

Small groups provide a setting where people can learn more about Jesus, meet each other's needs and reach out to the community.

There was a time when a natural network of relationships gave people good support and kept alive a strong experience of community.

This is no longer the case. The last four decades have seen drastic changes. Natural supportive structures have broken down, extended families have become fragmented, leaving people lonely, isolated and independent. Frequent job changes, cross-country moves, two-career marriages and growing numbers of single adults all contribute to loneliness.

Church members are to care for the needs of one another - bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2), teach and admonish each other (Col. 3:16,17), encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11), confess and pray together (James 5:16) and love each other (1 John 3:22,23; 4:4,11) and forgive (Eph. 2:2,32).

Small Group Leader

How to plan

Develop a tentative purpose and plan before the first meeting. Some questions to answer include: What is the purpose of this group? What will be accomplished through this small group experience? What elements should be included in each meeting: prayer, sharing, Bible study, outreach plans, worship? How long will it continue to meet?

You can recruit members in a number of ways. You may invite people to join you through personal conversations, advertising in the church bulletin, announcements in the worship service, at Sabbath School classes and letters inviting new members to join. Don't forget about the interest that others may have in the topic of your group.

More ideas

Then invite members to help shape the group's direction.

- Plan an additional activity or event such as a picnic or missionary project.
- Target a specific community need and expand your group through evangelism. Topics for discussion are unlimited and can vary from family life through to Bible study. Can you advertise your group in the public media? Always consider how you can be sensitive to the needs of new members.

For resources and information on training, log into the members site at sspm.adventistconnect.org or contact your local conference personal ministries director.



THE MINISTRY OF THE Small Group Leader

Have you been asked to serve your local church as a small group leader? Or perhaps you serve on a church nominating committee and wonder what a small group leader is expected to do. This guide has been designed to help you understand the role of a small group within your local church.

sspm.adventistconnect.org

The Role of the Small Group Leader

Experience has demonstrated that the small group is one of the best vehicles for the church to become what God intends it to be - a people sharing Christ, meeting each other's needs and reaching out in love to the world.

The Small Group Leader's responsibilities:

- approach individuals and families who may like to be part of the group (small groups are voluntary and the church does not assign groupings)
- establish a meeting place and time and ensure that members are aware of any time changes
- identify a study/ discussion focus and direction for the group
- learn about needs and concerns of group members (a phone call)
- provide opportunities for everyone to express their thoughts or feelings with an aim to stay on the topic
- set up the room to be inclusive by placing chairs in a circle
- provide extra Bibles and resources
- check room temperature and plan for the needs of children
- begin the meetings with a creative question that creates discussion
- keep things simple and try not to attempt too much at once

Becoming a Small Group Leader

Small groups are self initiated and flexible. A small group can be established by any member who is passionate about nurturing and building stronger networks within the church community.

Responsible to

Cooperate with the pastor.

Time Commitment

- Starting a group may take a fair amount of time on the leader's part. However, this is short-lived. Once the group is rolling, it is surprising how little time it takes. You will need to set aside about an hour a week in addition to the meetings.
- If you get involved in the individual crisis of a group member, that can take extra time.



Term of Office

A small group is ongoing and is not dependent on election.

Skills and Spiritual Gifts

God has gifted each of us in different ways. The small group leader's commitment to Christ should be obvious, he or she needs the attitude of servant: a willingness to care for, be available to and serve the group members.

- **Teaching:** It is the capacity to communicate the love of Jesus in a practical, meaningful way.
- **Administration:** The ability to organize and manage, working with and through others to achieve goals. This will be helpful in getting a group started, promoting it and organizing the preparations for each meeting.
- **Encouragement or "exhortation":** The gift of supporting people in times of need and helping them maintain their Christian commitment through comfort and instruction from the Bible.
- **Hospitality:** The capacity to provide "open house" and graciousness to those in need of food, lodging or fellowship so that guests are refreshed physically and spiritually.
- **Shepherding or pastoring:** The ability to share guidance, food and protection for a group of believers in Christ.



Small Group Leader