

Overview

The intent of this “Ministry Handbook” is to provide an overview of what we’re trying to do with the Small Group ministry at Bridgeway Christian Church – our vision, purpose, goals, expectations for leaders, etc. This is a living document that will change as we grow and learn. Your input is welcome!

Our Vision

The Small Group Ministry of Bridgeway Christian Church exists to help us experience God’s love and transforming power as we worship Him, learn from His Word and apply it to our lives in intimate small group settings. We want to see Bridgeway become a church where small groups are an essential part of our church identity and a fundamental part of our ministry.

Our Purpose

The purpose of the Small Group ministry at Bridgeway Christian Church is multifaceted:

- **Connecting** – Helping new people get connected to others in the church, and helping us all build deeper relationships with one another.
- **Shepherding** – Increasing our span of care and sphere of influence.
- **Transforming** – Learning and applying God’s truth to our lives.
- **Training** – Discipleship and accountability.
- **Impacting** – Focused on nurturing and equipping so we can, in turn, impact the world around us.

The Goal: *Moving you closer to Christ, so you will become mature and complete in Him...*

Colossians 1:28-29 (NIV) We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect [*complete, mature*] in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Small Group Leader’s Ministry Description

A Small Group Leader’s “Job Description” – the *short* version...

- Teach and facilitate your group.
- Shepherd, love, and care for your people.
- Identify and train a co-leader; mentor them so they can be ready to lead their own groups.
- Own the vision and share the vision to ‘spawn’ new groups so more lives can be impacted.

What a small group leader should do...	During Meetings	Between Meetings
Gather – Invite current or potential members into community	Build intimacy, transparency, and authentic relationships in the group	Build friendships with existing group members and seek to invite new ones
Develop – Take each person the next step in spiritual growth or leadership	Create a place where truth meets life	Shepherd members and develop apprentice leaders
Serve – Complete ministry tasks together	Plan and prepare for strategic serving opportunities	Serve personally outside the group or serve together as a group

From *Building a Church of Small Groups*, p. 136, by Donahue and Robinson.

Expectations of Small Group Leaders

As a leader or co-leader of a small group, you are like the pastor of a small church. People in your group will be looking to you as an example. It is therefore important that we live and conduct ourselves in ways that are honoring to God and encouraging to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Below are some of the basic expectations we have of all group leaders and co-leaders. This list is not exhaustive. It's designed to give a flavor of the type of life and character we would like to see in our leaders.

- Growing spiritual walk
- Faithful attendance at Bridgeway's worship services
- Active member of Bridgeway Christian Church (illustrates your commitment and accountability to the church)
- An example of good stewardship (giving of time, resources, finances, etc.)
- Responsive to church leadership (Pastors, Elders, small group leadership, ministry team leaders)
- Teachable – able to receive instruction, and also being a student of the Bible yourself
- Able to teach and shepherd others, and to genuinely care for those in your group
- Committed to keeping your small group biblically based/focused – God's Word is our final authority

Small Group Leader's Covenant

Below is our Small Group Leader's Covenant. This conveys the type of commitment and character we are looking for in our small group leaders.

Recognizing that my leadership in a small group will impact the spiritual life and development of others, I commit to the following:

1. I agree to regularly set aside time for personal Bible Study and prayer to keep myself spiritually fit.
2. I agree to regularly attend and participate in the weekend worship services of Bridgeway Christian Church.
3. I agree to set an example to others by giving financially to the Lord through Bridgeway Christian Church in a way that is prayerful, sacrificial, and regular.
4. I agree to pray for and support the leadership of Bridgeway Christian Church and to be responsive to their guidance and direction.
5. I agree to be teachable and be willing to learn from everyone.
6. I agree to keep all communication regarding the church and its members above ground and will seek to resolve conflict immediately when it arises.
7. I agree to keep a wide boundary in regard to male/female relationships. I agree not to counsel privately or meet privately with a member of my group of the opposite sex.
8. I agree to avoid sarcasm and put-downs and use only words of encouragement to members of my small group (Eph. 4:29; Proverbs 26:18-19).

Accountability & Support Structure

Below is the accountability and support structure of the small group ministry at Bridgeway Christian Church. This structure will grow as our small group ministry grows and matures.

- **Small group leaders** – Responsible for the shepherding, teaching, nurturing of those in the group, and for training/mentoring the co-leader.
 - **Co-leaders/apprentices** – Each group leader should have a co-leader/apprentice whom they are training. The apprentice would be trained and equipped to either lead the group at some point down the road or to lead another group that is born out of the parent group.
 - **Hosts** – A small group may be hosted by someone other than the group leader. This gives those with the gift of hospitality (who aren't necessarily teachers/group leaders) the chance to use their gifts and their homes for ministry, and it allows the group leader to focus on teaching and shepherding the group and training the apprentice.
- **Ministry Team Leaders** – Responsible for providing guidance over a specific area of ministry, such as Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Family Ministry, etc. If you are leading a small group within a specific ministry area, then the Ministry Team Leader for that ministry should be one of your first go-to people when you have questions or issues.
- **Small Group "Coaches"** (*Future Job Role, not yet implemented at Bridgeway*) – Responsible for providing guidance and encouragement to the small group leaders. Currently the Ministry Team Leaders at Bridgeway function in this capacity; others may be

enlisted to help as the ministry grows. Usually, one coach would oversee 3 to 5 small group leaders. Coaches would visit the small groups on a rotating basis, and would meet one-on-one with the small group leaders once per month to provide feedback, additional training, help answer questions or resolve issues, encourage and pray with the group leaders.

- **Small Group Director** – Oversees, coordinates, and provides a cohesive strategy for the church-wide small group ministry. Promotes small group ministry awareness and involvement to the church as a whole, and provides training, assistance, and encouragement to those in small group ministry leadership. Currently, Pastor Mark serves in this capacity with Kent Hein co-leading.
- **Pastoral Staff & Elders** – Provide additional oversight and guidance and help resolve issues that may potentially impact the larger church body.

Small Group Promotion & Communication

Below are some of the vehicles we will use to get the word out regarding the small group ministry, to let people know what groups we have available, how they can get plugged in, and what God is doing in the groups.

- **Small Group Ministry Web Site**
 - The Small Group section of the Bridgeway web site provides not only the latest list of small groups currently available, but also small group leader information and overview information for those interested in small groups.
 - We want to enhance the site by providing a Small Group Resource Center, with information regarding various small group Bible studies, DVD/Video series, study guides, etc. Besides basic information about the materials, we want to have hands-on reviews written by our small group leaders who have actually used the materials. These reviews can detail the strengths and weaknesses of the material as well as provide pointers and tips for using the material in a small group. Please let Pastor Mark know if you would like to help develop this Resource Center.
- **Small Group Ministry Booklet**
 - This booklet provides overview information on the small group ministry and a listing of key information for all small groups. This brochure is available at the Welcome Center in the church lobby.
 - Produced and maintained by Mark Henkel.
- **Church Bulletin**
 - The bulletin used to have the basic details and contact info listed for each group, but we can no longer provide this level of detail in the bulletin due to size constraints. This means the Small Group Ministry Brochure and web site are the primary means of communicating details about our small groups, so it is essential we keep them up to date.
 - Occasional inserts can be placed in the bulletin to highlight different needs or opportunities with small groups. These should be coordinated through Pastor Mark.
- **Small Group Leader's email newsletter**
 - Periodic email to all small group leaders/co-leaders.
 - Update leaders on the latest Small Group news plans for the future; request updates to the small group information; provide encouragement and training.
- **Small Group Ministry Emphasis Weekend**
 - Occasionally we will have a special sharing time up front in all the church services, about 5 minutes long, to focus on the small group ministry.
 - We can do interviews, have testimonies from small group leaders or participants, or special announcements. The focus is on how God is using small group to impact lives, and to encourage people to get involved.
- **Small Group Ministry Table (in church lobby)**
 - Provide small group brochures and fliers and a sign up sheet to get more information.
 - Staffed by a small group leaders to help answer questions.

IMPORTANT: Keep Us Informed of Changes

As the small group ministry continues to grow at Bridgeway, it is all the more important that we have open lines of communication. As changes in your group occur, you need to inform Pastor Mark (at mark@bridgewaychristian.org) in a timely manner. **Please let him know by the Tuesday of the week before the change occurs**, in order for the small group brochure and web site to be updated in time for the weekend. To help us improve our communication, we will be sending reminders to all group leaders via email. Please respond with any changes or simply say 'No change'.

Please Check Your e-Mail!

Much of the communication we will be doing among the small group leaders is done via email. This assumes you regularly use and check email. Please make a habit of checking your email regularly if you don't already, and respond promptly. If you don't use email, please let us know so we can contact you by phone, or smoke signal, or whatever method works best for you! Thanks!

Comments, Questions, Suggestions, Ideas?

Please contact Mark Henkel (mark@bridgewaychristian.org) with any input or questions you may have regarding the Small Group Ministry at Bridgeway.