

CLASS MEETINGS FAQ's

❖ What are Class Meetings (Small Groups)?

A: A key element to John Wesley's theology was the critical importance of participation in Class Meetings and Band Meetings, with the Class Meeting (or Small Group) being the central focus in the early Methodists journey of transformation toward Holiness. The practice of the Class Meeting and Small Group Discipleship has declined over time, along with the percentage of the population who are active in a Church.

❖ Why Class Meetings at TLUMC?

A: Here at TLUMC, we want to reinvigorate Small Group Ministry as a key part of our discipleship journey toward Holiness. Our TLUMC Mission is: "To build followers of Jesus Christ who Love and Serve God and Neighbor". This Mission Statement is rooted in two of the key commandments from Jesus: First, the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 19-20), "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" and Second, the Great Commandment (Matt. 22: 37-40), He said to him, "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." John Wesley based the model of the Methodist Movement on these two commandments, and called the "methods" the Means of Grace.

❖ Is Class Meeting (Small Group) ministry a part of TLUMC core value?

A: In early 2019, the Discipleship Committee was formed and charged with promoting the TLUMC Core Value of Intentional Disciple Making by providing Information, Encouragement, Support, Training and Facilitation for Intentional, Accountable, Transformational Discipleship Groups, whether existing or new, in order to reinvigorate a movement toward more 'Small Group-focused' ministry. If we are able to shift our attention from the large group as the focus of our ministry to small groups as the engine that drives our church health and disciple-making mission, we will create a model of church that is sustainable and thriving, that will invite new people to become more deeply connected, and that will be an intentional expression of our TLUMC mission to "build followers of Jesus Christ who love and serve God and neighbor.

❖ What do we do? What happens in the meetings?

A: This is not a bible study group or Christian social gathering. Those have merit, and their place too. The intent for class meetings is to grow more Christ-like through support and love with each other. Basically, to have a set aside time, with brothers and sisters in Christ each week to talk and share about our individual walk with God, where we have seen God at work in our lives this week, where we've been able to share our faith with someone, what our struggles may be, and to encourage one another, pray together and watch over one another in love, is irreplaceable. To devote the time in answering, How is it with your soul? Or, How does your soul prosper? The group may also choose to substitute a short devotional from the weekly program early in the forming of the teams, to focus on reflections from the previous week sermon.

As Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke stated: "We have no doubt, but meetings of Christian brethren for the exposition of scripture- texts, may be attended with their advantages. But the most profitable exercise of any is the free inquiry into the state of the heart"

❖ When will Class Meetings start?

A: In the next few weeks before fall, we will be recruiting individuals and couples who are interested in becoming Class Meeting Leaders in addition to signing up those who would like to participate in a group.

❖ If I sign up, do I have to lead a group?

A: The Discipleship Committee has developed some simple, but effective, methods and techniques, which will be taught to and practiced with Class Meeting Leaders. The Discipleship Committee will then support and facilitate these new leaders in forming a Class Meeting group and putting together the right group with them and then start holding Class meetings, at least for a trial period. The goal and desire would be for every Small Group to flourish and thrive, and have a long-term successful Discipleship relationship. A Trial Period, combined with meetings and mentorship for our Pastoral Leadership and the Discipleship Committee will increase success rates and maintain the focus on the primary mission

❖ **Who can join? How do I sign up?**

A: Anyone can join regardless of age or marital status. You can participate as a couple or single. This is an opportunity to connect with fellow believers and share your journey to grow in Christ. You can volunteer yourself and a group, identify those you feel comfortable sharing with; or the Discipleship Committee will help form groups. Anyone interested in at least exploring the possibility of being a member of a Small Group, or a Small Group Leader, can sign up on the Class Meetings tab on the Tri-Lakes UMC website.

❖ **What days and times do the Class Meetings meet? When is the last day to sign up by?**

A: The Class Leaders will select the time and date for their meetings. You can sign up based on time they meet or comfort level with the team membership. Last day to sign up is when each team have finalized their members.

❖ **Can I pick who I want to be in my group?**

A: Yes. While we are recruiting leaders and participation, you may identify a group that you are comfortable sharing with and the leader who is willing to follow the methods and techniques taught by the Discipleship Committee. The goal is to build disciples.

❖ **How often do they meet? Do I have to commit to attend all meetings?**

A: Each team lead will have the opportunity to decide how often they meet. The Discipleship Committee recommends at least once a week to discover where each person is in his or her relationship with God and where is God calling him or her to grow in faith and love.

❖ **Where will the meetings be held?**

A: In the past, the class leader and the group decided to meet either in their homes or at the church. Anywhere where the team feels comfortable sharing their faith in trials and triumphs. New groups will have the opportunity to decide for themselves.

In summary, in the model set forth by Jesus Christ himself with his 12 Disciples, which we might call his Class Meeting or Small Group, and further emphasized by John Wesley, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, your Discipleship Committee is ready to encourage, facilitate, train and support new Small Group Leaders and Members to grow participation in Small Group Ministry with confidence of the results being not only Transformational Discipleship, but also strengthening the very engine of our thriving Church.