

Group Guidelines

kingdom community

Vision of New Song Groups: Follow Christ Together in Kingdom Community.

Key Verse of New Song Small Groups: Philippians 1:27 “Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.

1. Be committed to the study of God’s Word through the chosen curriculum – this is our opportunity to dig deeper together.

2. Be excited and expectant about what God will do through you and this group.

3. Encourage each other to grow in relationship with Jesus, and to align our beliefs and actions with the Bible’s truths.

4. Pray for one another. Prayer is powerful. Continue to pray for each other throughout the week. Prayer helps build the bond of real Kingdom friendships.

5. Welcome newcomers. Be inviting and help plug people into Kingdom community.

6. Refrain from gossip. Unless the topic is glorifying to God and praiseworthy, do not speak of a mutual acquaintance or friend who is not present.

7. Be sensitive to the Spirit. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. Do not dominate the discussion - allow for equal opportunity for contribution to the conversation.

8. We are here to sharpen one another, not fix each other. Any advice given should always point to God and agree with His Word. Take care not to overwhelm the person. Consider if the person is seeking guidance

9. Avoid conflict. It is okay to disagree. It is not okay to argue within the group. If you and another member do not agree on a topic, move on. Conflict prone topics such as politics should be avoided in groups.

10. Assure confidentiality. What is said in the group, stays in the group – protect this environment fiercely. The only exception is when someone threatens to hurt themselves or someone else.

11. Abstain from alcohol and other addictive substances in group. Do not consume, offer, nor discuss them during group time. You never know what a brother or sister is struggling with. The exception would be if someone is discussing his or her recovery or struggle – this type of healing discussion is permitted and encouraged.

12. Avoid favoritism. Be inclusive by helping all group members feel welcome and equal in the Kingdom. Respect everyone’s contribution by avoiding cross-talk during group discussion. Bullying or any behavior that negatively singles someone out will not be tolerated.

If you feel there is a need, issue or concern that should be addressed, **first talk with your Group Leader, or email groups@newsongpeople.com** – this is a confidential resource that will connect you directly with New Song’s Groups Leadership Team.

Welcome Letter

kingdom community

Dear NEW New Song Group Leader, we want to start by saying THANK YOU!

Thank you for serving in this capacity and for playing a vital part in New Song Groups! We are excited and expectant that this role will bless you greatly as you experience what God has in store and witness His hand at work in your group.

As a member of New Song Church, you have heard about our vision, mission, and pursuits. One way to make this more tangible to us is to envision our pursuits: Pursuing the Presence, Transformational Discipleship, Kingdom Community, and Sacrificial Mission as the walls of our house with the Vision of Helping People Know God as the roof, or covering and the heart or the interior of the home being our Mission to Practice the Way of Jesus.

In New Song Groups, we do our part to sustain the house by following Christ together in Kingdom Community and creating environments where the rest of the pursuits are sought after through accountability, making every effort to collectively become “being transformed from one degree of glory to another.” When we seek after the Lord together - He shows up!

Philippians 1:27 shows us what it looks like to follow Christ together in Kingdom Community. “Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ.”

We trust that if we are meeting together as citizens of heaven, each motivated to live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, we will see real friendships develop, and real-life change take place, all for His glory.

This Community Group Starter Kit is designed to give you the resources you need to help not only start your Community Group but to see it thriving.

After your first three months of leading your group, you and your Co-leader will meet with our Community Groups Coordinator, Molly Ratliff to share how things are going and to address any concerns you may have. We call this a Cast Meeting. This meeting is where you either cast a vision for the future of your group or if circumstances have changed and you need to cast off your role to another leader, you will discuss how this can be done in a way that is beneficial to all group members. Molly will likely be occasionally checking in on how you’re doing before then. Please do not hesitate to reach out to her with any questions as well at molly.ratliff@newsongpeople.com

We are praying that God will use you in big ways as you begin this new role at New Song Church. We are joyful to welcome you as a New Song Group Leader. It is our privilege to serve you along the way!

In prayer,
New Song Groups Leadership Team

Courtney Haggard, Connections and Community Pastor, courtney.haggard@newsongpeople.com

Rosie Lobmeyer, Groups Director rosie.lobmeyer@newsongpeople.com

Molly Ratliff, Community Groups Coordinator molly.ratliff@newsongpeople.com

Ruby Thomas, HIS Groups Coordinator, ruby.thomas@newsongpeople.com

Josh Romano, Men’s Groups Coordinator, josh.romano@newsongpeople.com

Jamie Loeffler, Outreach Groups Coordinator, jamie.loeffler@newsongpeople.com

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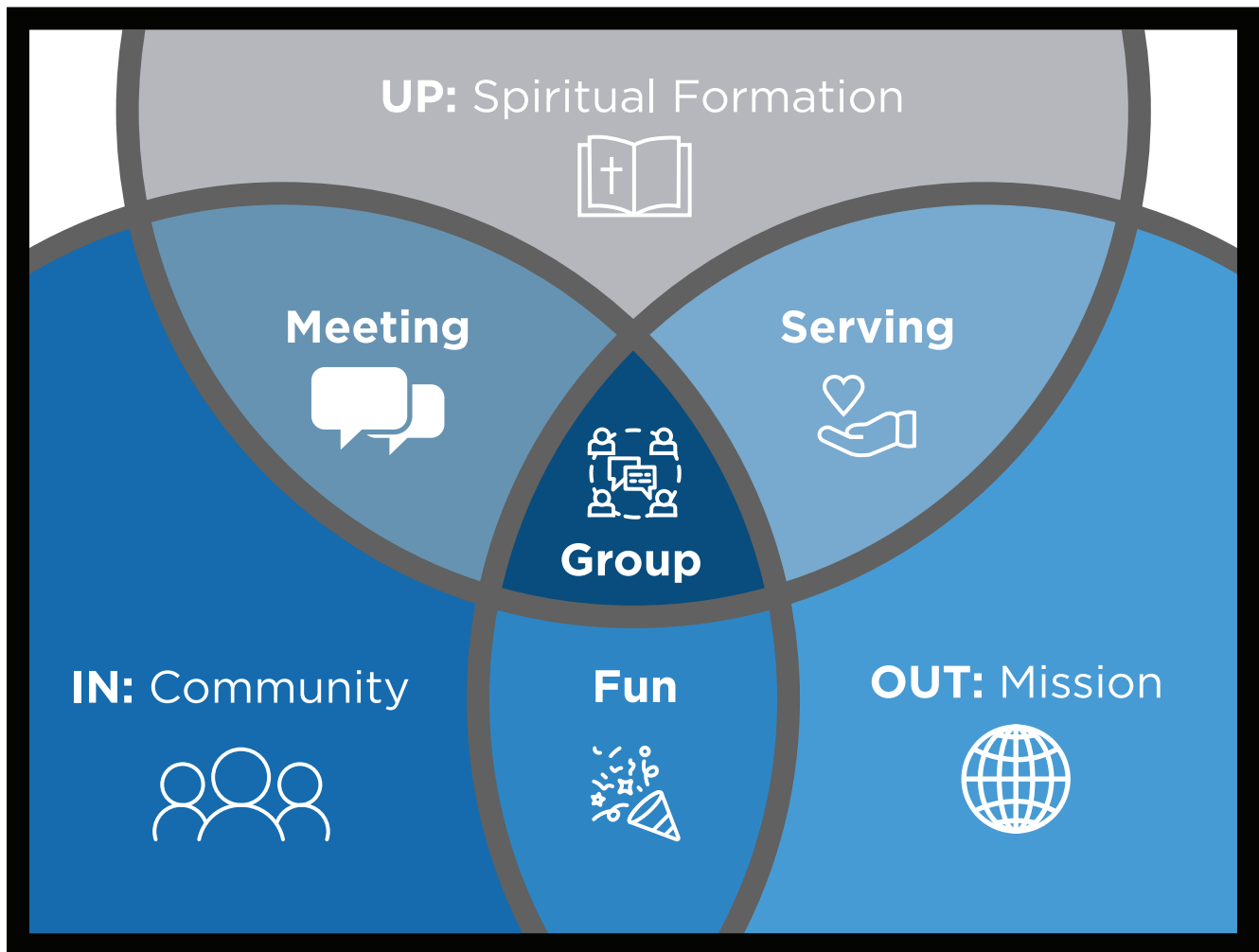
It is your responsibility, as a Group Leader, to not attempt to intervene in people’s personal lives beyond your role. If you feel there is a need, issue, or concern that should be addressed by church pastors or staff, contact our Groups Leadership Team at groups@newsongpeople.com

The Up/In/Out Model

We have found that over time, groups that have organically adopted this model - or have at least made an effort to move in this direction have been able to face the test of time and longevity - this has allowed them to fulfill the ultimate goal of fostering and maintaining Kingdom Community within their sphere of influence.

In addition to this model, we have found that groups that share responsibility for the group build healthier and more fruitful relationships. For example: groups that rotate host houses or opt into a potluck-style dinner where dishes and clean up is done together (as a family in Christ) see years of Kingdom Community instead of burn-out!

VC



The **UP** Leader: is typically the main Group Leader and fills these roles:

- Help create environments of worship, prayer, and praise.
- Help ensure that the conversation that takes place in the group is honoring the Lord and is designed to push people toward Transformational Discipleship.
- Usually ensures the flow of the group is on track and includes some form of confession or prayer request.
- Provides the teaching, content, or group discussion topics.

The **IN** Leader: is typically a Co-Leader and fills these roles:

- Welcomes, connects, and contacts new members.
- Helps existing members feel connected through regular updates, remembering birthdays, communication prayer requests, prompts
- conversation and community outside of group time - to include fun nights.
- May assist in the hosting duties (I find that groups that share the hosting responsibilities, meaning you rotate from house to house that can accommodate the group size) have the best outcomes.
- Initiates care responsibilities such as meal-trains or cards for sick or in-need group members.
- May help address conflict when needed.

The **OUT** Leader: Is typically a Co-Leader and fills these roles:

- Helps to cast vision for the greater purpose of Sacrificial Mission.
- Organizes serve projects either independently or by determining when the group will all serve together (i.e., Serve Saturday).
- May organize financial support for missionaries within the church.
- Assist IN leaders with organizing fun nights to support the Kingdom Community.

Together these leaders create a well-balanced group leadership structure that enables New Song Church to fulfill all four pursuits, the vision of Helping People Know God and the mission of Practicing the Way of Jesus!

When we work, serve, love, and grow together, we are far more likely to see the kind of revival and Kingdom Community the early church did - we will see what Acts 2:47 says, "Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

In order for you to be fully equipped as a Group Leader, we ask that you (and all co-leaders) listen to this teaching called: **Hosting The Presence** on the groups resources page, at newsongpeople.com.

Childcare for Community Groups

Providing childcare for your small group is not a requirement, but it can be a huge blessing. The option of childcare is likely the number one concern for prospective group members with kids!

If you and your Group Co-leader decide to provide childcare during group, there are two options to go about this:

- Option #1: Rotate two adult group members to watch the kids during meeting time in a separate room of the house.
- Option #2: Hire a childcare worker(s) to watch the kids during each meeting in a separate room of the house.

We often recommend seeking out students or persons who are fund-raising for mission trips. If you need a list of those who are currently fund-raising, please e-mail missions@newsongpeople.com

** Please note that childcare will solely be the responsibility of each small group, and New Song Church is not liable nor responsible for events that occur off campus. It is, however, of utmost importance to New Song that each small group chooses their childcare workers with an abundance of discretion and thought! We are here to assist you in this, so please contact your Groups Coordinator if you need any help!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Starting a Group

HOW BIG SHOULD MY GROUP BE?

The average small group size is 8-12 people, but every group is different. One of the reasons we value Group Co-leaders at New Song is that they help ensure that at least two people will be present at each meeting. Where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there among them. - Matthew 18:20

We want group members to feel comfortable in the space you meet. If your group outgrows your meeting space, reach out to your Groups Coordinator if you need ideas on how to ensure continued connection of all your group members.

WHEN SHOULD MY GROUP MEET?

We believe there is a time and place for whatever group the Lord has put on your heart to lead. Weekday evenings, after working hours, are popular group meeting times, but there also exist healthy small groups that meet outside of that popular time spot. Talk with your Group Co-leader and, most importantly, listen to the Holy Spirit as your guide for a time that will reach others well.

WHERE SHOULD MY GROUP MEET?

Meeting at a home provides an intimate, comfortable, and safe environment for group members to feel more apt to be real and transparent; however, if meeting at a home is not an option for you and your Group Co-leader, any space (coffee house, park, etc.) that allows your group to connect well and stay safe is a great space.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD MY GROUP MEET?

New Song Community, HIS, and Men's Groups are all expected to meet a minimum of once monthly. You and your Group Co-leader may up this frequency to every other week or even weekly, as you are able.

Consistency in frequency is crucial to assuring people keep coming to your small group. If you can create a good routine of meeting more regularly than once monthly, we believe you will develop a powerful Kingdom community within your group.

HOW LONG SHOULD EACH GROUP MEETING LAST?

We recommend that each group meeting last no longer than one and a half to two hours. If a meeting runs long, be sure to value your group members' time by announcing that you recognize the set time has been met and that they are not expected to stay later.

WHAT SHOULD WE STUDY?

Whether the content studied be scripture, Table Talk questions (found on the New Song app), sermon series, Christian books, the Being Transformed Journal entry of the day, or devotionals, as long as it is in agreement with the character of God and His Word, it is permitted. To assure approval, if you decide to study something other than the Bible or a New Song sermon, run it by your Groups Coordinator first (contact info on the Welcome Letter page of this Starter Kit). We trust our group leaders to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led as they guide their group, and with that, we extend a lot of autonomy in curriculum choosing provided it is in line with our core beliefs and values (found on the 'What we Believe' page on the New Song website).

WHAT IF I CAN'T ANSWER A QUESTION IN MY GROUP?

As a Group Leader, it is important to remember that you are a facilitator, not an answer machine. We do not expect you to have all the answers, nor should you think you do. In circumstances where you are not sure of an answer, work with your group members towards finding one in scripture. At New Song, we believe, "If it matters to you, it matters to God." Encourage the group member to pray over the question throughout the week as you do the same. We serve a God who longs to speak with us; sometimes, we just need to listen.

If a question or circumstance arises that you think needs attention from New Song pastoral staff, please contact your Groups Coordinator.

Communication and Discussion

Facilitate Dynamic Discussion - As the Group Leader, you are expected to be the facilitator of discussion. A facilitator is someone who makes a process easier. The discussion portion of a group meeting can, at times, feel awkward. Most people will be hesitant to share at first, but this DOES get better! The important thing is that you are intentional about moving the conversation forward and giving everyone an opportunity to speak.

Be Prepared to Talk - In any group setting, talking is contagious. Silence is also contagious. Create some momentum for your group, and keep it moving in the right direction. As the small group host, you will have to do some talking, however, DON'T dominate the conversation. This is a strong temptation, especially if you have a quiet group. Find the balance between talking too much and embracing the growing pains of silence. Sometimes allowing for a moment of silence is allowing the Spirit to move.

Communicate Clearly - At New Song, we like to say, "Clear is Kind." How many times have you had a negative experience due to miscommunication? Giving a vague or confusing message does not help anyone, for it often results in assumptions. Try not to leave room for assumption, for assumption blocks connection.

Keep it Open-Ended - Stay away from "Yes" or "No" questions. Push your group to dig past the surface by asking, "Why or why not?" Or, "What makes you feel that way?" Or, "How would you respond to that?"

Follow the 3 B's - Tell your Group members to keep their answers brief, biblical, and beneficial. This will keep your group on track, give the talkative person a limit, and give the quiet person confidence in their brevity. If someone is dominating the conversation, politely redirect back to another person - "Frank, that is such great input; Greg, what is your take?"

Remember: Groups are not the place for a political or even theological debate.

Roles & Types of New Song Groups

Roles

Group Leader - If you have a heart for others and a desire to Help People Know God, you can be a New Song Group Leader! We will provide simple training before you launch your group, and our Groups Leadership Team will work to support and assist you and your group as you follow Christ together in Kingdom Community.

Group Co-leader - Having a Co-leader serves to help you in many ways. It assures that at least two or more will consistently gather. A Co-leader can help keep routinely scheduled meetings when you may be sick or out-of-town by leading occasionally. We encourage you to split tasks based on gifts and talents, look out for each other, and plan the future of your small group together.

Types of Small Groups

Community - These groups are open to both men and women ages 18+. There are two sub-types of Community Groups.

- **Transformation** - These are traditional co-ed small groups in which members gather to study scripture, Table Talk questions, sermon series, Christian books, etc., all with the goal of growing spiritually in their relationships with Christ and one another. Often community growth groups choose a group name that defines the life stage or target demographic of their group members (ex. "Young Couples", "Families with Teens").
- **Connection** - These are co-ed groups that have the goal to connect with Christ and one another by doing something together that all the group members enjoy (ex. "Game Night Group"). It is important to remember that although these groups gather based on a shared interest, Christ should be kept at the center of the group and as the ultimate shared interest.

HIS - These groups are exclusive to women only, ages 18+. Like Community Growth Groups, HIS Groups may be named based on a targeted demographic but feel free to have no restrictions at all. Like Community Connection Groups, some HIS Groups gather based on a shared interest to celebrate together, and similarly must remember to keep Christ at the center of the group and as the ultimate shared interest.

- **HIS AM** - These are semesterly groups that meet twice a year in the spring and Fall for women 18+ at the church or a location determined by the group leader. Each group covers a specific curriculum or book study that fits within the semester timeline. HIS AM provides childcare for children birth - 5 years old by registration. Group time is from 9-11:30 a.m. on Tuesday mornings.
- **HIS PM** - These are semesterly groups that meet twice a year in the Spring and Fall for women 18+ at the church or a location determined by the group leader. Each group covers a specific curriculum or book study that fits within the semester timeline. Childcare is not provided. Group time is from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday evenings.

Men's - These groups are exclusive to men only, ages 18+. Like Community Growth Groups, Men's Groups may be named based on a targeted demographic but feel free to have no restrictions at all. Like Community Connection Groups, some Men's Groups gather based on a shared interest to celebrate together, and similarly, must remember to keep Christ at the center of the group and as the ultimate shared interest.

Outreach - These groups are open to both men and women ages 18+. These groups answer the call to build our community through the love of Christ as we Show Up and Serve. Outreach Groups serve the Greater OKC area, typically partnering with local organizations in our community or serving a specific demographic (ex., the homeless). We serve knowing we are called to be a part of bringing God's heart to our city in action, word, and deed.

Group Attendance and Cares Report

Group Meeting Attendance

As a New Song Group Leader, you will be responsible for submitting attendance of each of your group meetings on Planning Center via planningcenter.com or the free Church Center app.

This is how that works: after you complete this Starter Kit, be sure to let your Groups Coordinator know. He or she will see to it that your group is represented at newsongpeople.churchcenter.com/groups.

On this website, you will have access to edit a list of all your group members. On this website, you will also have the ability to schedule “events” for your group; these “events” are your group meetings. It is important that you schedule each group meeting in advance.

The Planning Center software will use these scheduled events and your list of group members to send you reminder emails to submit group meeting attendance. You can even auto-schedule your groups out as far in advance as you would like.

The free Church Center app is a great way to submit attendance, as the app will notify you when it is time to take attendance, and you can do so right on the app.

If ever you have a new member or visitor at a group meeting that is not on the official member list, you can easily add them while taking attendance, whether on the website or using the app. If you run into any difficulty or have any questions, please contact your Groups Coordinator (contact info found in the Welcome Letter of this Group Starter Kit).

MONTHLY LEADERSHIP REPORT (AKA CARES REPORT)


New Song’s Cares Ministry answers the call to love one another by starting with our brothers and sisters in our church family.

The Monthly Leadership Report is a way for New Song’s Cares Ministry to have a pulse check on how our church family is doing by counting on all leaders within the church, and this includes group leaders, to submit a monthly report of any care needs among their team. As a group leader, your team refers to your co-leaders and group members. Care needs include happy events such as engagements, weddings, and births, as well as grievous events such as serious illness, hospitalizations, and deaths.

You will likely hear the report referred to as the “Cares Report.”

It can be accessed at newsongpeople.com/caresreport or within our Group Leader Resources at newsongpeople.com/groupresources

The Cares Report is due at the end of each month, between the final day of the month being reported over and the 5th day of the following month. It is important to New Song’s Cares Ministry that you do not submit the form early to avoid events falling through the cracks. You will receive monthly reminders as the deadline for submission approaches.



If you have further questions, please pull up the form now at newsongpeople.com/caresreport to learn more. New Song's Cares Ministry has made to great effort to provide clear and thorough instruction within the form.

First Meeting Checklist

BEFORE

1. Invite as many of your friends as you can think of..
 - Share your vision for the group – why you're doing it and what you hope people will walk away with.
 - Try to describe the dynamic of the group and the people who will be a part of it.
 - Create an invitational ripple effect by having your friends and new group members invite their friends too.
2. Invite more people than you have room for because, typically, only 1/2 to 2/3 of those who confirm actually show up! Start with as many people as you can at the beginning because there's usually some attrition
3. Tell people how initially it's a short-term experience that you're confident they'll love, and then they'll be able to decide if and in what way they'd like to continue.
4. Phone or text those interested a day or two before your first meeting.
5. Pray for your new group and those who plan to come!
6. Review the Starter Kit and your chosen study for the meeting.

DURING

1. Welcome and introduce yourself (be relaxed, be real, and have FUN!).
2. Share a little background as to why you chose the focus of the group that you did, and tell them basically what each meeting will look like.
3. Allow time for people to introduce themselves and share who they are and why your group stood out to them.
4. Acknowledge God's Presence with you (Matthew 18:20) and share how you believe the Lord will use your new group experience to transform their lives. Depending on how many people are present who are not members of New Song, you can touch briefly on how your group will align with New Song Group's vision to "follow Christ together in Kingdom Community."
5. Model authenticity and affirm each person's input as you facilitate discussion.
6. Encourage participants to invite their friends, coworkers, neighbors, parents of their kids' friends, and other unconnected people at your church to future meetings.
7. Close your group meeting with a brief prayer and get a picture.

AFTER

1. Let your Groups Coordinator (contact info found in the Welcome Letter of this Starter Kit) know how everything went and how he or she can pray for you!
2. Submit your meeting attendance online at planningcenter.com or on the Church Center app. Reach out to your Groups Coordinator if you have any questions.
3. Follow-up with those who didn't show up by calling them. Let them know you missed them and how great the first meeting was, and remind them of when the next meeting is going to be.
4. Spread the word on social media with your photo and welcome people to join you.
5. Remind your new group members of your next meeting a day or two beforehand.
6. Review the upcoming session and tailor discussion questions based on who God has placed in your group.
7. Over time, share bite-size roles and responsibilities with your group members, see what people gravitate toward, and let them run with it! Rotate the study facilitation as well.

Once you have read each component of this Men's Group Starter Kit, please reach out to our Men's Groups Coordinator, Coby Moran, to let him know you have done so. Contact info can be found in the Welcome Letter.

Thank you for your commitment to completing this training and beginning your role as a New Song Men's Group Leader!