



**GUIDELINES**  
for Leading Your Congregation

---

# **LEADING SMALL GROUPS**

---

*Where two or three are gathered. . .*

*Written by Judith M. Bunyi  
General Board of Discipleship*

## **LEADING SMALLGROUPS**

*Copyright © 2000 by Cokesbury*

All rights reserved.

United Methodist churches and other official United Methodist bodies may reproduce up to 500 words from this publication, provided the following notice appears with the excerpted material: From *Leading Small Groups: 2001–2004*. Copyright © 2000 by Cokesbury. Used by permission.

Requests for quotations exceeding 500 words should be addressed to Permissions Office, Abingdon Press, P.O. Box 801, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202-0801.

*This book is printed on elemental-chlorine-free paper.*

**ISBN 0-687-03544-9**

All scripture quotations unless noted otherwise are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyrighted 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## CONTENTS

4/Our Identity, Call, and Mission
6/Your Role as Leader of Small Groups
10/Handbook
10/Preparing to Lead Small Groups
10/Connecting with God
11/Connecting with Others
18/Practical Help for Getting Started and Organized
20/Getting People to Join Small Groups
22/Helpful Skills in Leading Small Groups
23/Elements of Small-Group Life
25/Stages of Small-Group Development
27/Strengthening Your Small-Group Ministry
28/Resources

The Rev. Judith M. Bunyi, Ph.D., is Director of Small Group Ministry at the General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, Tennessee. She is an ordained Elder and member of the Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. In her various ministries as lay person, pastor, general agency staff, professor, and school administrator in the U.S. and the Philippines, she has had experience as trainer, leader/facilitator of and participant in small groups in varied settings. Starting fall, 2000, she will assume the presidency of Harris Memorial College, a United Methodist-related school in the Philippines Central Conference.

# Our Identity, Call, and Mission

About now a small voice in the back of your mind may be whispering, “What am I doing here? To what have I said yes? What is my role?” At the same time you may be aware that your congregation has extended to you a *call—a call to serve*. And you have said *yes—yes to leading in a vital mission*.

***The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.*** You have agreed to serve as a leader bringing your unique passions, gifts, and abilities to the church. When the leaders focus on the church’s purpose—*its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ*—and link that purpose to the passions of the people, amazing things can happen.

***The fundamental way we fulfill our mission is to reach out to people in the name of Jesus Christ, to relate people to God, to nurture and strengthen them in their journey of discipleship, and to send them into the world to be the church—inviting and receiving others in the name of Jesus Christ. We call this the primary task of The United Methodist Church.*** Effective leaders keep the whole of the primary task in their sight, working to keep all of its aspects in concert.

***Leaders in the church must be first, and foremost, spiritual leaders*** who model and embrace Christian discipline and teaching. *By practicing the means of grace—prayer, fasting, studying Scripture, corporate worship, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Christian conversation, and acts of mercy—church leaders stay tuned to the mission of the church and live out the primary task.* Members and would-be members should be able to look to a congregation’s leaders for spiritual example and direction because true leaders are known by their fruits. People’s lives are changed through their influence.

***Leaders use their gifts and talents to enable others to use their gifts and talents to the fullest potential.*** The flow of information, inspiration, guidance, and vision from leaders is an encouragement to others on their spiritual journey. Leaders help others to see new possibilities. When leaders are focused on the mission of the church, community is built and ministry occurs. The church focused on God is alive with creative energy aimed at transformation.

## Four Essential Leadership Functions

***Church leaders support and strengthen the church when they pay attention to these leadership functions: (1) help people discover the current***

*reality in which they live; (2) bring together the congregation's understandings of current reality and desired reality into a shared vision; (3) develop the plans to help the community move from current reality toward the reality of its shared vision; and finally, (4) monitor the whole work of the church as the congregation moves with God's guidance toward its vision.*

### 1. Discovering Current Reality

Accurately describing current reality—the way things are—may be the most important function of leadership. The booklets in this Guideline series offer suggestions for leaders to pay attention to the various committees of the church's ministry. In addition, it is critical for church leaders—lay and clergy—to spend time together discussing the ministry of the whole congregation. The conversation needs to include attentiveness to God's guidance and everything that describes a congregation's "what we are, here and now." Because God is always doing a new thing, this job is continuous. When we pay attention to change, we provide a base of integrity and strength from which to move into the future. Faith in Jesus Christ and a spiritual centering in God offers the strongest foundation to move people fearlessly through the massive changes of the twenty-first century.

### 2. Naming Shared Vision

Ask the question, "What do you want more than anything else in the world?" and most persons will give a response that indicates that they want to live in a world filled with love, faith, security, and meaning. Because persons desire a positive future, they are willing to invest themselves in organizations that are committed to it. By its very nature, the church is devoted to the creation of a better future. When the church promises to move people personally and corporately toward their desired reality, people will invest time, energy, and resources into the church. As people see their own desires linked to the congregational vision and a deeper understanding of God's future, they deepen their commitment and involvement. Building this link is a vital role of leadership.

Naming a shared vision is accomplished by asking people about their lives and their faith, and by listening very carefully. By listening, we mean deep listening—the kind that requires setting aside our own agendas and entering into the worldviews of others, and listening for God through the conversation. It is a significant shift in our understanding of leadership in the church to move from telling people what we think they need to know to listening to people in order to find out who they are and what their desired realities are. Effective spiritual leaders listen to the hearts of people and begin to articulate a shared vision.

### 3. Developing Bridges

To span the gulf between our current reality and the hope expressed in the shared vision, leaders must build a bridge. The third critical function of leadership is to plan actions and develop systems that create the bridge across this gulf. Leaders who are elected to administrative and program committees are responsible for the ongoing work of the church and must pay attention to the present. At the same time, leaders *must* be focused on the future—keeping today and tomorrow in tension—ensuring that the church does not get stuck in the past, present, or future.

Church leaders who are attentive to God’s leading and who can hold the tension between today and tomorrow are *visionary leaders*. Visionary leaders see it all—current reality, desired reality, and the bridges to get from one to the other.

### 4. Monitoring the Journey

Perhaps the most critical task for leaders is keeping an eye on the whole of the faith journey of the congregation. When leaders are constantly caught up in “doing” the administrative and program work of the church, there is not any time left for “being” with God in prayer to discern the leading of the Spirit for the congregation. Leaders must step back from “doing” constant activities in order to pay attention to the total direction of the church’s mission and ministry. All elected and appointed leaders must spend time together listening to God in prayer, Bible study, conversation, and other means of grace in order to lead the entire community in the work of Christ. Anything less is not Christian spiritual leadership.

## Your Role as Leader of Small Groups

Congratulations! Someone chose you to lead a ministry that is both faithful to the biblical model and responsive to the spiritual, missional, and emotional needs of the people. Your role is to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through your unique talents, personality, and interests. By God’s grace, you can provide leadership in small-group ministry settings by enabling persons to grow in their knowledge of and love for God and others. Jesus Christ has called us to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20).

This Guideline helps you fulfill your critical role in planning and leading various small-group ministries in your church. The following sections

### 6 Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation

describe your tasks and responsibilities, outline the steps to help you prepare to create settings for faith formation and discipleship, and provide practical suggestions for getting organized and started. The final section lists resources to help you further your work.

### Benefits of Being in Small Groups

Small group settings are one of the most effective ways whereby both the Great Commission and the mission of the church are best lived out. In small groups, people may more easily feel welcome and part of a Christian community. When the group is smaller, members tend to participate and interact with each other more as they study the Scriptures together. Also, participants are able to reach out more quickly to those in need of care and support during difficult times, spiritually and otherwise. As needs are met, members of the small group are able to identify and affirm each other's spiritual gifts, as well as "watch over one another in love."

### Responsibilities of the Leader of Small Groups

As leader of a small group, your responsibilities include the following:

#### **1. PRAY** for

- yourself, that God will give you spiritual maturity and wisdom, as well as a heart and mind open to the Holy Spirit's leading;
- gifts (abilities and skills) you will need in leading the group as it grows in love for God and neighbor;
- those who will be part of your small group—both inside and outside the church;
- clarity of vision and purpose for your small group;
- your pastor, who will play a critical role as spiritual leader, mentor, and teacher.

#### **2. PREPARE** by

- following a personal discipline of prayer, Bible study, and reflection. You cannot share what you do not have. Being a leader, model, and mentor means that you practice the spiritual disciplines in your own life before you can encourage others to do the same.
- participating in activities that help form your faith in God, such as worship, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, fasting, and meeting with other Christians for sharing and support in living daily as Christ's disciple;
- designing the process for shaping the vision and mission of the group;
- planning the meetings and overseeing group life. A well-planned meeting does not mean stifling the movement of the Holy Spirit, nor does it mean being inflexible. It means that you are able to make the most of the time you are together for prayer, worship, study, fellowship, and mutual support. It means that you are able to honor your time together and still allow members to meet other obligations and commitments.

**3. CONNECT** with others. This involves developing relationships and communicating with others, including:

- *the pastor*, who plays a vital role in laying the groundwork for small-group ministries, supporting the leaders of small groups, and providing opportunities for continuing education of leaders;
- *other congregational groups*, such as the *charge conference*, *church council*, and *church staff*;
- *other existing groups*, where applicable, such as the Sunday school staff, committees and task groups, UMW, UMM, choir, and age-level ministry staff.

Connecting with and getting to know others is also an excellent way of identifying potential leaders of small groups, as well as members of your leadership team.

**4. LEARN** some practical skills necessary for moderating and facilitating a group. Small groups are composed of persons with different gifts, needs, levels of maturity, background, and theological perspectives. You will need to learn how to

- plan meetings;
- facilitate group discussion and sharing;
- identify spiritual gifts;
- listen;
- encourage others;
- solve problems (related to group leadership);
- manage conflict;
- make decisions;
- implement action plans;
- evaluate the ministry.

Wait! Please don't get overwhelmed by this list. The items listed above can serve as topics for continuing education for you and other small-group leaders. People in the conference office and at the General Board of Discipleship can help you. Don't be afraid to ask, seek, and knock.

As the leader of a small group, you will need to schedule a regular meeting (for example, monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly, depending on need and circumstances) with your pastor and other small-group leaders, if there are others besides you. You may gather for practicing the spiritual disciplines, forming community, continuing education, planning, addressing issues, sharing lessons learned in leading, or deciding on the curriculum/resources.

**5. MODEL or SET AN EXAMPLE** in

- Christian community and fellowship;
- unity and harmony;
- teaching and learning;
- evangelism and outreach;
- caring and support;
- serving God and neighbor;
- accountability.

Be faithful to your role as the small-group leader. When members of your group witness through you a life committed to Christ and his teachings, they may be inspired and encouraged to do the same.

**6. DEVELOP** leaders continuously. It is critical to pray for and discern God's will in identifying potential leaders—those who demonstrate maturity in their spiritual life, share the vision of doing ministry in and through small groups, possess integrity and moral character, and are willing to learn.

Have a plan for leader training and development. As more leaders are trained, your church will be ready for growth. One model for training leaders is described by Grace Bradford in *Guide for Class Leaders* (see Resources). Other leader training may occur informally by encouraging others to use their gifts and talents in a variety of settings, whenever they can. Even if they start small or in a limited capacity, it would be a step toward gaining confidence in taking some leadership roles.

Another training method is to mentor someone whom you have prayed for and identified as having leadership potential. You may work side by side, first letting the other observe you as you lead, and then giving him or her the opportunity to lead while you observe. Together, reflect on the experience.

As more people are empowered to exercise their gifts, energy and enthusiasm are generated, leadership is shared, and the threat of burnout is lessened.

**7. EVALUATE** in order to know your strengths, as well as areas that need to be strengthened and areas where gaps exist. Set aside a time to assess whether or not your group is moving toward your vision and mission, as well as that of the church as a whole. This may be done at regular intervals, such as quarterly, every six months, or once a year.

**8. SEEK HELP** when necessary. In meeting the continuing education needs of small-group leaders, you may invite your pastor or an outside resource person to provide further training, lead retreats, or even suggest

new ideas for various aspects of small-group life. There are several print, audio, and video resources available that deal specifically with issues particular to small-group ministries in congregations (see Resources).

The next section will discuss in more detail the steps needed in preparing to lead a small group.

# Handbook

## Preparing to Lead Small Groups

When Jesus was asked which commandment in the law was the greatest, his response was: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment” (Matthew 22:37-38).

The first step, therefore, involved in preparing for leadership of a small group is focusing on, connecting with, knowing, loving, serving, and worshipping God. As leader, you should be able to model those behaviors and responsibilities that you expect from members of your small group.

## Connecting With God

### Spiritual Disciplines and Means of Grace

Part of your role is to provide spiritual leadership for the group. Keeping connected with the true Source of life, truth, and love will sustain you in your journey in discipleship. Jesus said, “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

Establish a daily, personal discipline of worshipping God, studying the Scriptures, meditating on God’s revelation and will through Scripture, learning from spiritual leaders through the ages, and praying. Periodically practice the discipline of fasting. Practicing these disciplines will help you grow in your own spiritual life and enable you to encourage others to make a commitment to do the same.

Consider the following suggestions:

1. *Establish a regular time to meet with God.* Depending on your schedule and preference, you may choose a time of day when it is quiet and there is less likelihood of interruption. Set aside thirty to ninety minutes of time for your devotions and stick to that schedule as much as possible no matter where you may be.

2. *Choose a quiet place to have your meditation.* You may choose a spot (a room or a favorite chair) in your home where you are not likely to be disturbed. This choice may be combined with the first one—your choice of a time of day when you will have quiet time. If you have access to an area where you can meditate close to nature, that would also be great.
3. *Keep a journal of your reflections.* Later, when you go back and read your entries, you may learn more about your faith and discipleship journey. The book by Ann Broyles, *Journaling: A Spiritual Journey*, is a helpful resource to get you started (see Resources). You may also write your response to the following questions:
  - What does the Scripture say?
  - What might God mean?
  - What do other traditions and scriptures say about this?
  - What does my experience say about this?
  - What is the Spirit nudging me to do now?
4. *Practice other means of grace.* According to John Wesley, these include participating in the Lord’s Supper, doing no harm and doing acts of mercy and justice, and meeting with others for mutual spiritual encouragement and reflection. Being part of an accountability group, where you “watch over one another in love,” says Wesley, helps you to be faithful in practicing these disciplines and in living a life of obedience and service to God and neighbor.

## Connecting with Others

The second commandment, according to Jesus, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). To be fully human involves being with and relating to other people. Our purpose for interacting may vary. We may seek the presence of others in our lives through intellectual stimulation, emotional support, caring, affirmation, giving and receiving information, sharing, and fellowship. It is a basic human need to belong, to want to be part of something. Small-group settings allow for relationship building, which fosters love, unity, reaching out, and welcoming others within the context of Christian community. Our Wesleyan heritage of Christian *conferencing* comes to us as a gift. When we meet with fellow believers for encouragement, sharing, listening to God and one another, reflecting, and learning, we grow spiritually and gather strength for the journey. These, in turn, help us in our ministry of leading small groups.

In your work as a small-group leader, your role is to relate with different people, not only to be a part of the Body of Christ, but also to accomplish specific objectives or meet certain expectations. You may need to relate and

communicate with your pastor; the charge conference, church council, and various ministry and work area groups; your own small group; members of the church; and the community at large.

This section will deal with the nature of your relationship with each of these persons or groups. It will also explain the kind of expectations that are tied to such relationships.

### The Pastor and the Pastor's Role

Ideally, the pastor holds up the vision of small-group ministry before the people. If this is true within your faith community, you can depend upon your pastor to

- help identify potential leaders for small groups;
- equip and train small-group leaders;
- provide support and encouragement;
- serve as a mentor;
- model servant leadership flowing from a Christ-centered life;
- model faithful, Christian discipleship and accountability within a small group. This may be the church council, a covenant discipleship group, or a small group for spiritual growth.

The pastor plays a crucial role in stressing the need for people to meet in small groups for study, worship, nurture, fellowship, care, and outreach. The one- or two-hour corporate, weekly worship is important for your faith formation and growth. But it is in small-group settings that members are challenged to live out their mission to go and make disciples.

The pastor has an important task in preparing the people to understand the vital function of small groups in forming and transforming individual lives and the life of the church. The pastor may draw from biblical examples that show how a small, intimate band of people can build up each other while learning to walk in faith together. Jesus certainly modeled that life with his twelve disciples. The first-century Christians met in house churches, as well as in the temple (Acts 5:42).

From Wesleyan heritage, we find examples of early class societies. These were small-group settings where Christian formation and growth, discipleship, and accountability happened. Grace Bradford's *Guide for Class Leaders* and David Lowes Watson's *Class Leaders* provide a thorough explanation of this subject, including the relevance to the twenty-first century church. (See Resources.)

Aside from sharing the vision of small groups from the pulpit, the pastor, the lay leader, and you will have to share the responsibility of making sure

that the message is heard in various ways, forms, settings, and times. While this is being done, pray that it will bear fruit in the hearts of people.

*What if your pastor does not share the vision for small-group ministry?*

What if the pastor even resists the notion of small groups? That is possible, but I pray this will not happen in your case. If the pastor's resistance comes from the fear of losing control over what's going on in the small groups, all the more reason the pastor needs to be involved. As the small-group leader, you can help by voluntarily sharing news about what is happening in the life of your group. Keep your pastor updated.

Your pastor, on the other hand, has both the responsibility and the opportunity to equip leaders of small groups with theological understandings on various issues. Your pastor can help train and supervise small-group leaders. If the number is small, all the leaders can form a team, with the pastor serving as teacher-mentor. Members, then, meet regularly for visioning, mutual accountability, learning, and encouragement.

Before you lead a small group, therefore, it would be helpful for you to meet and discuss with your pastor the small-group ministry and your pastor's role in it. Also, seek the help of other key leaders in your church. Make use of their knowledge, experience, expertise, and networking in your exercise of leadership. Be in constant communication with your pastor and key lay leaders regarding your vision, plans, and activities. I cannot overemphasize the need for you to work in harmony and close relationship with your pastor.

Offer information to key leaders, when appropriate. Hold yourself accountable to your pastor and your group. Consult them when faced with a decision, problem, or conflict. When necessary, share your concerns and the difficult challenges you are facing, always keeping in mind that you need to honor confidentiality in the process. Lift up each other in prayer. Doing so is not a sign of weakness or defeat. Instead, you release the gifts of the Spirit in others as you give them permission to share your burdens and leadership responsibilities. You will also feel less overwhelmed.

## Connecting with Various Church Groups

### **The Charge Conference**

One of the primary responsibilities of the charge conference is to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church. Not only does it receive reports, it adopts objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist

Church. Depending on your church structure, part of your accountability to this group may take the form of an annual report to the charge conference.

### **The Church Council**

Connecting and relating with the church council or its counterpart(s) is as important as communicating with your pastor. Our *Discipline* mandates that the church council “shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life” (§251). While this is basic, churches have other options for ordering their life and ministry. Options, such as council on ministries and/or other structures, may be used to meet varied congregational needs. It would benefit the overall life and ministry of the church if small-group leaders, the pastor, other key leaders in the church, and the church council or its equivalent share not just the vision, but also the process of casting the vision for small-group ministry. Some of the benefits are:

1. *Unity* of vision, mission, direction, and purpose. There is power in this kind of unity. It is more likely that the congregation will catch the vision for fulfilling the Great Commission and the church’s primary task through large gatherings and small-group settings when church leaders are guided by the spirit of unity and harmony.
2. *Support* for the small-group ministry is more likely, since most of the church leadership took part in birthing it.
3. *Clarity of communication* is more likely to occur than are misunderstanding and miscommunication. Everyone will be on the “same page,” so to speak.
4. *Success* in launching and implementing your plans is more likely. The more people there are who share the vision, the more support through prayer, member involvement, commitment, and enthusiasm there will be. More people will help in sharing the vision with the rest of the church. Leadership will be shared, and synergy will be generated.

### Connecting with Small-Group Members and/or the Small-Group Leaders Team

Whether you are serving as leader/facilitator of a small group or the small-group leaders team, it is likely that members of your group look up to you for spiritual leadership, guidance, and encouragement. It would be helpful for you to explore together with group members various ways by which you may express love and support for the people God has entrusted to your care. The following suggestions are idea starters. Choose from this list only the suggestions that apply to your group. Feel free to add your own ideas to this list. It should be noted, however, that all members of the group—not just the leader—do these activities.

1. Spend some time getting to know each member of your group. Listen to their needs and concerns, their joys and celebrations, their fears and anxieties. When a person feels that she has been heard, she usually feels affirmed.
2. After getting to know group members beyond the surface level, you can begin to pray more specifically for the needs of each person, remembering their hurts and pains, their praises and thanksgiving.
3. If you have a gift for writing inspiring messages, try a greeting card ministry. Sometimes, just a note to let the person know that someone is praying for him can lift up his spirits.
4. Personal visits in the hospital, nursing home, or other places, where necessary and appropriate, are usually appreciated. Remember, however, to respect people's need for privacy and confidentiality. Honor their time and wishes.
5. Communication through technologies such as e-mail, telephone, fax, Web page, cell phone, video phone, and many others are additional ways of keeping in touch with members.
6. Sending fresh-cut flowers from the garden or a potted plant, or baking a loaf of bread for special occasions are other ways to demonstrate care and appreciation.
7. Composing a poem or song is a personal way to express admiration and gratitude.
8. Arts and crafts are creative ways to say you care.
9. Activating the prayer chain and helping with meals or house chores during a time of emergency, illness, or tragedy are usually welcome.
10. Material, financial, and physical help are sometimes easier to give than confession, forgiveness, and mercy. But when offered and received graciously, confession, forgiveness, and mercy may result in a transformed life. If doing any of these is a challenge for you, trust in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to help you.

In the New Testament, "one another" phrases are used at least sixty times, for example, love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another. Group members are to build up each other for the edification of the Body of Christ.

Whether you are trying to build relationships with members of your small group or planning to form a new group, consider the various settings where caring and support, as well as building Christian community, may happen:

- Church classroom, parlor, or sanctuary
- Home den
- Local restaurant
- Prison or jail
- Cafeteria

Hotel lobby  
Park pavilion  
Housing projects  
Clubhouse  
Barn  
Warehouse  
Office  
Mall or marketplace  
Public or private transportation  
Street curb

### Connecting with the Church

The growth and spread of Methodism in eighteenth-century England was ushered in by the work of the Holy Spirit and facilitated in large measure by John Wesley's introduction of a system of small groups for spiritual growth, discipleship, and leadership development. This system included societies, class meetings, bands, select societies, penitent bands, leaders' meetings, and stewards' meetings. These small groups came close to the pattern of the New Testament church. *Believers met in small groups for mutual accountability and nurture in Christian discipleship and in doing works of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion.*

This system of small groups, however, seems to have fallen by the wayside and been forgotten for some time. By action of the 1988 General Conference, the ministry of *class leaders* was put back in *The Book of Discipline*. Since then, we have seen a resurgence of interest in accountable discipleship through covenant discipleship groups and class leaders. Other small-group models have also been developed and used in various church and parachurch settings.

We may think that corporate worship and large gatherings provide worshipers the opportunity to make connections with the larger church just because of the presence of a larger number of people compared to small groups. Ironically, the informal and intimate nature of small groups allows for more direct interaction among members. The smaller the size of the group, the greater the likelihood of participation among members when engaging in the study of Scriptures, sharing joys and concerns, praying for each other, worshiping, doing works of justice and mercy, reaching out and inviting others, doing missions, and having fellowship. *Thus, connecting with others in the church happens on a deeper level in small groups than is possible in larger gatherings.*

The best places for identifying potential leaders and providing them with hands-on training is in small-sized groups. There is greater occasion

for participants to discover, exercise, and share their spiritual gifts. The presence of a different set of gifts in every group makes each group unique in terms of its dynamics, views, perspectives, needs, strengths, and opportunities for mission and outreach. In small groups, persons have a place in which to feel welcome and part of a “family,” to relate to God, to be nurtured in discipleship, to be equipped for ministry in daily life. This enables them, in turn, to invite others into the fellowship of Christian believers.

*For whatever reason, however, some people may need time to get used to being in small groups.* Intimacy and sharing may evoke feelings of uneasiness and anxiety. The best you can do for such persons is to be gentle with them, pray for them, and model for them the benefits of being in a small group for discipleship, spiritual growth, and connecting with the larger church. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives according to God’s timeline.

### Connecting with the World

Christ explained to his disciples why he must die: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). As Christ’s disciples, we are called to “bring good news to the poor” and to “proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

As leader of the small group, you will want to be aware that *connecting with the world* means to:

1. Pray for the world, that is, persons with whom you will share the gospel and love of Jesus Christ. Pray that persons you encounter will be open to receiving the gospel. Your “world” includes your own family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. But it doesn’t stop there. That smaller circle is just the beginning. Your “world” needs to expand to include strangers, persons with whom you would not normally interact—those who are different in language, culture, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and even persons who live beyond your geographical boundaries. *Ask yourself: “With whom can I share the gospel today?”*
2. Reach out and invite people to come to know the living Christ. Evangelism is at the heart of what we do and are as a people of God. We are entrusted with the privilege of being a part of the process of kingdom building. Be alert to opportunities to share God’s love with those who need it. *Ask yourself: “How can I share God’s love with this person, family, or group?”*
3. Welcome people into your small groups. Practice hospitality. Although large group meetings and corporate worship can be energizing and uplifting, discipleship and transformation of lives happen more often in

intimate, personal settings like the small group. Some folk are less intimidated to join and participate in a small group than in a large gathering. However, for some newcomers to a long-established group, feeling welcome or part of the group may not come easy. The following question, then, is for members of an established small group. *Ask: "How am I showing hospitality to someone new in my group?"* Even when the small group is newly formed, all members may still need to ask the question about how they are practicing hospitality to one another.

4. Encourage, coach, and challenge members of your small group to reach out to their "worlds." *Ask group members: "In what ways are you reaching out to others within and outside/beyond your circles?"*
5. List names of specific persons for whom you will pray.
6. Pray for those on your list personally, with a prayer partner, and in your group or team. *Ask yourself: "Am I regularly praying for those I have on my list to reach out to?"*
7. Nurture and strengthen, by teaching and example, the faith of those who have responded to Christ. *Ask yourself: "How am I enabling others to grow in their faith and love of God and neighbor?"*
8. Expect results: people are drawn to Christ, the circle of faith expands, lives are transformed, the Body of Christ is edified, and God's name is glorified. *Ask yourself: "What fruits in Christian discipleship, servant leadership, faithful worship, and loving service have I seen in my own life and in the lives of others?"*
9. Continue to teach and equip others for evangelism, discipleship, service, and ministry in daily life and in the world. *Ask: "What training opportunities for various ministries are we offering?"*
10. Send people out into the world to share the love of Christ and the good news to the poor.

## Practical Helps for Getting Started and Organized

Your role and responsibilities as small-group leader have been outlined in the section "Our Identity, Call, and Mission." In this section, we will deal with the steps involved in starting a small group. If you have been chosen by your pastor or small-group coordinator to lead a small group, here are some important steps and decisions to bear in mind.

### Laying the Foundation

1. Form a group with your pastor and other small-group leaders in your church. Agree to pray for each other, for the vision for small groups, for other potential leaders, and for those who will be invited to become members of your small groups.
2. With the pastor and other small-group leaders, begin to develop the vision for small groups as places for making and growing disciples of

Jesus Christ, transforming lives, loving and serving God and neighbor, and forming community.

3. Individually and with your team of leaders, practice the spiritual disciplines and participate in the various means of grace.
4. Learn practical skills in leading Bible studies and prayer, facilitating group meetings and discussions, and planning agendas. If your pastor or small-group ministry coordinator has planned a training program for leaders, take advantage of it. If they have not planned such a program, request one, or attend other available training offered elsewhere. Invite a resource person to teach on specific subjects. Watch training videos (see Resources) and read books on the subject. Interview people who have had experience in leading groups. If you have questions, ask your pastor or small-group ministry coordinator.
5. Start identifying potential members of your small group by drawing up a large “prospect” list. Pray for each person on the list. Then begin sharing with them the vision of small groups as an aid to making disciples and faith formation. If your church holds ministry fairs where people can sign up for groups they are interested in joining, then this step may be skipped.
6. Once you have the members in place, decide with them the place to meet, day of the week, time of day, and frequency of meetings. Set your launch date.
7. Draw up an agreement that will guide the conduct of your group meetings. Let everyone sign it. Remember, you will hold each other accountable based on what you have agreed to do. To learn more about the process of writing a covenant, read chapter seven of David Lowes Watson’s *Covenant Discipleship* (see Resources). Examples of covenants are also provided.
8. If you do not have a planned curriculum, you may discuss this with the group and decide what you are going to study. The Resources section of this booklet lists places to call to ask for advice about appropriate curriculum resources.
9. Read the resources that will be used. Prepare materials to be used during the meeting.
10. Assign other responsibilities to your coleader (if you have one), as well as to other members of the group (someone to be in charge of music, set up and clean up, child care, and other responsibilities). Sharing leadership and delegating are excellent ways to develop emerging leaders.

The following format is designed to help you prepare for and carry out your small-group meeting. *Note:* Be sure to start and stop on time. Honor each other’s time.

## Small-Group Meeting Format

### *Before the meeting:*

1. Pray for the persons who will be attending and for the meeting itself.
2. Study the materials to be used during the Scripture study.
3. Prepare the agenda, incorporating information from others.
4. Delegate other responsibilities, such as:
  - promoting the meeting, “getting the word out”;
  - preparing the place;
  - preparing the refreshments, if any;
  - reminding people of the time and place of meeting;
  - making arrangements for child care, if needed;
  - making arrangements for carpooling, if needed;
  - making arrangements for music during worship: accompanist/instrumentalist, song leader, songs, songbooks.

### *During the meeting* (sample agenda for Bible study, worship, and fellowship):

1. Gathering (10 minutes)
2. Praise and worship (15 minutes)
3. Bible study and sharing of reflections (20-25 minutes)
4. Sharing of joys and concerns (15 minutes)
5. Intercessory prayer (15-20 minutes)
6. Closing and announcements (5 minutes)

### *After the meeting:*

1. If you have a leader-in-training helping you, ask the person to follow up on newcomers.
2. Follow up and follow through on items/issues raised during the meeting.
3. Thank your host(s), if you met in a home.
4. Thank all those who assisted you in any way.
5. Delegate responsibilities, such as cleaning up and putting things back in place.

One important thing to remember is that you don't have to do all the work yourself. There are persons in your group who have been blessed with gifts for ministry. Allow them to share in the ministry.

## Getting People to Join Small Groups

In some churches, ministry in and through small groups may be new. However, if you look closely, there are already existing groups where people are seeking

to grow in their love for God and neighbor. Examples are Bible study and prayer groups, issue-oriented groups, care and support groups, covenant discipleship groups, and mission and outreach groups. Sunday school classes and choir(s) are included, too. (See Carol Krau's *Keeping in Touch* and Anne Hook's *Grace Notes* for practical help.) There are also work groups (sometimes labeled committees and task forces), where the main focus is the accomplishment or completion of certain tasks not ordinarily perceived as essentially faith forming, such as maintenance of facilities and equipment and making decisions. In these groups, the leader may start introducing time for devotion and worship and/or time for engaging in evangelistic outreach and mission, if these are not being done. At other times, the leader may also make members of these working committees aware that the work they do is a form of worship to God. (The resources in the "Equipping the Future Church" series are designed to provide help to congregational groups in discerning their call, mission, and ministry.)

If you have the vision for making these existing groups, as well as newly created ones, places where lives are transformed by God's grace, you will need time for preparation. You will meet both acceptance and resistance to the vision. Remember, however, that you have power, courage, and strength available to you through the Holy Spirit.

Here are some steps to take:

1. Pray.
2. Share the vision with as many people and groups as possible.
3. Form a *small-group leaders' team*, if there is more than one leader, to plan strategies appropriate to your setting. Members of the small-group leaders' team are expected to share the vision for small groups as places for discipleship and faith formation.
4. With your pastor, plan a campaign to get the word out in various ways.
5. Model accountability and discipleship in a small group. Lead by being an example yourself in order to evoke interest in others. In an accountability group, for example, members use a covenant, which they have all agreed upon, and give an account of how they have lived out the terms of their covenant. Members meet weekly to encourage and "watch over one another in love" (see David Lowes Watson's *Covenant Discipleship* for examples of covenant).
6. Conduct a ministry fair. These are opportunities where new and old members come, on a designated day, to check out the different small groups that are open for membership. For example, booths for different interest groups and ministries in the church may be set up to allow people to ask questions, get information, and make decisions about which group they might join. A worship service may open the event, and the entire fair may be set up in an atmosphere of celebration.

7. Ask persons whose lives have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit through participation in a small group to speak of their experience. This is the best “advertisement” for small groups.

## Helpful Skills in Leading Small Groups

When preparing to lead small groups, there are a number of skills that are critical for effective management of group life. You, the leader, will face the challenge of ensuring that each person is heard, while paying attention to other dynamics within the group resulting from differing backgrounds. Each person brings a wealth of experience, wisdom, and perspective. Each individual adds to the richness of the tapestry stemming from culture; family upbringing; social, emotional, political, intellectual, theological, economic, and aesthetic orientation. Add to the mix communication styles! So, what skills are important in negotiating through this complex maze called small-group interaction?

### **1. Listening to God**

The first important skill is learning to listen to God with your heart, mind, and soul. Learn to listen to the nudging and prompting of the Holy Spirit, for with it comes spiritual discernment. Engage in contemplative prayer. Meditate on the same passage(s) of Scripture several times. Record what you heard God saying to you after the first (second, third) reading.

In our fast-paced life, we need to learn to slow down and pay attention to the beauty of nature and the splash of colors in the spring. Hear the children’s laughter, the bird’s song, the rustling leaves. Smell the newly mown grass. Stretch and reach up to the sky. Look around and feast upon God’s handiwork.

### **2. Listening to Yourself**

Listen to your feelings. Listen to the way you communicate your ideas—verbally (choice of words) and nonverbally (accompanying actions and tone of voice). Do you like what you hear? Observe how people react to you when you speak. What are they saying through their feedback?

### **3. Listening to Others**

Being leader or facilitator of the group does not mean you have the right to monopolize or dominate the discussion. Allow others to share. Listen to their stories, ideas, hopes, and dreams. Listen to their hurts and sources of pride and joy. Listen to their likes and dislikes. *Listen to what they are saying, and discern what they are not saying.*

This is how you get to know others on a deeper level. As a result, you will gain a better perspective when working with them. Observe, also, how they

communicate—verbally and nonverbally. How are you reacting to the content and manner of their communication? Why are you reacting the way you do? What judgments have you made regarding the message and the sender of the message? How do you show respect for others and their ideas?

#### **4. Time Management**

To avoid dragging out small-group meetings, agree on how long you will meet (between one hour and an hour and a half would be ideal). *As group leader, make sure that everybody honors that time.* If you are meeting in a home, the hosts need to know when and how long the group will be there in order to plan accordingly. Moreover, members of the group who have commitments after the meeting will still be able to fulfill their obligations.

#### **5. People Skills**

This refers to your ability to work with people, especially in groups. Do you like being with and working with others? Are you a team player? Do you have a vision and passion for building Christian community? Do you enjoy sharing that vision with others? How do you handle conflicts?

#### **6. Task Skills**

Are you able to stay focused on the vision, mission, purpose, and task of your small group? Are you able to follow a task through to its completion? How do you handle distractions or interruptions? How flexible are you?

Task skills are helpful in keeping the “big picture” in front of you—the vision and purpose for why you have a small-group ministry and why you are part of a congregational small group.

#### **7. Communication Skills**

It is important that you are able to articulate the vision for small-group ministry to every person you meet, as well as to the different bodies in the church with which you relate. This is especially crucial when you are still in the planning and preparation stage.

These are important skills to have, but you don’t have to acquire them overnight. Some of these may be included in the monthly or quarterly training sessions. Just learning or acquiring these skills is not the end. These skills are a means to an end, that of building community where lives are being transformed daily into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

### **Elements of Small-Group Life**

Acts 2:42-47 provides a glimpse of life in the New Testament church. The believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to

the breaking of bread and the prayers.” They also shared whatever they had “to all, as any had need.”

### **Apostles’ Teaching: Meeting the Intellectual Need**

Teaching and learning need to be integral parts of any small group that aims to grow in the knowledge and understanding of the triune God. Through the apostles’ teaching and exhortation, believers learned about God’s love through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. In your small group, discern God’s will for you, for the group, for the church, and for all of creation by studying and reflecting on the Scriptures, examining tradition, employing the critical reasoning process, and learning from your individual and collective experiences (based on Wesley’s model).

### **Fellowship: Meeting the Social Need**

Through fellowship and social interaction, members are able to build up one another. Caring and sharing help meet the social and emotional needs of human beings. You laugh and cry, sing and shout, pray and praise together. You share your joys and hurts. Your presence provides comfort and security to each other. You become vulnerable, yet empowered. You provide mutual support and accountability. You form relationships upon which you build Christian community.

### **Breaking of Bread: Meeting the Physical Need**

In small groups, needs are more easily discerned and met. The basic, physical need for food is assuaged when you break bread together. Most important, when we share in the Lord’s Supper, we are made one in Christ and Christ is made known to us (Luke 24:35).

In many cultures, allowing strangers to eat at table with you is also a sign of welcome and hospitality. It means that they are being considered part of the family, or at least a friend of the family.

### **Worship and Prayer: Meeting the Spiritual Needs**

When you pray, you talk with God, you connect with God. The book of Psalms contains a wide variety of prayers, many of which are attributed to King David. In them, we hear David experiencing the full range of emotions: worship, reverence, awe, fear, anger, love, disappointment, deep hurt, doubt, uncertainty, confidence, joy, peace, sadness, hope, and many others. You, too, most likely have felt the same emotions at some point in your life. Like David, you can direct your prayers to God, confident that God is listening to you and can hear your voice of joy, praise, worship, and pain.

## Sharing Goods: Meeting Other Needs

The church's primary task includes *inviting and welcoming people into the Body of Christ and nurturing and equipping disciples*, not for their own benefit, but for the task of being sent back into the world to lead transformed and transforming lives. Our ministry is not confined to the care and edification of our members alone. If that were the case, we would only have an inward focus. We need to balance that with an outward focus. We need to be about ministering to others daily—in and outside our homes, schools, places of work and business, and even at play. Wherever and whenever we see injustice, pain, brokenness, tragedy, hopelessness, and despair, we have the opportunity to share God's love, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing, hope, joy, and Christ's shalom. We can share in practical and concrete ways by sharing our goods (time, talent/skills, money, or material things) to those in need. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can empower the disenfranchised, the poor, the captives, and the marginalized. Through works of mercy, justice, compassion, and devotion, we can participate in the process of ushering in the reign of God.

It must be remembered, though, that these are not the only elements necessary for small-group life, nor are they mutually exclusive. Teaching does not involve only the intellect; rather, learning and the wisdom gained from study will form, inform, and hopefully transform one's whole being. In the same manner, there is a spiritual aspect to fellowship and breaking of bread: the soul is fed, too. Likewise, fellowship and nurture are closely intertwined with intercessory prayers and sharing of God's blessings and abundant grace with those in need.

## Stages of Small-Group Development

Small groups, like humans, go through a cycle of beginnings, birth, infancy, growth, maturation, aging, and death. Your understanding of the stages of group development will help you, as you lead the small group, to anticipate the needs and opportunities that accompany each phase. The length of time for each stage will vary from group to group.

**1. *Beginnings.*** Long before the small group first meets, a great deal of time must be spent in prayer, discernment of God's purpose, reflection, conversation, sharing of vision, and planning. This stage is parallel to the period of gestation. The small groups have not physically come together, but the groundwork is being done. The stage is being prepared for the formal launching. This period may take from six months (if the church is ready) up to one or two years. Whether the preparation time is long or short, it is important not to rush, but to devote this time resting in and waiting on God.

**2. *Birth.*** The small groups meet for the first time. In a church, you can

expect to have some of the same people serving or participating in a number of groups. Even if you do, when you form a small group for a different purpose, then that new group has just been born.

**3. *Infancy.*** A newly formed group goes through infancy. Just like a little child, it may need some guidance and direction early in its life. It is crucial to come to an agreement as to how you will order your life together so that everyone is clear about it right from the very start. Guidelines or group norms may help you deal with conflicts or they may even prevent some conflicts from developing. For example, you may agree to respect confidentiality, listen to each other, take turns in speaking, honor meeting times, share the leadership, or commit to devoting time to working together in a soup kitchen once a month.

Infancy is also a time of getting to know each other. Examples of warm-up and getting-acquainted activities for small groups are listed in the books by Cindy Bunch and Michael Kendrick (see Resources). Each time a new member joins or someone leaves the group, the dynamics of the small group changes. Every time you meet, the first few minutes may also be treated as going back to the infancy stage. Therefore, it is important to set aside about five to ten minutes for a warm-up activity.

**4. *Growth.*** This phase is marked by learning to be in ministry together. Members start to share the gifts, talents, and skills toward the fulfillment of the group mission. For some, this may be the opportunity to discover and test their gifts. There may be times of tension and awkwardness as individuals figure out where and how they fit into the group, as well as how they share in leadership. That is when group guidelines or norms on how you will address concerns and issues come in handy.

**5. *Maturity.*** The group is functioning well and members work in harmony with one another. Members are able to apply lessons learned from past experiences and deal with whatever comes before them with spiritual, emotional, and intellectual maturity. There are groups that stay in this phase for a long time. There are even those that keep growing and giving birth to new shoots (new groups) as new leaders are developed and members are encouraged to use their gifts in loving and serving God and neighbor.

Evaluating your group life is best done during this phase. Knowing your strengths and improving on areas that need attention will contribute to your growth. If you wait until the next stage, it may be too late to recover from whatever is ailing the group.

**6. Aging.** Signs of deteriorating group life may be manifested by members' lack of interest, losing sight of original purpose and mission, high drop-out rate, and developing new interests unrelated to the group's mission. When you see these signs, pray for discernment about the future of the group. If the group needs to disband, perhaps "death" is the necessary next step.

**7. Death.** The group disbands. In some cases, groups are revived or take a new form after a period of rest.

Each group is unique in its development. Understanding the stages will help you, as the leader, in guiding and helping members to recognize the nature of each stage and taking advantage of all the opportunities for learning and growing together as the Body of Christ.

## Strengthening Your Small-Group Ministry

Taking time to assess how your small groups are doing helps you know whether or not you are accomplishing your mission and objectives. If not, you have an opportunity to identify gaps and places for strengthening the ministry. Besides, there is always room for improvement, and there is always something to learn.

If you are accomplishing your goals toward the fulfillment of your mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, then you can celebrate. You can rejoice with those whose lives have been transformed in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can rejoice with those who have found love and acceptance in a Christian community. You can rejoice as individuals share their testimonies of how they have grown in their love for God and neighbor.

The following questions might help you as you expand and deepen your ministry. I suggest that you spend time talking with people who are actively participating in small groups. Take note of their responses and bring them back to the small-group leaders' team, where appropriate. If you don't have a small-group leaders' team, you may share and discuss members' feedback with your pastor. Pray with your pastor and seek guidance in addressing issues that need attention.

1. In your small group, what has helped you grow in your understanding of God the Creator? Jesus Christ? the Holy Spirit? the church's mission?
2. What has helped you grow in your understanding of yourself as a child of God? of others as children of God?
3. What have you learned about small-group life and its impact on the task of disciple making?
4. What needs to be done to improve the quality of our small-group life that will enable it to become a place for faith formation and discipleship?
5. How have the training sessions helped in leadership development?

As you prepare yourself for this important ministry, may the guidance and wisdom, power and inspiration, love and grace of God be with you.

## Resources

### Telephone Numbers

Cokesbury: 1-800-672-1789, for ordering resources

Cokesbury: 1-800-445-8189, for ordering by FAX

Cokesbury: 1-800-732-7881, for Spanish-language material

Cokesbury: 1-800-227-4091, for 24-hour TDD (Telephone Device for the Deaf)

Curric-U-Phone: 1-800-251-8591, for help in identifying and selecting resources

Discipleship Resources: 770-442-9742, for ordering by fax

Discipleship Resources Information Line: 1-800-814-7833, for information

Discipleship Resources Order Line: 1-800-685-4370, for ordering

EcuFilm: 1-800-251-4091, for advice about media use, renting, or purchasing videotapes

InfoServ: 1-800-251-8140, for general information on The United Methodist Church

The General Board of Discipleship: 1-877-899-2780, for information

The United Methodist Publishing House: 615-749-6000, for information

The United Methodist Publishing House: 615-749-6079 fax, for information

The United Methodist Publishing House: 1-800-227-4091, TDD

The Upper Room Books: 1-800-972-0433, for ordering books and bulk magazines

The Upper Room Books: 615-340-7590, for ordering by fax

Upper Room Magazine Subscriptions: 1-800-925-6847, for individual subscriptions

Upper Room Resources: 1-800-491-0912 or fax 615-340-7178, for assistance in choosing the right resource for your church or study group

### Mail Order Addresses

Cokesbury

201 Eighth Avenue South

P.O. Box 801

Nashville, TN 37202-0801

### Discipleship Resources

Discipleship Resources Distribution Center

Box 6996

Alpharetta, GA 30009-6996

The United Methodist Publishing House  
P.O. Box 801  
Nashville, TN 37202-0801

Upper Room Books  
1908 Grand Avenue  
P.O. Box 189  
Nashville, TN 37202-0189

Websites for Ordering Online and Other Information:

[www.cokesbury.org](http://www.cokesbury.org)  
[www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org)  
[www.ecufilm.org](http://www.ecufilm.org)  
[www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org)  
[www.upperroom.org](http://www.upperroom.org)

Small-Group Ministry

- Arnold, Jeffrey. *Small Group Starter Kit*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
- Arnold Jeffrey. *Starting Small Groups: Building Communities That Matter*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Bauknight, Brian Kelley. *Body Building: Creating a Ministry Team Through Spiritual Gifts*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Braden, Suzanne, and Shirley F. Clement. *Small Groups: Getting Started*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1989 (reprinted in 1996).
- Bradford, Grace. *Guide for Class Leaders: A Model for Christian Formation*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999.
- Bunch, Cindy. *Small Group Idea Book*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Bunyi, Judith M. *Building and Growing Your Small Group Ministry*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, available Spring 2001.
- Carter, William J. *Team Spirituality*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Corrigan, Thom. *The Small Group Fitness Kit: How to Keep Your Group Healthy and Growing*. Hamilton, Mass.: Pilgrimage Publishing, 1996.
- Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996.
- Doughty, Stephen. *Discovering Community: A Meditation on Community in Christ*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1999.
- Fox, H. Eddie, and George Morris. *Faith Sharing* (revised and expanded). Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996 (reprinted in 1998).
- Galloway, Dale. *The Small Group Book: The Practical Guide for Nurturing Christians and Building Churches*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 1995.

- George, Carl. *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*. Mansfield, Penn.: Kingdom Publishing, 1997.
- George, Carl. *The Coming Church Revolution*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 1994.
- Harris, Edie Genung and Shirley Ramsey. *Sprouts: Nurturing Children Through Covenant Discipleship*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1995.
- Hook, M. Anne Burnette. *Grace Notes: Spirituality and the Choir*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998.
- Kendrick, Michael. *Supper Club: Creative Ideas for Small-Group Fellowship*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994.
- Kirkpatrick, Thomas. *Small Groups in the Church: A Handbook for Creating Community*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1995.
- Krau, Carol. *Keeping in Touch: Christian Formation and Teaching*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999.
- McBride, Neal. *Real Small Groups Just Don't Happen: Nurturing Relationships in Your Small Group*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998.
- Mack, Michael. *The Synergy Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996.
- Manskar, Steve. *Living in God's Household*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, Fall 2000.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Covenant and Call* (Equipping the Future Church Series). Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2000.
- Newby, James R. *Gathering the Seekers*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1995.
- Phillips, Edward and Sara Phillips. *In Spirit and Truth* (Equipping the Future Church Series). Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2000.
- Savage, John. *Listening and Caring Skills in Ministry: A Guide for Pastors, Counselors, and Small-Group Leaders*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Schwarzentraub, Betsy. *Afire with God* (Equipping the Future Church Series). Nashville: Discipleship Resources, available late 2000.
- Sperry-White, Grant S. *Echoing the Word: The Ministry of Forming Disciples*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998.
- Stark, David, and Patrick Keifert. *Design and Launch a Successful Small Group*. St. Paul: Church Innovations Publishing, 1994.
- Starting Small Groups and Keeping Them Going*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995.
- Sutherland, David. *Together in Love: Covenant Discipleship in Youth*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999.
- Swanson, Roger, and Shirley Clement. *The Faith-Sharing Congregation*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996 (reprinted in 1999).
- Turner, Nathan. *Leading Small Groups: Basic Skills for Church and Community Organizations*. Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1996.

- Veerman, David. *Small Group Ministry with Youth*. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1992.
- Watson, David. *Class Leaders*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991.
- Watson, David. *Covenant Discipleship*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991.
- Watson, David. *Forming Christian Disciples*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1995.
- Williams, Dan. *Starting (and Ending) a Small Group*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Wills, Dick. *Waking to God's Dream: Spiritual Leadership and Church Renewal*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

## Spiritual Formation

- Alive Now: Strengthening the Faith Life of Groups and Individuals*. Nashville: The Upper Room.
- Bondi, Roberta. *A Place to Pray: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Bondi, Roberta. *To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987.
- Bondi, Roberta. *To Pray and to Love*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Brown, Patricia. *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Broyles, Anne. *Journaling: A Spiritual Journey*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1999.
- Bultemeier, Joanne. *Spiritual Growth Through Team Experience (Walk to Emmaus)*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.
- Carter, William J. *Team Spirituality: A Guide for Staff and Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Dean, Kenda and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998.
- Devo'Zine Guide for Mentors and Small Groups*. Nashville: The Upper Room (six issues annually).
- Fox, H. Eddie. *Grace Esteem: New Life in Christ*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1988.
- Harper, Steve. *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1999.
- Hinson, William. *The Power of Holy Habits: A Discipline for Faithful Discipleship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Miller, Craig. *Encounters with Jesus: A Group Study in Baby Boomer Spirituality*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998.
- Miller, Craig and Lia Icaza-Willetts. *Culture Shifts: A Group Bible Study for Postmodern Times*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1997.
- Miller, Wendy. *Invitation to Presence: A Guide to Spiritual Disciplines*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1995.

Morris, Danny and Charles Olson. *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.

Newby, James. *Gathering the Seekers: Spiritual Growth Through Small Group Ministry*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1995.

Rice, Howard. *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998.

*Spiritual Formation Bible, The*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999.

Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast: An Introduction to Spirituality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Vest, Norvene. *Gathered in the Word: Praying the Scripture in Small Groups*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.

Ware, Corinne. *Connecting to God: Nurturing Spirituality Through Small Groups*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1997.

Group Study Series (Curriculum)

Curri-U-Phone: 1-800-251-8591

Discipleship Resources Information Line: 1-800-814-7833

Upper Room Resources: 1-800-491-0912

Videos on Small-Group Ministry

**Coleman, Lyman.** *Serendipity Series* (Twelve videos).

**George, Carl.** *Nine Facets of the Effective Small-Group Leader* (Series of nine videos.)

The General Board of Discipleship

*Fancy Footwork: Discipleship Wesleyan Style*

Part A: *Worship and Justice*

Part B: *Compassion and Devotion*

**Discipleship Resources**

*Faith-Sharing Video Kit*