

COMMUNITY

POPLAR CREEK CHURCH

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Journeying with others into a viable
and thriving relationship with Jesus Christ

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Community Groups are small groups of five to ten individuals that gather weekly (or bi-weekly) in someone's home for fellowship, Bible study, discussion, and prayer. They are for teens and adults of all ages, stages of life, and spiritual maturity.

Community Groups are also a group of people who live life together for the purpose of edifying one another and giving glory to God. It is a group of people journeying together and bearing burdens, who care for one another and who own the mission to see more people glorify God.

It's important to note that a Community Group is not an event. It is a lifestyle

of transparency; shared lives with Gospel intentionality. We as a church benefit greatly from the consistency and accountability of these regular small groups and, even if you're new, we strongly encourage you to find community in one of these powerful groups!

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Community groups exist to develop honest, transparent, and challenging relationships with God and each other, in an environment where difficult questions can be asked and accountability can be forged through a desire to see the Gospel proclaimed.

The purpose of these groups is to further cultivate a Christ-centered community for Poplar Creek Church where the vision, values, and goals of our church are lived out in a way Sunday mornings alone cannot accomplish.

Connecting - Facilitating a time of connection with one another

Introducing - Introducing the Scripture in a way that is helpful for both new and returning individuals

Interpreting - Digging deep to work through thoughts and questions

Applying - Challenging one another in tangible and realistic ways

Supporting - Building authentic community in the group, one that supports each other

Threshold (new believers/members)

Threshold is a 4-week “get to know us” small group where we discuss “Why we do, what we do, the way we do it.” These groups are comprised of men and women of all ages and stages of life (single, married, divorced, and widowed) and provide a basic understanding of our systems, strategies, and background as a community.

Elements of a Community Group

This section defines and explains certain elements that are a part of our Community Group rhythm. Our goal is to see unique expressions of community that *encompass* these elements, versus letting the elements *dictate* what community looks like.

A key element in our Community Groups is study of Scripture. The Bible is the revelation of God and is therefore authoritative in our lives. It should be the place we go to answer questions about our lives. It should not be something we merely study but something we live by.



BIBLE STUDY

A key element in our Community Groups is the study of Scripture. The Bible is the revelation of God and is therefore authoritative in our lives. We believe it should be the place we go to answer questions about our lives. It should not be something we merely study but something we *live* by.

In our Community Groups we want to be in the Word consistently. Community Groups are more than Bible studies - the Scriptures are central to our life together. We are not fully a biblical community until we apply what we read in Scripture.

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Therefore, you should have time for Bible study within the rhythm of our groups. During that time everyone is **strongly encouraged** to follow the text from Sunday services. The purpose for this is to encourage unity and connection with other groups and unify ministries within Poplar Creek so that our community is learning together.

Discussion questions are provided for the text covered on Sunday. They are written to encourage each group to engage in the text (not simply the sermon), as we desire each group to test and explore the Scriptures on their own in response to what they have heard.

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As the image bearers of God in community, we ought to live lives of worship. As a community we should encourage one another toward a lifestyle worship, both in Spirit and in Truth – not just on Sunday mornings. You can practice this in community in many ways but here are a few examples:

- Worship together on Sunday
- Lift praises to God throughout the week
- Pray through the Psalms or other Scripture
- Write a poem/psalm in exaltation of Jesus
- Gather to sing worship songs
- Eat a great meal and praise God
- Gather for Thanksgiving in June
- Clean someone's yard for the glory of God

This is the place where we get out and bless our local community. It is an opportunity to partner with your neighbors toward a common cause and gives us the chance to develop relationship with your neighborhood. It is an opportunity to reflect the grace and love of Jesus to our neighbors. We encourage group members (not just leaders) to check schools, community centers, neighborhood newsletters and websites for ideas on where your group can serve. Service includes serving the body, so groups are encouraged to check with the Ministry Directors for needs within the Poplar Creek community that their group can fill as well.

It is absolutely vital that each group is putting physicality to the truths of the Gospel, being **doers** of the Word – not just simply **hearers**.

— James 1:22

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Mission is the engagement with the surrounding neighborhood for the glory of Jesus and the advancement of the kingdom of God. This is the outward focus of our groups to love people and share the truth of the gospel through the witness of our life together. This should be a consistent focus of our communities in prayer and action.

Each Community Group is encouraged to develop a **concise** mission that aligns with that of Poplar Creek and God's Word. Write it out, frame it, make t-shirts – get creative!

The Holy Spirit is in the business of elevating Jesus and that is the purpose of our Community Groups. Therefore it stands to reason that we should be exercising gifts of the Spirit in community and seeing the fruits of the Spirit as well. As the church is described as a body with all the parts important to the function of the body, so a community of believers should be using their gifts for the glorification of Jesus.

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Every Community Group member should put together a plan for personal growth in Christ over the next year. Leaders should be aware of growth areas for their members. We passionately believe that every mature believer should have both a “Timothy” and a “Paul” – a mentor and a mentee – who are deeply invested in this growth.

This is a plan to be worked out and owned by each specific group. The purpose is to keep our groups focused on the mission and call of God on your specific Community Group. This plan should reflect their **planned involvement** in the neighborhood around them. Every Community Group should **start** with building a Group Plan.

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NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

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This plan is to help each group in a neighborhood strategize on how we are going to reach this portion of the city. The plan will be developed by the leaders along with their specific Community Group. This plan should be consulted frequently to chart progress and rejoice in what God is doing.

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Much has been written on this subject but the idea is simply this: In our culture today, **many people want to belong to a community before they actually commit to belief in their values.** People often want to see if the values you profess are actually lived out in your life. They want to participate and may even be willing to further your cause before committing to belief.

This helps form the way we think about Community Groups. Our groups need to think strategically about providing opportunities for engagement in the culture and the ability to invite non-believers into their community in accessible but authentic ways.

This is the place where you enjoy one another and can more easily invite new people to experience your community. Characteristics of hospitality include food, fun, and conversation. The point is to build relationships, so enjoy yourselves!

Prayer is a gift of God's grace to us. It is an opportunity to communicate with the Creator of the universe. We have the ability to converse with God, praising Him, confessing our sin, asking for His provision, and listening for His response. Our Community Groups should be consistently seasoned with prayer – developing a culture that understands that it is more important to pray than simply talk about prayer.

Some possible examples of prayer rhythms in your groups are (this list is not exhaustive):

- Pray as a large group (directed, specific prayers for neighborhood, the sick, the mission, etc.)
- Pray in smaller groups (break out by gender)
- Pray in groups of two (specific prayers for each other)
- Popcorn Prayer (no pre-discussion, pray as you feel led)
- Korean Style Prayer (everyone praying for the same thing at the same time)
- Pray through Psalms or other Scripture
- Meditate on Scripture.

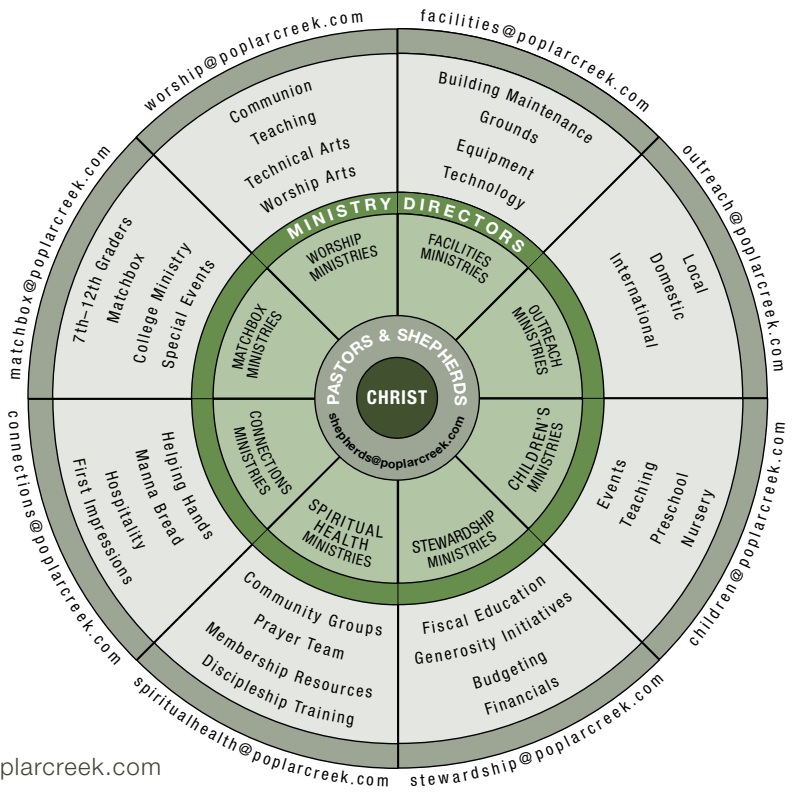
As with prayer we are looking for a culture of confession and repentance as a response to the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. If we are to see transformation in our Community Groups, we need to see conviction worked out in repentance. As a community we cannot dismiss sin, but must lovingly repair beliefs, thoughts, and behavior that is not honoring to God. **The purpose must always be reconciliation not conformity.** Therefore, the group's goal in this area should be to point to Jesus, the cross and the resurrection, as the only remedy for sin and look to the Holy Spirit for the ability to walk in righteousness. We are looking for heart change not merely behavior modification.

One of the key elements of a Community Group is replication. It allows room for new people to join and see lives transformed by the gospel. As these groups continue to grow and replicate, we make steps towards our goal to transform our cities.

Replication is an opportunity to plant another community in your neighborhood and provide another outpost for the gospel.

Every group should **strive** to plant more communities and saturate their neighborhood with the Gospel of Jesus. Our goal is to see more and more lives transformed by Jesus - not simply to gather in a “holy huddle” together. Every group should have an apprentice leader being groomed to eventually plant a new group. Once a group reaches regular participation of about 12 or more, it’s encouraged to replicate.

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