

# BETHESDA SMALL GROUP OVERVIEW



RELATIONAL and TRANSFORMATIONAL



*Bethesda*  
PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

Small  
Groups 



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# Introduction

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The Small Group ministry is a long standing and pivotal part of congregational life at Bethesda, sometimes referred to as “the DNA” of our church. It is identified as the foremost way of bringing people into community and facilitating spiritual formation.

## **Biblical Support**

Scripture contains numerous references to the interactions followers of Christ have with each other. Living our lives in isolation is not what God intended for us. There are over fifty specific “one another” verses that flesh out what doing life together looks like: love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, etc. And Jesus himself gathered a Small Group of twelve people around him. It was that Small Group of people that he mentored and encouraged.

# Message from the Lead Pastor

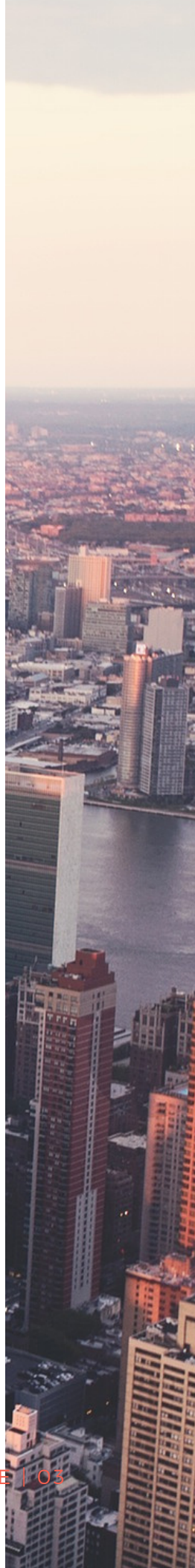


**Bruce Newman**

"At the heart of every person is the desire to have meaningful connection with people unlike ourselves. Our differences are what set us apart from each other yet they make us alike.

In many ways, differences were the driving force of the early church in Acts Chapter 4 and 5. They had just experienced an overwhelming call to be the church and they were now living it out in their context; a gravitational pull to be together with "one another." This pull drew them both inward and outward at the same time. The more they cared for one another the more they "added to their numbers daily." Even though they were from different walks of life they had a common denominator and that was their love for Jesus that manifested in caring for those they knew and those that weren't yet a part of that community. As they shared community together, a peculiar thing happened; "No one went without." Their drive inward to community compelled them unselfishly outward.

This is what is at the heart of building community at Bethesda. It connects people relationally because it builds a community that involves an individual in the lives of others. When relationships are formed through caring people gathered around the Bible, we create a recipe for transformation. I encourage you to take the next step to either join a group or step into creating these kinds of environments as you facilitate or host a group."



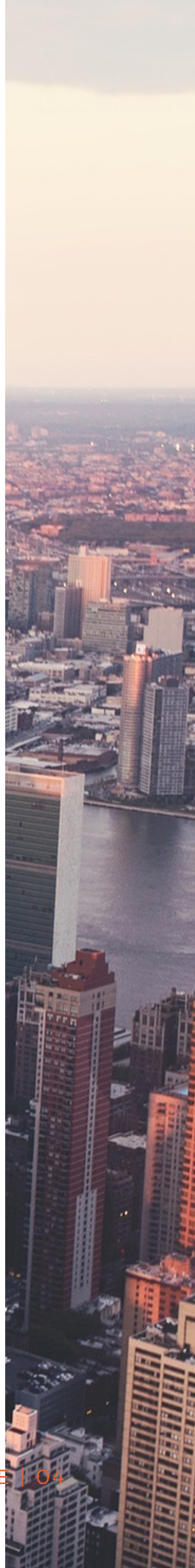
# Message from the Connections Pastor



**Rob Lodge**

“Front and centre at Bethesda is our Mission (Bethesda exists...to turn those far from God into fully devoted followers of Christ) and Vision (Passionately Engaged, Growing in Christ and Impacting the World). Bethesda’s Small Group ministry plays a key part in seeing both come to fruition. As we, together, become engaged in intentionally growing deeper in our faith, we fulfil both the Great Commandment (Loving God and Loving Each Other), and the Great Commission (Making Disciples).

If you are not in a Small Group, I would encourage you to join one. If you are already in a Small Group, I encourage you to either help facilitate/host, or launch a group of your own. By doing so, you will make an eternal impact in the lives of others, and in your own life as well.”





# Message from the Small Group Director

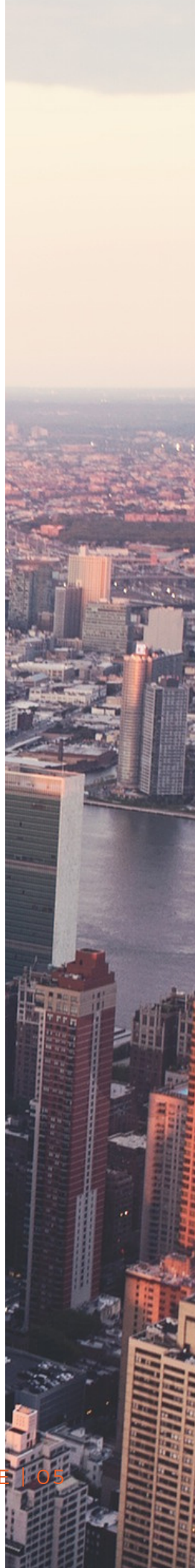


**Ralph Cann**

Here we are starting a new Small Group season. We trust this year is one of continued growth and renewal.

Let's remember that what we do in our Small Group ministry really matters as we move forward. Doing this well can mean that we'll be creating spaces where people can pursue God in the company of others. We hope this document provides a good overview of what our Small Group ministry is about and how we are structured, how we function and what we consider to be important.

If you have any questions, I'd be honoured to try and find answers for you. Feel free to contact me at [ralphcann@gmail.com](mailto:ralphcann@gmail.com)



# Definition of Roles:

**Small Group Director:** The person who provides leadership to the Small Group Lead Team (SGLT). He or she communicates with the Connections Pastor as vision and strategy are developed and executed.

**Small Group Lead Team:** A group of individuals who oversee the Small Group ministry and are answerable to the Connections Pastor.

**Small Group Leader:** The person responsible for individual Small Groups. This person ensures that the Small Group is operating smoothly, and they remain in contact with the Small Group Lead Team. This person is accountable to the church leadership.

## Leaders of Small Groups: (2 types)

**A) H.O.S.T leader:** When launches or other opportunities arise for individuals to take risks in starting a Small Group they can be encouraged to do so.

This leader may serve in this role for a short period of a few weeks. Resources such as notes from a Sermon Based Small Group series or other approved video-based material can be provided. If, after the end of the series, this person feels like they wish to continue then they could proceed to becoming a regular Small Group leader.

**H.** They have a **h**eat for people.

**O.** They **o**pen their home or arrange to meet in a suitable location.

**S.** They arrange for some **s**nacks to be served.

**T.** They can **t**urn on the video resource.

**B) Regular Leader:** This level would indicate that the leader has understood what the expectations and qualifications of a Small Group leader are and has signed a ministry covenant or has become a member of Bethesda. They may have spent time as H. O. S. T. leader, or they may be deemed ready to assume this level of leadership.

**Facilitator:** A person who may be facilitating the discussion during any gathering. This person does not have to be considered the leader of the group.

# Purpose: What is our goal?

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Our goal is to continually expand the number of Small Groups and to make it easy for newcomers to find their way to a caring Biblical community. We intend to continually invest in leadership as we strive to accomplish this goal.

Small Groups should be...

**1) Relational:** group members get to know each other and develop soul nourishing relationships. Caring for each other in holistic ways is foundational.

**2) Transformational:** as people interact with each other, and with scripture, over time they are transformed to become more like Christ in character..



# Process:

## How do we achieve our goal?

### 1) A Leader's Guide to Forming a Small Group

#### a) Format of Small Group Gathering:

Small Groups should always be rooted in our goal that our groups are being both **relational** and **transformational**.

Many groups begin with 15 minutes of small talk and coffee as members arrive, followed by an hour of discussion on the current topic. After a time of sharing prayer needs and actual prayer time, participants could have time for casual conversation over snacks.

Groups are encouraged to consider relationship building activities that take place outside of regular meeting time. Finding ways of serving others can be a great bonding activity.

#### b) Size of Small Groups:

There is no hard and fast rule for the number of people in a Small Group. Some groups could be made up of as few as three people. Many would argue that around twelve is an ideal size. Once a group gets too large group members can go unnoticed, can't get airtime, and the discussion dynamic is impacted. Some homes and apartments have size limitations that impact the number of comfortable seating spaces. However, some homes have space or a group to subdivide. This enables two or more discussion groups to operate at the same time.

#### c) Location

- House or apartment
- Room in the Church
- Coffee shop
- Office Space
- College or University Campus
- Other

## d) Type

We are not locked into a rigid list or template of group types. Meeting the criteria of being relational and transformational is what is key. Short term groups may last for five or six sessions. Other groups have existed for several years, where the members have developed significant lifelong relationships. We intend to have an increasing diversity of Small Group types.

### Possible considerations

- Geographic area
- Demographic similarities
- Topic based or book of the Bible
- Long term/short term
- Sermon-based
- New believer

## 2) A Facilitator's Guide to Leading the First Meeting

The first meeting should be a time of getting to know one another, as well as discussing and agreeing on logistics of the meeting.

Some things to cover would include;

- Introductions
- How long the group will stay together before re-evaluating
- How often the group will meet; where & when
- Agreement to inform the host or leader regarding attendance of each meeting
- Basic ground-rules such as mutual respect, confidentiality, and freedom to share diverse ideas without judgement
- Resource options
- Discuss childcare arrangements, if needed
- Take time to share what brought you to the group and how you hope God will continue to shape you through the group

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Have some fun as well! An ice-breaker can be a good way to melt people's defenses and create camaraderie (adapted from Calvary Community Church Small Group New Leader Guide by Carolyn Taketa).

### **3) Support Available for Small Group Leaders, Facilitators, and Hosts**

#### **a) Training:**

The SGLT will invest significantly in practical learning and celebrating opportunities for Small Group leaders. Our methods and venues change over time. Online access to video clips, podcast episodes and articles is being developed. Participation in these is expected for all leaders. Other options could include in person events. For example:

- One in the fall which could be an "in-house" event
- Another in the spring when Small Group leaders from other congregations are invited

These events are considered critical. Attendance facilitates alignment with core values as well as providing time for story sharing and celebration.

#### **b) Coaching:**

A more personalized way for the SGLT to invest in the development of Small Group leaders is via coaching. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- One on one over coffee
- Gatherings of a few at a chosen venue
- Phone calls, texts and emails that follow up after a leader views an online training session or especially during the launching of new groups

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#### **4) Promotion of Small Groups**

The most critical and effective way of promoting Small Groups is likely a personal invitation from existing group members who are eager to share their experience.

Other means of promotion can include:

- Online bulletin
- Pulpit announcements
- Ministry fairs
- Website
- Video clips
- Promotional services
- Church events
- Kiosk in the foyer
- Launching events
- Word of mouth
- Social media
- Etc.

#### **5) On and off ramps (how to join Small Groups)**

A concerted effort will be made to create easy on ramps for people to try out either attending or leading a Small Group.

At certain times in the church calendar a challenge can be thrown out to potential leaders to gather friends, coworkers and acquaintances and discuss a short series of sermons or some other prepared resource. If the leader discovers that they'd like to continue after the series ends, they can be encouraged to formalise their position as a Small Group leader.

# Product:

## How do we measure our success?

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### Our Metrics:

We believe that “what gets measured gets valued.” Leaders of each group are required to use **Planning Center** to keep attendance records. The following is a list of some other examples of what could be measured.

They include the number of;

- People attending each meeting
- Leaders
- Small Groups starting after a launch
- Roles delegated in a group (i.e. Discussion facilitator, etc.)
- Leaders participating in training events
- Groups accommodating children
- “Getting out to serve others” activities (i.e. Supper Bowl, etc.)



# Small Group Lead Team (SGLT)



**Ralph Cann**



**Rob Lodge**



**Emmanuel Mintal**



**Shirley Swamidas**



# Gallery





# Gallery





# Gallery



*you  
Belong  
here*



# Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions:

## For those interested in being in a Small Group

### **Q1. What is our church-wide vision for Small Groups?**

Simply put, our vision is to continually create more safe spaces where people can grow in their relationship with God and where they can find soul-nourishing relationships with others.

### **Q2. Where do Small Groups meet?**

Locations can include homes, coffee shops, space available at the church, or any other space that allows for good conversation.

### **Q3. Do I have to be a “believer” to attend?**

Definitely not. Many in the group will be but we want to create safe spaces where people can explore issues of faith whatever their starting point is.

### **Q4. How often do groups meet?**

Some groups meet weekly but many meet every second week. Each group determines the time, place and frequency.

### **Q5. Can I bring my children?**

This depends on the group. Some accommodate children, others cannot.

### **Q6. Is there “homework”?**

This depends in part on how much you'd like to invest. The more you can reflect on the content between gatherings the more you'll get out of your small group experience. How much homework may also depend on the resource a group is using. We encourage you to attend even if you can't do this. We also place a high value on “just being together” and caring for each other.



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### **Q7. Will the small group meetings be like listening to a lecture?**

We strongly suggest that there be lots of conversation. People learn more when they are engaged in discussion.

### **Q8. Do people in the group meet outside of the Small Group meeting?**

This is really encouraged. Some do potlucks. Others do game nights, hikes etc. It's up to the creativity and mobility level of each group.

### **Q9. Can I try different groups before I settle into one?**

Yes. You are perfectly free to try out different ones until you find one that 'fits'.

### **Q10. Will I be asked to read something or to pray out loud?**

We encourage leaders not to ask people to do either of these things unless they have gotten your permission privately in advance.

## **For those interested in leading a group**

### **Q1. How do I find people for my Small Group?**

The best way is to tap into your social network and invite them. Also, you can make known that there is space in your group for new members. Often there are people inquiring about what groups have room for others. We also have special launches where there is a special emphasis on encouraging more people to get into groups.

### **Q2. Can we choose any resource we want in our small group?**

This is an important question. We have a growing list of resources that are "approved". If you have a resource that you'd like to use, please contact the director to see if it could be added to the list.

### **Q3. Do leaders receive training?**

Yes. We are quite intentional about this. Some of it has been occurring in gatherings of all Small Group leaders. Sometimes we meet with leaders from other congregations in the Metro area and beyond. We also have on-demand tailored online training where each leader will be expected to participate. Some of the content will be purchased and some will be created "in house".

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**Q4. Can I and other members of our Small Group invite our friends who are not Christians to our Small Group meetings?**

Absolutely. That is a fantastic idea.

**Q5. Can I and other members of our Small Group invite our friends who attend another Church to our Small Group meetings?**

Good question. The important issue is that we don't try to lure people away from the churches that they are already a part of. That being said, we already have some groups where members come from different congregations around the city. And that is fine with the Lead Team.

**Q6. Who do we go to for answers when there is a Biblical or Theological question that none of us can answer?**

The Small Group Director may be able to direct you to suitable and sound resources that can help you wrestle with challenging issues. The Pastoral Staff may be available to help as well.

**Q7. Is there a suggested "quorum" for our Small Group meetings to proceed?**

Don't wait until you have a full slate of members before you go ahead with a meeting. Otherwise, you'd rarely be able to meet. There is value in even two or three being together. But having at least 6 - 8 people helps with creating a great dynamic for conversation and community building.

**Q8. Who should I talk to for guidance when I need help leading my group or if there is a problem within the group?**

Contact the Small Group director, Pastor Rob or a Lead Team member. He or she will help or will direct you to someone who can discuss the issue with you. We certainly don't want any leader to feel that they are left alone to deal with difficult situations. Ongoing training will also provide you with some grounding in leading your group. There are numerous resources available like podcasts that can be of great assistance, as well.

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**Q9. Can we organise and engage in fun activities within our Small Group as a way to build relationships?**

Absolutely. That is definitely encouraged. It is a tremendous way to build community and strengthen relationships in your group.

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# Appendix 2: Resources

Leaders should inform the Small Group Lead Team of their choice of a resource to keep our data updated. The choice should be made from a bank of approved resources. The approved list can be expanded over time.

## Contact info:

If you have any questions regarding small groups, please contact:

**Ralph Cann**

e-mail: [ralphcann@gmail.com](mailto:ralphcann@gmail.com)

# Appendix 3: Expectations and Qualifications

## What's expected from a Small Group Leader at Bethesda:

(Adapted from Calvary Community Church Small Group Leader Handbook by Carolyn Taketa)

### a) Qualifications

- Have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and regularly attend services at Bethesda
- Commit to Bethesda by becoming a member or by signing a ministry covenant. (please contact the Church office for a copy)
- Pursue spiritual growth by engaging regularly in times of prayer, Scripture readings, financial generosity, and other spiritual disciplines
- Commit to leading a group for approx. 8 weeks with the likely option to continue
- Buy into the two big rocks of Bethesda's small group ministry. (Each group should be transformational and relational)
- Be teachable, faithful and humble

### b) Expectations

- Participate in training and celebration events (online or in person)
- Facilitate meetings
- Pray for your small group members
- Ensure that someone is prepared to lead the small group discussion. It is beneficial to share the task of discussion facilitation with others in your group.
- Maintain an environment of trust, honesty, and support
- Create community
- Use email, texts, phone calls, etc. to connect with your small group
- Maintain an open conversation with the SGLT
- Celebrate together with meals and social activities
- Shepherd and disciple others
- Delegate and share responsibilities among your small group members
- Consider involving your group in at least one service project each year
- Encourage your members to grow in relationship with Jesus and each other
- Identify and mentor potential new small group leaders within your group
- Discern together next steps of growth and work together with your small group members to move forward

I agree to the above qualifications and expectations.

Name and Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_





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