

SMALL GROUP DISCIPLESHIP

Back to the Basics: Reinvigorating the Wesleyan Class Meeting concept with Small Groups

A message from your TLUMC Discipleship Committee

Dear TLUMC Family,

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. Here at TLUMC, we want to reinvigorate Small Group Ministry and 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.'³⁸This 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.

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." The COVID virus had a significant impact on the progress the Discipleship Committee was able to achieve in 2020. However, with conditions improving rapidly, and the limitations and restrictions being increasingly relaxed, it is now time to move forward with the first phases of our overall strategy.

The plan for the remainder of 2021 is as follows:

- Recruit, mentor and train individuals or couples who are interested in becoming Small Group Leaders. The Discipleship Committee has developed some simple, but effective, methods and techniques, which will be taught to and practiced with Small Group Leaders
- Support and facilitate those new leaders in forming a Small Group. The Committee will assist new leaders with putting together the right group with them
- Start holding Small Group meeting, 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.

This is where we need your participation and feedback. Anyone who is interested in at least exploring the possibility of being a Small Group Leader, or even a member of a Small Group, please contact one of the following Discipleship Committee Members:

- Kevin Williams: rkwilliams@gmail.com (719) 332-1691
- Margi Frostman: mfrostman58@gmail.com (719) 244-6992
- Jay Kelley: jaykelley@me.com (719) 338-9336
- Susan McCreedy: suesoriginals@gmail.com (830) 719-2269
- Diane Williams: desp8@aol.com (719) 210-4268

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”

And as John Wesley stated:

“Never omit meeting your Class or Band... These are the very sinews of our Society; and whatever weakens, or tends to weaken, our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community.”

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.

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.

Blessings to all, and we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Your Discipleship Committee