



Starting a Small Group

Why Small Groups?

Connecting with a small group of friends about faith matters is an amazing way to really immerse yourself in your faith with the personal attention, encouragement, prayerful support, and accountability you need to sustain you on your faith journey. Allow God to break into your life and enter into your heart in this new & exciting way!

“Small groups aren't just beneficial, they're biblical. From Moses (Exodus 18:13-26), to the Apostles (Acts 2:42), meeting together in small groups encourages us in the faith (Hebrews 10:25).”

Starting a Small Group is Simple

As Small Group coach Chris Stefanik says about starting your own group...*“Be stubbornly simple. Nothing kills an initiative like complexity”*. With this in mind, here are some tips to help you along...

- Start by choosing a day and time that your group will meet, usually every 2 weeks (some meet weekly) as long as it's always the same day & time. At the moment, groups are meeting on Zoom (refer to [Hosting a Small Group](#) document) but once the restrictions are lifted groups should, if possible, meet in person usually at the host's home but you can also rotate to each other's homes. There will be more on this further down in this document.
- Next, personally invite a couple of friends to join your group. We can also help with finding new group members, there are always parishioners looking to join new groups!
- Read this and the other resources in the 'Resources' section located at the bottom of the Small Group webpage.
- Complete the online Small Group Inquiry form, we will contact you to discuss the next steps.

Keep it simple. We will provide the material you need, which will include resources that may be video programs which not only support the faith growth of the group, but which also stimulate great conversations along with discussion questions and or reflection points to start the conversation. But don't forget the incredibly powerful way friends have always helped one another grow in the faith by simply asking: “How ARE you?” and “How is your prayer/spiritual life going?” And then, really listening!

With just a few people you can start a group. You don't need training and there are no formal requirements - just a spirit for generosity, and a heart for others.

Fears Around Starting, Hosting or Joining a Small Group

- I don't have the right gifts... > share the responsibilities, talk to a few friends and work together to share the load.
- What if no one says yes?... > Keep asking, they might be overwhelmed with life. Ask if there is something you can do to make life easier.
- I don't know how to manage conversations... > You don't need to! Who wants a "managed" conversation anyway? God desires us to be real with one another: He'll equip you...if you let Him.
- I don't know enough... > Who does? It's OK not to know. Your role isn't to provide answers, to educate, or even to furnish information...answers to questions can always be looked up. While no question is off-limits, your role is better understood as someone who wants to help facilitate faith-filled conversations. Trust God enough to let Him guide the conversation.
- My house isn't clean enough... > neither are the homes of your friends, believe me.
- I don't live like others in my parish... > People didn't all live the same in the early Church. When we love each other, we don't judge each other by the size or style of our homes. St. Paul tells us that he learned the secret of being hungry and well-fed. We too can learn to live according to our circumstances with humility (Phil 4:12)!

A Note on the Importance of Small Group Relationships

We don't think we can say it better than Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas did in their book *Activate*:

Most of the people...are looking for social relationships. They want to meet casual friends. They are looking for some people to hang out with, because they know instinctively that within that group of people they're likely to meet someone they want to get personal with and invite into their inner circle. Then, from that inner circle, they can decide who they want to be in intimate relationship with. Instead of being forced into contrived familiarity, they just want to be given an opportunity to connect with new people so that deeper relationships can develop naturally.

Allow casual friendships to develop without feeling a need to force intimacy. Most parish leaders have made two critical mistakes in trying to help people connect. First, we have undersold the importance of basic friendships and social relationships to overall spiritual health. Second, we have oversold the importance of personal and intimate relationships—and we have tried to force our small group members into such relationships, even though groups are naturally structured to accommodate social, not personal or intimate, connections. People simply do not get personal or intimate in groups of eight to fifteen people. They socialize in groups of eight to fifteen people. When we try to force more intimate relationships in our groups, we scare and alienate many potential group members, especially men. No man is going to sign up for a group if he thinks he is going to have to let people he doesn't know that well into his personal business. But men (and women) will sign up for groups where they can meet new friends, connect with God, and hang out socially.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Small Group Coordinator Kim should you have any questions or concerns at: holyfamily.kim@gmail.com

Please visit holyfamilywhitby.ca/online-small-groups/

Read: [Hosting a Small Group](#) Document