

College Park Flock Group Ministry

The Need for Small Flock Groups

Since College Park Church was formed on March 13, 1985 our numbers have grown from 12 to about 4300 with an average attendance last year of 2,811, including 457 children from nursery through 6th grade. Of those on the roster 1571 are members. Along with this growth has come the desire for meaningful relationships and interconnectedness among those attending our weekly services.

Among the leadership of the church, there is also a deep felt need to strengthen our focus on building disciples, applying the of word of God taught from our pulpit on Sunday mornings, encouraging one another to live it out in our daily lives, and bring others to Christ through the lifestyles we live and our proactive impact on the world. After all, we have not been drawn into fellowship for the benefit of its members, but for the benefit of the world. We are to be the salt of the earth and a light unto the world.¹

How the Flock Group Ministry Began

In 1999, Garrett Higbee was brought on staff of College Park Church and was delegated the task of starting a Flock Group Ministry. Pastor Kimber Kauffman gave two provisos for the task: "make the church feel small" and "don't meet on Sundays." Garrett and several other staff members began a six-month prayer vigil, asking God to prepare the hearts and minds of the people and raise up leadership for the ministry.

Early in the year 2001 a Small Flock Group Ministry Council was formed under Garrett's leadership. Soon after, several pilot groups were formed. Eugene Kimble was asked to be the elder over this ministry later that year and under his guidance and the council's leadership the ministry has grown to its present state.

As we enter the year 2003 we have seen God's hand as He has blessed the refinement and growth of this body life ministry. We now have over 400 people involved in small flock group meetings in the homes of members throughout the area served by the church, and interest is growing each month.

Here is a typical e-mail response to the blessings many small group leaders are receiving as they start up their groups.

Eugene,
Deb and I had our first meeting last Saturday night. We had 17 adults including ourselves! So far, everyone has committed to returning. Deb and I could not be more pleased with how it went. We truly felt the Holy Spirit was guiding us. I'll tell you more next time I see you. Thank you so much for all your efforts. All praise be to God!!
In Him,
Greg Mink [January 14, 2003]

As a direct response to scriptures like Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4: 11-16 and Act 2:42, the Flock Group Ministry has become the ministry of "missing link" in that it now provides a

¹ Matthew 5:13-16

mechanism for fellow believers to connect with one another and encourage one another in their walk with the Lord.

The Flock Group Ministry is also a complimentary ministry in that it does not replace already existing structures, but adds another dimension to the way people within the flock of College Park Church can “stir one another up” as the “priesthood of believers.”

It is also viewed as a means whereby we can disciple one another as we build each other up in the faith and share the good news with others in our daily walk.

The Flock Group Ministry is now an integrated part of the pulpit ministry of College Park Church whereby we, like the early church of Acts 2:42-47, meet together corporately for public worship and privately in each other's homes during the week.

As an extension of the ministry of College Park Church we are actively involved in accomplishing the mission of our church which is, **“to glorify God by making disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.”** The process by which we are encouraged to accomplish our mission as a church involves teaching, worship, fellowship, evangelism and compassion. To learn more about our mission as a body of believers at College Park Church, visit our website at <http://www.yourchurch.com>.

Our Mission

As a Flock Group Ministry, our mission is, ***to glorify God by building disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, employing...***

Teaching...facilitating application of our pastors' preaching of God's word,

Fellowship...building community with love and devotion to one another in Christ,

Prayer...joining together in adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and

Outreach...sharing our faith in Jesus and serving others through word and deed,

...in a small home-based flock group setting.

The four areas of teaching, fellowship, prayer and outreach are the four pillars around which we encourage our small flock group leaders to structure their time together with their small flock groups.

Our vision for the meeting time of the small flock groups is that they will make an intentional effort to stimulate one another to love and good works through facilitated discussions of the sermons and Bible preaching at College Park Church with the primary focus on how to apply what we learn to our everyday lives. As part of a balanced (four pillar) approach we further encourage small flock groups to multiply the gifts and effectiveness of the saints of College Park Church through personal prayer, community building, and reaching out to our body and the communities in which we live.

Our Goals

Our overall goal is that the small flock groups will encourage intentional discipleship, evangelism, and multiplication of flock groups in order to meet the growing needs of the larger flock that has been led by the Holy Spirit into our fellowship at College Park Church.

Our general goals for the Flock Group Ministry are...

A. To grow in Christ.

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:11-16

B. To build community.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day 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. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47

C. To make disciples.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

D. To support the pulpit ministry.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

Our specific goals for the ministry are...

A. To pray for one another...knowing the heart of others.

B. To stir one another up...through application discussion of Sunday's Sermon.

C. To encourage one another...share Christ with others in word and deed.

D. To equip the saints...for reaching the world for Christ.

Small Flock Group Distinctives

There are a number of distinctive characteristics that set apart the “**small flock groups**” that meet under the umbrella of the Flock Group Ministry from other types of groups:

A. Sense of community and connectedness.

This sense of community and connectedness comes from the fact that,

"Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ"
1 John 1:3b,

And, this close fellowship...

1. Provides an environment that fosters transparency,
2. Equips participants and provides a way for intentional "one anothering" to take place, and
3. Encourages in-depth personal involvement and spiritual accountability.

B. Frequency and continuity of meetings.

The small flock groups are committed to...

1. Meet at least every other week,
2. Meet for specified length of period of time, and are ongoing, and
3. Meet to facilitate spiritual growth through purposeful structure.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

C. Not focused as much on teaching but actual application of what has been taught.

Although there is teaching involved, it comes in the form of a facilitated discussion of the pastors' teachings and personal application in the lives of the participants.

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. Proverbs 20:5

D. Participation by all members.

The small flock group leaders encourage participation of all members, knowing that everyone has something to contribute for...

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Romans 15:14

As the group interacts with each other, they are encouraged to...

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

Through this process, there is a sense of progressive sanctification as they open up and interact with each other...as "iron sharpens iron."

E. Not focused on numerical growth but multiplication of mature disciples.

The size of the groups are generally held within the range of 10-14 members, in order to allow air time for everyone to participate and become involved in the process. The larger the group, the less "air time" is available, so in this sense, small is better.

Providing this quality time together is what draws people into the process of being known, knowing God, and becoming like Christ which makes it such an integral part of CPC culture.

These are not groups unto themselves however. Small flock group leaders are encouraged to apprentice those within their group that have leadership potential, so that at some point a new group might be formed.

In this way the small flock group process can expand throughout the congregation to include all those who want to become connected with one another and be personally encouraged in their walk with the Lord.

This process is very important as the Lord adds to our numbers those who hunger and thirst for a way to become connected with one another.

F. Home-based.

As in the early church when the believers met together in each others' homes, as well as corporately in the temple, members of the flock are encouraged to meet together in each others' homes.

"Every day 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. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47

In the intimate setting of a small flock group meeting within the home, people become transparent with one another and encourage one another in the faith.

Meeting in the home also provides a forum for practicing hospitality and helping the whole family of God develop in their faith. Some small flock groups even include the children of each family in their meetings, or at least a portion of their meeting...for example, during worship and singing. Each group, however, is responsible for providing their own arrangements for inclusion of children and/or arrangements for child care.

G. Diversity of group members.

As groups are formed by the leading of the Holy Spirit, the membership of the groups are generally quite diverse in age, stage in life, personal needs, etc. They are generally formed based on geographic proximity and are drawn from all walks of life, as the Holy Spirit leads. It is truly an exciting process to see how the Lord leads in forming the groups.