

Small Group Strategic Planning

Introduction:

“Biblical and historical sources give evidence that small groups are the most effective structures for the communication of the gospel and that small-cell communities are strategic in fostering renewal in the church. They are a source of encouragement and strength through good and difficult times and provide a context where personal growth can take place.” –Harley Atkinson, quoted from *The Power of Small Groups in Christian Education*. He lists 8 reasons why small groups are beneficial to church ministry;

- They provide individuals with a sense of community
- They assist people in the quest for spirituality.
- They are an ideal point of entry into the church.
- They provide a safe environment for learning.
- They are an ideal way to study and apply Scripture and church doctrine.
- They are an effective way of mobilizing the laity to ministry.
- They provide a good context for much of a church’s ‘caring ministry’.
- They are a way for very large churches to keep a sense of smallness.

God created us to be in relationship with one another, but relationships in our culture continue to break down. It is the church’s responsibility and opportunity to model God’s intentions for true relationships in the body of Christ.

GOAL 1: Grow small group participation at Atonement.

Year 1:

- A. Development of a tool that will track small group membership and involvement yearly. (Completed between February & April 2010)
- B. Development of an assessment tool to find out satisfaction/dissatisfaction and what is wanted and needed in small group ministry. Assessment will be done yearly and implementation of small groups will be determined by assessment. (Developed and handed out at church: March 2010)
- C. Development of marketing methods that will connect people into small groups within three months after going through new membership classes.
- D. 35% of church membership post confirmation will be involved in a small group.
- E. Provide 10 new small group opportunities each year.

Year 2:

- A. 45% of church membership post confirmation will be involved in a small group.
- B. Begin 5 small groups in geographic areas outside of a 20 minute drive to Atonement.

Year 3:

- A. 55% of church membership post confirmation will be involved in a small group.
- B. Begin 10 new small groups each year.

- C. Evaluate structure and staffing to ensure we are meeting the needs of the growing number of groups.

Year 4:

- A. 65% of church membership post confirmation will be involved in a small group.
- B. Begin 10 new small groups each year.

Year 5:

- A. 75% of church membership post confirmation will be involved in a small group.
- B. Evaluate last 4 years and set new goals for the next 5 years to make small group membership 100%.

GOAL 2: Develop a network of leaders to meet the needs of small group growth.

Year 1:

- A. Develop and implement bi-annual leadership training for small group leaders.
- B. Establish a support system for leaders. (Ex. monthly leadership meetings, weekly emails, etc.)
- C. Annually train 10 (or more) new small group leaders who begin leading a group within the first year of completing the leadership training.
- D. Assess the needs of leader support and ongoing training.

Year 2:

- A. Assess effectiveness of small group leaders.
- B. Develop and implement a coaching plan for small group leaders.

Year 3:

- A. Assess first year of small group coaching plan.
- B. Assess the need for new small group leaders and adjust the number accordingly.

Year 4:

- A. Annually train new small group leaders based on Year 3's needs assessment.

GOAL 3: Ensure that the Atonement small group vision is incorporated into ministry at all life stages.

Year 1:

- A. Work with staff to develop continuity of small group philosophy in all areas of ministry at Atonement.
- B. Collaborate with the Life Stages Team to create a rubric to evaluate each life stage ministry so the small group team and other teams can assess the different ministries.
- C. Collaborate with the life stages visioning team to evaluate each area of ministry.
- D. Collaborate with each ministry area to see what life stages they are serving and identify those life stages not being served. Identify small groups that can serve these life stages. (Jan. – June.)
- E. Establish priorities in what life stage ministry area to develop each year.
- F. Find and train small group leaders willing to start a small group within those life stages annually. (July – December)

Year 2:

- A. Evaluate the previous year's new life stage groups yearly.
- B. Evaluate past priorities in life stages ministries and establish new priorities in what life stage ministry area to develop yearly.

Year 3:

- A. Continue to evaluate the previous year's life stage groups.
- B. Continue to evaluate priorities in Life stage ministries.

Year 4:

- A. Create a rubric and evaluate the effectiveness of Atonement's model of small group ministry.

Year 5:

- A. Modify or amplify Atonement's model of small group ministry based on the results of Year 4's evaluation.
- B. Continue yearly life stage evaluations.

GOAL 4: Ensure that the following spiritual disciplines are an integral part of each and every small group: study, worship, prayer, fellowship, service, and evangelism.

Year 1:

- A. Train leaders to incorporate these 6 spiritual disciplines into the life of their small group.
- B. Develop an evaluation tool (rubric) for each small group to ensure that these six spiritual disciplines are being incorporated into each small group in some degree or aspect.
- C. Evaluate small groups based on the use of the six basic spiritual disciplines.

Year 2:

- A. During a monthly leadership meeting for the small group leaders, have the leaders assess their small group on these spiritual disciplines and assist as needed. Do this on an annual basis.

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