At this stage, the group is continuing to work on deep, healthy, and authentic relationships. It hasn't produced any fruit or blooms yet, but it's nearly ready to expand beyond itself.
- **In Full Bloom.** Like a plant in full bloom a maturing group will focus outside itself and begin to serve others. Some groups seem to bloom for a long time, while others may only last for several months.
- **Natural Withering.** This can be a time of grieving for group members, but good leaders see this as a natural occurrence. Some people burn out, move on, have new priorities. Leaders should encourage members to prepare for the next stage because that's where growth will occur.
- **Producing New Seeds.** Like a plant, the life cycle of the group repeats itself. Apprentice leaders who've emerged from the previous group now seed and nurture new groups.



THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY AT VANDERBILT

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1225 Piper Blvd., Naples FL 34110

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www.vpcnaples.org

Presenting opportunities for developing friendships through

⇒ Traditional Small Group Activities
and

⇒ VanderBUILDERS . . .
Meeting People,
Building Friendships

For more information:

Traditional Small Groups

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Small Group Ministry



*"They continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."
Acts 2:46-47:*



Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church

THE *SMALL* GROUP MINISTRY AT VANDERBILT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HOW DO WE DEFINE A SMALL GROUP?

- The *Small Group Ministry Team* defines a group as 6 to 10 persons who get together to become more focused about being a part of the VPC family. All groups gather at least once a month to get to know each other better and enjoy Christian fellowship.
- A more Biblical definition might be found in Acts 2:46-47: *“They continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”*
- Personal experience would have me describe a small group as a gathering of casual acquaintances that, over time, become friends in Christ and lean on each other for advice, encouragement and moral support.



WHY SHOULD I BELONG TO A GROUP?

In a church with a congregation of nearly 1,000 members it is sometimes difficult to get acquainted. A small group is the ideal vehicle for remedying that problem.



Small groups are educational. Studying scripture and related biblical materials in this sort of informal setting gives everyone a chance to participate and learn from each other.

Small group members support each other, minister to each other and enjoy each other's triumphs and tragedies.

WHERE AND WHEN DO WE MEET AND WHAT PROCEDURE DO WE FOLLOW?

- Most groups meet in a member's home.
- It is best if the host is responsible for the food and some other member provides the program.
- EACH meeting should begin with prayer, a scripture reading and a sharing of joys and concerns.
- Programs will vary according to mutual interests of the members but it is imperative that the program be specific enough to provide a focus point for group discussion or action.
- Every group should appoint a leader. He or she is responsible for reminding members of upcoming meetings, contacting members in the fall as they return from their summer homes and providing guidance. He or she will not dictate agenda but will guide the group toward mutual interests and goals. Without this kind of leadership most groups will self-destruct very quickly.

WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP?

- To make my small group meetings a priority, and to call if I am unable to attend or am running late.
- To come to my small group meeting prepared and ready to participate.
- To maintain confidentiality of the personal information shared with my small group.
- To help create a safe place for each member to share with no judgments attached.
- To be accountable to the group concerning my personal and spiritual growth.
- To pray for my small group members and share their joys and sorrows.



WHERE CAN I GO FOR GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT IN HELPING MY GROUP TO PROSPER?

There are many good resource materials available. A few are listed below:

- The Serendipity Bible
- Serendipity Group Studies
- The Thoughtful Christian (web site)
- Presbyterian Today Online
- Church library
- www.serendipityhouse.com
- www.pcusa.org
- www.cokesbury.com



“Traditional” Small Groups? VanderBUILDERS?

What's the difference?????



VanderBUILDERS is a short-term (4 to 5 months) program designed to give people the opportunity to meet others in the church without long-term involvement. New groups of 8 – 10 individuals are formed once or twice a year.



Traditional Small Groups (8 to 10 individuals) are typically formed around a particular focus - Bible study, mission projects, pot luck suppers, for instance – and are of a more permanent basis than VanderBUILDERS.

Several people in the congregation participate in both types of groups.