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Vision for Groups

Groups are an intentional, authentic community where we go to grow and become like Jesus.

At Northeast, we believe that disciple making happens best when two things come together:

- First, people understand who Jesus is and are equipped with tools that help them follow Him.
- Second, people are surrounded by others from different places in their own journeys who can provide support and push them to become like Jesus.

Acts 2:42,46-47 says,

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.... They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

The early church modeled Christ-centered values that are the cornerstone of Northeast. These values are community, servanthood, and generosity.

1. Community: Intentional gathering with other like-minded Christians.
2. Servanthood: Live our lives connected to God. From the overflow, we unleash the love of Jesus in our everyday lives.
3. Generosity: See every arena of our lives as a mission field.

Vision for Group Leaders

The primary role of the group leader is to know, love, and follow God and help others do the same.

In John 15:5, Jesus says,

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus is Why! We want all our Group Leaders to understand how important their roles are to develop discipleship focused groups.

A healthy Group Leader:

- Walks with and cares for group members.
- Is willing to speak up first in discussion.
- Doesn't have to have all the answers or be a Bible expert.
- Must be willing to ask and answer questions to help the group discover Jesus.
- Is authentic, not perfect.
- Models staying connected to Jesus.
- Encourages the group to be healthy.
- Helps group members move from “spectator” to “Stakeholder”.

Group Leader Values

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Your group is the place where you can express your true thoughts and feelings, and allow others to do the same.

Being authentic is a process that takes time and trust. As the leader, you can model this by creating an environment that fosters trust and allows the time for genuine open relationships.

Characteristics of Authentic Community:

- Group members are fully known and accepted.
- Group Leaders share appropriately, ask good questions, and care about the spiritual growth of their groups
- The leader sets the tone of authenticity, and is willing to “go first” in discussion with vulnerability and honesty.

“You are called into the community of faith; the call was not meant for you alone...” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Growth is movement; any step forward is growth. Growth is visible; it is demonstrated by the fruit in your life.

Group leaders are people who are focused on their own growth and helping others grow.

Galatians 5:22-23 says,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Be aware and celebrate steps like these in your group:

- A member decides to give their life to Jesus and follows him in baptism.
- A member decides to read scripture regularly to hear from God.
- A member prays out loud for the first time.

Any step of growth should be celebrated by you and the rest of your group!

BIBLICAL LITERACY

We always want to be growing in our ability to hear from God, and often He speaks most clearly through His Word.

2 Timothy 3:16 says,

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”

Hebrews 4:12 says,

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”

At Northeast, we accept the Bible as the authoritative, complete Word of God. Not only do we accept it, but we believe it is living and active. When we spend time with God through reading the Bible, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and shows us who God is.

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

You don't have to be a theologian to interpret the Bible. The word *theology* simply means "study of the nature of God." Every person, including you, has thoughts about what God is like. That makes you a theologian!

When we study the Bible in community with fellow believers and with the generations of Christians who came before us, we can understand the character of God more fully.

- The Bible is a document that is thousands of years old, made up of 66 books written by multiple authors.
- Each book of the Bible must be interpreted to understand the author's intended meaning for their original audience. Then, we interpret how to understand and apply its truth for today.
- We believe the Bible should be studied in community to better understand and obey what it teaches.
- We read the Bible *first* to learn about God and his love for us expressed through Jesus.
- We then read the Bible to understand how we were created, and how we should live as a result of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

You don't have to interpret the Bible alone- and you shouldn't! As a Group Leader, you'll be provided with accessible resources to help you lead Bible study for your group.

Group Model

What do Healthy Groups Look Like?

CO-LEADERSHIP

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

The model at Northeast Christian Church is co-leadership when possible.

- Co-leadership takes the pressure off one person or couple.
- Co-leadership models shared responsibility to the group.

GROUP LEADERS ARE FACILITATORS

- Encourage everyone to participate. Leaders should talk less than 20% of the time.
- Guide the discussion. Don't let individuals dominate the conversation. Invite people who aren't sharing.
- Be curious. Don't ask “why” questions. Ask “how” questions.

OPENNESS TO GROWTH

Matthew 4:19 says,

“Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

Set ground rules for inviting new people to the group. Always leave an empty seat.

SHARED OWNERSHIP

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 says,

“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.”

Everyone has something to offer.

- Identify strengths and gifts of your group members.
- Invite everyone to own parts of the group.
- Encourage all members to stretch themselves by leading in different ways.

MULTIPLYING

Growth is the goal of any group.

Matthew 28:18-20 says,

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Spiritual growth, becoming like Jesus, is the main goal. That sometimes means your group will grow in size as well. (Just because your group is staying the same size or even shrinking that does not mean you are not growing spiritually!) As a leader, it is your responsibility to know your group and be aware of how it is growing.

- Remind your group members that we are all here to grow.
- Talk about multiplication as a possibility in the future.
- Talk with the Spiritual Formation Team if you think multiplication may be in your group’s near future.

CURRICULUM OPTIONS

Northeast Resources

Whether you’re established in your spiritual rhythms or you’re just starting out, the Northeast Resource Library will offer you tools that will help you mature into a fully-formed disciple of Jesus.

Each resource is designed to help you grow in faith and obedience to Jesus. We encourage you to select from the provided Northeast Resource options as a primary source of study, and tailor it to fit your group.

Other Study Options:

- Discovery Bible Study
- Sermon Discussion Guides
- RightNow Media
- Book studies

As a group leader it is up to you to pick the right study for your group. The Spiritual Formation Team is always glad to help you explore what the best options may be for your group. We trust your judgement as a leader to decide what is best for your season.

Group Meeting

COMMUNITY, STUDY, SERVICE

Your group may have a great rhythm of regular study. It is also important to find times to just hang out together.

Spending time in community opens up opportunities to connect with the people of your group in a different way. It allows kids, spouses, and significant others to engage in the group in new, fun ways as well.

It is important for you as the Group Leader to make the call on what your group needs to help it grow.

We want to challenge every group to regularly Love the ‘Ville in the home, workplace, city, and church. It is best when your group finds their “sweet spot” for serving.

MEETING FREQUENCY

Northeast Groups meet either weekly or bi-weekly during the term (spring, summer, fall). Having consistent meeting times helps emphasize the group as a priority.

It is important to be flexible as seasons of life change. Your group meeting time may change from season to season. It can be helpful to change up your meeting frequency during summers or holidays, and meet less often. Spending time focusing on community and taking a break from study during the summer can be a good way to break up the routine.

MEETING TIME

It is best to pick a time of day and length for your normal gatherings. Start and end *on time*, so everyone knows what to expect.

Guarding your group time is important. One of the tendencies of groups is for “community time” to continue to grow and push out the study and prayer time. As leaders, you need to make sure you are prioritizing all three. One of the ways you can do that is by creating a schedule in your head to make sure that you allow for all the components of the group. As always be flexible and make changes as needed, but start with a plan!

Example Meeting Schedule for a Study Night

- Spend 15-25 minutes catching up and eating snacks. This can be a time to connect in conversation and relationship, a time of sharing highs and lows.
- Spend 45-60 minutes in study.
- Spend 5-10 minutes of prayer requests and praying.

Group Environment

Every group environment should feel **safe** and **predictable**.

“Safe” means that group members can be open and honest with what is going on in their lives. Everyone should know that what is shared in the group will stay in the group.

- Make confidentiality a priority.
- Respond to each other with focused attention and respect (Don't let side conversations happen).
- Make your group a place of unconditional acceptance.

“Predictable” does not mean boring. It means setting clear expectations early on so people know what to expect. You always want to create an environment that is as distraction free as possible.

- Communicate the start and end time for the group, then stick to it.
- Let everyone know what you will be discussing.

New Leaders

We need your help to identify new leaders.

Often, people are ready to lead but do not have the confidence yet to do it. Give them opportunities in your group to take that step. Let us know of people who may be ready to lead their own group.

Group Leader Resources

Support Team

If you ever encounter a situation that is above what you feel comfortable addressing, we're here to help. See the Group Leader website for a list of contacts for help, or reach out to the Spiritual Formation Team.

Team Contact Information

Richard Mosqueda

Email: richard.mosqueda@necchurch.org

Phone: (502) 212-5250

Rich Cottrell

Email: rich.cottrell@necchurch.org

Phone: (502) 212-5220

Allison Pecore

Email: allison.pecore@necchurch.org

Phone: (502) 212-5244

This guide and additional resources for your group can be found at: <https://www.necchurch.org/group-leader-resources/>

Planning Center

You can go to <https://Groups.PlanningCenterOnline.com> to manage your group.

The Roster tab lets you see who is in your group.

- This is also where you will see new member requests.
- You will get an email any time someone requests to join your group.
- It is very important you respond to them quickly (within 48 hours) and answer any questions about your group. You can communicate to them through email here.

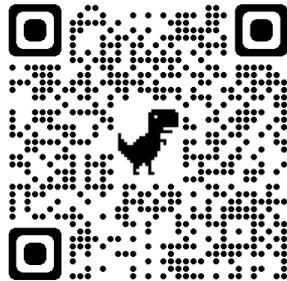
The Events tab is where you can setup a group calendar.

- You can use this to notify your group via email with meeting dates and times.
- You can use this tab to track attendance. (It is helpful to keep attendance so you can see when someone may be falling through the cracks.)

The Resources tab is where you can find the latest Sermon Discussion guides, or even upload resources for your group to check out.

Church Center App

The Church Center App allows you to manage and message your group and access additional resources from your phone.



Group Leader Agreement

A group leader is someone who

- Has made a public profession of faith in Christ.
- Is a committed Northeast Stakeholder demonstrating community, servanthood, and generosity.
- Has a heart to shepherd and help others grow in following Jesus.
- Cares for and regularly communicates with your people.
- Is committed to share leadership responsibilities with the group.
- Prays regularly for their group.
- Facilitates weekly or bi-weekly gathering for your group (with breaks).
- Attends quarterly leader gatherings.
- Share stories of growth in the story portal.
- Read all monthly leader emails/texts.

SIGN _____

DATE _____