



CONNECT

GATHER

GROUP

SERVE

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him,
he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...
This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."
[John 15:5, 8]*

Jesus said his relationship with his followers is like the relationship between branches and a vine. If a branch stays attached to the vine, it will produce much fruit.

WE WANT TO BE A CHURCH FILLED WITH PEOPLE THAT PRODUCE GOD-GLORIFYING FRUIT!

Someone who lives in a way that brings glory to God is called a "disciple." (Which is a much better term than 'fruity-Christian.')

We describe a disciple as someone who is in the process of Knowing, Living & Sharing the Good News. (Knowing Jesus, Living for Jesus, and Sharing about Jesus.)

We believe discipleship is a lifelong, ongoing process. And we believe God has called the local church to help people grow as disciples.

We believe the primary mission of every local church should be to make disciples, but we believe the details of how the church goes about this mission can vary greatly. It depends on the time, place, culture, people and circumstance in which God is using that church.

The purpose of this booklet is to describe the process of how we believe God wants to use our church to help people Know, Live & Share the Good News.

Our Process is...

- ...a way to help us all understand how we do ministry. Our process shows the importance of our primary weekly ministries of Sunday services and Small Groups.
- ...a way to simplify what it means to be involved in church. Trying to do too much at church can actually pull people away from Jesus and other important relationships.
- ...a way to focus our resources. We minister with the resources God has entrusted to us. We will evaluate new ministry opportunities and start those that help us make disciples. Limiting the number of activities will allow us to focus best on what God is calling us to do.

Our process is not...

- ...trying to force God to work in a predetermined way. We acknowledge that God works in ways beyond our understanding or expectation. This process is not set in stone and will be adjusted as God continues to lead our church to fulfill his mission in his way.
- ...supposed to be rigid. Not everyone will participate in these steps in the same order. As God leads, some may move quickly and some may take years to move through all these steps.
- ...a measure of Christian maturity. While we believe this process will encourage most people to grow in their faith, it is no guarantee of bearing fruit. What people do outside of church has a significant impact on whether they grow as a Christian. Most importantly, Christ-like growth depends on God's Spirit. We also acknowledge that a Christian can bear fruit without walking through this specific process.



CONNECT GATHER GROUP SERVE

Making initial contacts with our church community

God uses all Christians to impact those who do not yet know him.

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16

- People connect in a wide variety of ways.
- First connections are usually made with individuals outside of church events.
- A connection has two sides, but the responsibility to make this connection falls on the side of the church.
- Each person in our church has unique set of relationships God uses to make connections.
- Special church events provide opportunity to connect [VBS, Harvest Party, Strawberry Festival, etc.].
- First visit(s) at church are key to connecting. Regular attendees should look for opportunities to build new connections at church events.
- A good reputation in the community will encourage people to connect with our church.
- Connections grow out of a genuine care for others.

Example of the importance of **connecting**.

A few years ago, Gail had come to a few of our church services because of her family relationship with Judy and Nell. Then, during a difficult time, Judy invited Gail to come to church again. A few weeks later, Gail helped hand out cocoa during the Christmas parade. During that event she met Lynn and Joe who have since become good friends.

Later, when Gail's sister, Nicki, learned that her mother had cancer, she too felt the need to come to church. She joined her sister for a few worship services, and quickly built relationships with others at the church. After six months, Judy invited her to join the Tuesday AM Mission Group where she was able to serve and build more relationships.

Today, we are thankful that Gail and Nicki are involved members of our church.

Next Step: We hope that after making connections with individuals or groups within the church a person will begin to regularly **gather** for the Sunday morning worship service. This may take place rapidly after only one or two connections, or it may take longer after building many different connections to the church.



CONNECT GATHER GROUP SERVE

Regularly attending Sunday worship events

Christians encourage godly growth by meeting for teaching, fellowship, worship and prayer. Sunday morning is our primary time to identify as a local church body.

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...” Hebrews 10:25

- Gathering together allows Christians to identify as the church and is a visible example to unbelievers.
- The Sunday morning service encourages regular authentic worship as a church family.
- Bible-based preaching brings us before God's Word in the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Right teaching helps the whole church community understand and apply God's Word while avoiding error.
- A friendly & welcoming atmosphere encourages people to return.
- Quality nursery and Jr. Church encourages the spiritual growth of children while helping parents to focus on the sermon.
- Age appropriate children, teen, and adult Sunday School provides interactive study of God's word.
- At this time, Children and Teen Sunday school is the primary small group opportunity for children and youth [see **“Group”**]

Example of the importance of gathering.

John and Sharon like to say they have been attending church since “before they were born.” Gathering with other Christians has provided many encouraging and influential friendships over the years. They met each other at this church when John’s father served as pastor. Their friendship had the common bond of Christ, and quickly moved to marriage.

John and Sharon have both found that years of listening to biblical sermons has helped them to better know God’s Word. God has used others’ teaching to help them understand passages—especially difficult ones—in a clearer light. When they read their Bible today, often snippets of past teaching comes back to help them respond to God’s Word. Music and worship are also important to them, and they enjoy the chance to sing songs of praise with other Christians. Songs they sing at church on Sunday often come to mind (and to the lips) during the week.

Gathering with other Christians gives them a place where they feel they belong. John and Sharon appreciate the chance to visit with old friends and get to know new ones following the worship service.

Next Step: Regularly attending Sunday services should help a person Know, Live and Share the Good News. We believe that God uses close relationships with other Christians to bring even greater growth. For this reason we encourage people to share their lives with others in a weekly small **group**.



CONNECT GATHER **GROUP** SERVE

Involvement in a Small Group

Loving and supportive relationships are essential for greater Christ-like growth. This kind of relationship is more likely to develop when smaller groups of people gather regularly together.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." James 5:16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." Colossians 3:16

- Small groups center around the study and application of God's word.
- Small groups provide a safe place to ask questions.
- Small groups provide a safe place to be yourself.
- Small groups are the first place to ask for help.
- Small groups are a place to encourage each other to take the next step in Christ-like growth.
- Small groups are a place to share dreams & joys as well as challenges & failures.
- Building trust and close relationships in Small Groups will take time.
- Small groups can vary in size, type, personality and purpose.
- Not all small groups will work for all people. It is okay to change groups.
- Small groups are the structured way our church encourages closer relationships, but they are not the only way these kinds of relationship can take place.

Example of the importance of **grouping**.

When Doris started coming to the Tuesday mission circle group, she also met with Pastor Travis to study the Bible and learn about Jesus. After a month, she said she would be interested in knowing what her new friends in the Tuesday mission circle thought about Jesus. “It’s not that I don’t appreciate meeting with you. I just that I also want to know what the ladies think.” In response, Kathleen (then 85 years old!) started our first small group Bible study with some of the ladies from that group. Doris not only learned more about Jesus and what it means to live as a Christian, she was able to hear from her peers what following Jesus means to them. As she came to know more, her small group strongly encouraged her to attend church and later to be baptized as a way of showing her new faith in Jesus. Doris and “the ladies” have experienced deep friendships that have grown over the past few years.

Doris’s story is just one of many varied examples of how people have been supported and encouraged through our small group ministry.

Next Step: As we grow in Knowing, Living & Sharing the Good News, we are called to use our God-given gifts in **service** to others. **Serving** is one way we share God’s love with others. Much of that **service** will take place in family, work-place, school, or community. We also encourage **servicing** our church or community by joining one of our church Ministry Teams.



CONNECT GATHER GROUP SERVE

Serving in Ministry

Serving others is one of the primary ways we express God's love within and outside of our church. God builds the church as each member does its part in service.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. ^{Mark 10:45}

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ^{1 Corinthians 12:27}

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ^{Ephesians 2:10}

- Followers of Jesus act like Jesus when serving others.
- Our church performs formal service through Ministry teams. [Much informal service also takes place.]
- Many church ministry teams have focus on serving the church body.
- We look forward to growing more church ministry teams that promote Christ while serving our local community.
- Serving "outside of comfort-zone" provides opportunity to trust in God's provision and power.
- Serving alongside of Christians can be a powerful experience for those exploring Christ.
- Church service should not so dominate a one's time that a person can not also serve family or community.

Example of the importance of **serving.**

Serene first had the desire to take part on a short term mission trip while in high school, when people from her church in Peru, Maine shared their experience about a mission trip to Haiti. She was inspired and felt with her youthful energy that she should help in a similar way. Mike was similarly inspired when, years later, he heard from missionary and nurse Kristy Engel about the challenges she faced having to decide who would obtain medical care under her care. Both Mike and Serene (husband and wife) wanted to do something for those who were in greater need than themselves.

When the opportunity came to go to La Romana in the Dominican Republic to work with Kristy and others for a week, Mike and Serene joined Gail and 5-time La Romana short term missionary Judy. Mike and Serene gladly gave a week of their time and took the small yet real risk of health and safety that came with this kind of work. Going to another culture, especially one with such poverty took Mike and Serene out of their comfort zone.

They went to serve, but both returned feeling they received much more than they had given. Seeing poverty first hand gave them each a better sense of their own wealth and caused them to rethink how they treated their own belongings. They were also greatly impacted by witnessing the vibrant worship and faith of those who had almost nothing to their name.

Seeing injustice and poverty as well as joy and faith impacted these two who served as missionaries for a week.