

Groups are the primary means by which active discipleship, fellowship, and community take place at Community Church.

## Core Characteristics of Community Groups:

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### Discipleship Focused

- **Discipleship is helping people discover a relationship with Jesus Christ and moving them toward spiritual maturity.** This is the primary purpose of every group and the goal of every leader. Helping make disciples who, in turn, are able to make disciples in a similar way. We have many tools that can help you on the journey.
- **Community Groups exist to grow disciples.** “Real Life Discipleship” is the model we use to train up disciple makers. This allows leaders to assess where their group members are on the spiritual maturity wheel and put into practice methods of bible study and tools for evangelism to equip their members to be disciples who make disciples.
- Groups have a regular focus on reaching those who are far from God. **Intentionally praying for those who do not know Jesus, training people how to effectively engage and have a spiritual conversation about the gospel, and celebrating those who invite people into a 1-1 discipling relationship.**
- Groups have a habit of helping people take next steps in their discipleship journey. At the end of meetings, leaders ask participants to make an **‘I Will’ Statement**. An ‘I Will’ Statement is where group members respond to what they learned by making a simple commitment to an action they can complete in the next few days or before the next meeting. It's not just a statement of belief or good will. It is a deliberate commitment to practically obey the Word of God and listen to the Holy Spirit in their everyday lives.

### Three Dimensional: Up | In | Out

- Community Groups balance their energies between an UP-ward movement towards God, an IN-ward movement towards the group as a place of identity, and an OUT-ward movement to represent Christ to those that are far from God and in their community.
  - UP:** deep and connected relationship to the Father and attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This may include studying God’s word, time in prayer, and worship.
  - IN:** constant investment and spiritual development in the relationships that exist within the Community Group.
  - OUT:** entering the brokenness of our world, looking for responses individually (people coming into relationship with Jesus) and systemically (seeing our world being transformed by Christ). This is an intentional heart for the lost that can include serving together or intentionally sharing about Jesus with those outside the group.
- When groups gather, these dimensions are expressed in creative ways that are appropriate to the particular group. There is room for diversity between groups in how this looks, with a variety of leaders given room to step forward and contribute. The only rule is that they do not try to do a miniature version of a Sunday church service.

## Sunday Morning Engaged

- Every group should be engaged with the larger Community Church family by checking in on the sermon on Sunday. This can be a full discussion that takes up the learning portion of a group meeting or a brief conversation before focusing on another designated topic.
- Resources and group questions are provided by the pastoral teaching team to help groups go further in discussion. These typically follow a format of providing Head (information), Heart (meaning), and Hands (application) questions to engage the group.
- Group members should feel part of what is happening and being taught during the Sunday morning gathering which creates alignment for all groups.

## Multiplication Oriented

- Open groups are required except for short term periods for unique circumstances. That means they are available for new people to join. Even groups that feel full should have an open chair philosophy, ready to welcome at least one more.
- People may join groups by personal invitation, connection through the church, or after studying the Bible with a particular group member.
- Healthy groups grow... and consequently, multiply. Be on the lookout for group members who may have the gifts required to lead a group and train them to lead.

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## Sample schedule of a Community Group meeting:

- Guests arrive. A snack and a beverage is made available to people who want them.
- Ask everyone to be seated. **Do an ice breaker.** Make it fun! Get to know each other.
- **Check in on Prayer Calendar.** This is an essential habit for your group. If your group is new, you may need to do some training on this. As your group develops this habit, begin to cultivate a focus on intentional discipleship. Conversation quadrants, storytelling, and celebration are fundamental.
- **Check in on 'I Will' statements** from your last meeting. How did everyone do following through? This is where obedience and accountability come into play.
- **Start a discussion using the Group Leader Questions.** These are available in the sermon section on our website. Not all questions need to be used. Remember - you are a facilitator not a teacher! Just get the conversation started and keep it moving. At the end of the discussion, ask each member to make an "I Will" statement, a commitment to action based on what they just learned.
- **Ask each person how the group can be praying for them during the next week.** Take notes. You should plan to be the one to pray out loud for the group at the first meeting. Find out the comfort level of praying out loud before asking someone to do it.

## Community Groups Culture

- Purpose: To provide a comfortable yet challenging environment where participants experience authentic community, spiritual growth, and the feeling of a family by choice.
- Church strategy: Grow In Groups
- Values:
  - Authenticity
  - Discipleship Focused
  - Confidentiality
  - Mutual Respect
  - Availability
  - Multiplication Oriented
- Community Group Leaders:
  - Group Leaders are responsible for providing their groups with vision, direction, and support. They primarily serve as shepherds by facilitating and fostering their group.
  - Qualifications:
    - Connected. Partnered with Community Church, often through membership.
    - Culture. Embrace our Groups strategy and values.
    - Character. Known for their integrity.
    - Chemistry. Interviewed with groups leadership.
    - Competence. Previously participated in a small group.
  - Priorities:
    - Shepherd the group by facilitating the group and monitoring its health.
    - Disciple group members with goal of moving to greater spiritual maturity.
    - Guide decisions relating to the covenant and curriculum around the three dimensions
    - Attend and participate in training events.
    - Communicate updated group information in CCB.
  - Process:
    - Application (expectations / commitment)
    - Interview (connect / determine qualifications)
    - Leader Orientation (Purpose / Strategy / Best Practices)
    - Group Trainings (Celebrate / Appreciate / Equip)

## Communication:

Our primary method of communication is email. All Community Group Leaders must have an active email account that is checked regularly and frequently.

Part of using email also includes using the church database system. This system is called Community Church Builder (CCB).

To log into CCB, go to [communitymi.ccbchurch.com](http://communitymi.ccbchurch.com). This will take you to the CCB log in page. Once you are logged in, there are a few things that you can do:

- Update your own profile (click on “People” and type in your name)
- Update your Community Group profile (click on “Groups” and type in your group name)
- Record attendance for your group

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## **Community Group Essentials** | Here are some thoughts on running a successful Community Group:

### **Plan ahead:**

- Choose a day and time for your meeting if you haven't already done so.
- Invite people on your own or be included in the group listing.

### **Before your first meeting:**

- Make a personal contact with each person/couple who indicated an interest in your group.
- At least one of your contacts should be either in person (like after a service on Sunday) or on the phone. Communicating by email is fine once you've established communication with them.
- Make sure that they have directions to where you will be meeting plus any other details about when and where you will be meeting.
- Plan to serve a light snack and a beverage.

### **BEFORE each meeting:**

- Have a good physical environment. Consider good lighting, comfortable seating, etc.
- Eliminate Distractions. Work out details for childcare and communicate clearly with your group. Turn off your phone.

### **Your FIRST MEETING:**

- Serve a light snack and a beverage.
- Do an icebreaker. Go online for ideas or use *The Complete Book of Questions*.
- Spend some time getting to know each other (especially the early meetings).
- Depending on your group, you may choose to not discuss spiritual content during the first meeting.
- Discuss a Community Group Agreement.

## **As a Community Group Leader, you are a VALUED ministry leader at Community Church.**

Because of your character and your commitment to integrity and spiritual growth, we value your leadership and ability to care for your group members. As a Community Group Leader at Community Church, we commit to being available to support you when needed.

We believe that the church building is not a "Sacred Place", meaning that the Holy Spirit can and will work wherever He wants. He is not contained to a building. In the same way, pastors, elders and church staff are not "Sacred People", meaning that the Holy Spirit can and will work with whoever He desires. He is not limited to working with 'professionals'.

What IS sacred are the Biblical functions of caring, prayer, accountability and God's Word. You, as a Community Group Leader, are trusted to lead in these important functions. Thank you!