

St. John Lutheran Church  
Organization and Structure  
Connect Groups

**The 4 F's: Focus, Form, Fill, Facilitate**

**Semester Calendar**

Fall: October to December

Spring: February to April

Summer: June to August

**Outline**

**September:** fill, promotion month

**October:** facilitate, fall connect groups begin, staff follow-up with group leaders to ensure that everything is going well

**November:** focus, begin planning for spring connect groups

**December:** form, begin forming spring connect groups by asking people to be group leaders/coordinators/hosts and finetune meeting location, days and times

**January:** fill, promotion month for spring connect groups

**February:** facilitate, spring connect groups begin, staff follow-up with leaders to ensure that everything is going well

**March:** focus, begin planning for summer connect groups

**April:** form, begin forming summer connect groups by asking people to be group leaders/coordinators/hosts and finetune meeting location, days and times

**May:** fill, promotion month for summer connect groups

**June:** facilitate, summer connect groups begin, staff follow-up with group leaders to ensure that everything is going well

**July:** focus, begin planning for fall connect groups

**August:** form, begin forming fall connect groups by asking people to be group leaders/coordinators/hosts and finetune meeting location, days and time

## Focus

“Evaluation is the key to excellence.”

To begin with, we're going to have nothing to evaluate, so we focus on planning. It's never too early to begin planning.

### **Focus Step #1: Evaluate**

“You can't evaluate what you don't measure.”

Questions to ask:

1. How can we do it better?
2. What went well? What didn't go so well?

Feedback is key to success.

- Survey to the group participants at the end of each semester
- Connect Group Leader Training survey

### **Focus Step #2: Set The Calendar**

The Calendar 2019:

#### Fall

Fall Semester Begins: Monday, September 30

Fall Semester Ends: December 8

Connect Group Training: June 29, October 19

Sign-ups for the fall: September 15-29 in church and online

Date for asking/confirming leaders: August 25

Date for preaching on Connect Groups: September 29

Date Connect Group Catalog and website is finalized: September 15

Date Connect Group leaders will have table with group information for sign-up: September 15

#### Spring

To be determined after evaluation of Fall

#### Summer

To be determined after evaluation of Spring

### **Focus Step #3: Set the Goals**

“Goals are dreams with deadlines.”

“Goals are outward expressions of what you are trusting God to accomplish.”

Goals:

- 7-8 new groups with 7-8 new leaders
- Variety of groups that meet the needs of the people
- To encourage parishioners that “living by faith” is living life with other people, connecting with others.

### **Focus Step #4: Set the Structure**

- Women's
- Men's
- Married Couples
- Mom's
- Single
- Professional
- Community Service

#### Structure of Connect Groups

1. Leader
2. Coordinator
3. Host
4. Participant

Leader Requirements:

- a. Be a church member (a first-time leader can be a regular attendee headed toward membership)
- b. Be a member of a previous St. John connect group (emphasized next semester)
- c. Served as a coordinator in the past (emphasized next semester)
- d. Willing to attend Connect Group Training
- e. Committed to raising new leaders
- f. Pray for group members every day
- g. Facilitate group discussion once a week
- h. Update Pastor once a month (in person, email or handwritten)
- i. Recommend at least one new leader from current group once a semester

Coordinator Requirements:

- a. Be a regular church attender (although not necessarily a member)
- b. Be interested in becoming a member of the church
- c. Be selected and approved by the group leader/facilitator
- d. Willing to attend Connect Group Training
- e. Pray for group members every day
- f. Assist the group member with organizational tasks every week (e.g., reminder emails, prayer request distribution etc.)
- g. Facilitate group discussion once or twice a semester

Host Requirements:

- a. Willingness to open up one's home and develop a "safe place" for people to gather

Group Participant Requirements:

- a. Make weekly attendance a priority
- b. Regularly attend worship services at St. John and contribute to the ministry of the church through attendance, giving, service, and inviting of others
- c. Strive to build authentic relationships with those in my group by showing care, providing encouragement, and praying for their needs
- d. Serve together with their group once a semester and will play together with my group at least once;
- e. Explore honestly my next steps for spiritual growth

Questions to consider:

1. Do we have enough diversity in our groups?
2. Are they meeting the needs of the people?

**Focus Step #5: Build the List**

- Create a list of names of potential connect group leaders, coordinators, and hosts
- To alleviate potential burnout, group leaders will serve for two semesters, then take a semester off and participate in a group
- This encourages others to "step up" and lead, especially coordinators who've been trained and empowered

## Form

Calendar form months: April, August, and December

- Teach/Preach about life-to-life discipleship and the importance of living in faith and connecting with one another in connect groups
- Write and reflect about connect groups in The Eagle
- Sign-ups begin during worship and online
- Connect groups will be promoted in the weekly bulletin and The Eagle
- Big Day or "Vision Sunday" emphasis on teaching/preaching through the mission/vision of the pathway of discipleship
- Distribution of Connect Group Catalogs
- Opportunity given during Announcements to pick-up and sign-up for groups with clear deadlines in place
- 2 weeks before groups start, introduce of connect groups leaders to congregation during worship
- All information for each connect group is compiled into a catalog and available during worship and online

## The Big Ask

1. If you don't ask, you will not receive.
  - Matt. 7:7-8: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."
2. Leading a group is not an obligation; it's an opportunity.
  - Attitude: "We don't have to, we get to."
3. Asking people to lead helps them climb the ladder of leadership.
  - It helps them grow as a disciple and mature in their faith

### What Makes a Great Group Leader?

1. A follower of Jesus
2. Attends worship faithfully
3. Has participated in a group before, preferably as a Coordinator
4. On track to become a member (i.e., has registered for the next "Discover St. John" class)

## Fill

Calendar fill months: January, May and September

*Acts 5:42: "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."*

Now that connect groups have been "focused" and "formed," they now need to be filled with people.

The fill: Promotion month in which the entire focus is on connecting people to connect groups.

### Schedule:

1. One month until groups start:
  - Announce that groups are open, hand out catalogs, and give clear instructions how to sign up
2. Three weeks until groups start:
  - Announce that groups are open, hand out catalogs, and give clear instructions how to sign up
  - Have information table in the Gathering Center for people to pick up catalog of Connect Groups and answer questions
  - Recognize group leaders during worship
3. Two weeks until groups start:
  - All of the above
  - Teach/preach on the topic of Connect Groups, making the connection to our vision of "living by faith"
4. One week until groups start:
  - All of the above
  - Invite everyone who has already signed up to raise their hands to be recognized
  - Schedule a testimony to feature how lives are being changed by living life in community with Jesus and others

### **Fill Factor #1: One-Step Sign-ups**

KISS Principle: Keep it simple, silly.

- People say "no" when a proposition is unclear.

Two Ways to sign-up:

1. Sunday morning Worship
2. Online (website)

### **Fill Factor #2: Teaching/Preaching on the Power of Groups**

- Vision Sunday's
- When people know the why, they'll figure out the what and the how

### The Why:

1. Since the start of the Christian Church, Christians have gathered in large groups and in small groups for discipleship, fellowship, worship, evangelism, and ministry.
2. God created us to be in relationship with him and with each other (c.f. Gen. 2:18).
3. We need other people in our lives because life is tough (c.f. Eccles. 4: 9-12).
4. Jesus' presence is stronger when two or three are gathered together in his name (c.f. Matt. 18:20).
5. Fellowship with other believers is part of God's plan for discipleship (c.f. Acts 2: 41-42).

### **Fill Factor #3: Testimony, Videos and Dramas**

Action is spurred when we can relate to portrayed human experience.

- Testimony Ticket (to begin in the Spring of 2020)
- Next to preaching/teaching, testimonies are the next most powerful way to motivate people
- Revelation 12:11: "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

### **Fill Factor #4: Connect Groups Info Table**

- This is the importance of our Connect Center--it helps direct people to where they need to go and to "connect"

### **Fill Factor #5: Targeting Specific Group Types**

- Target the need, not only the want

Question: What need is being unmet? How can I attribute to the solution and not the problem?

### **Fill Factor #6: The Church-wide Campaign**

- Provides tremendous synergy and unity in the church
- A single focus between Sunday Worship and Connect Groups
- Examples would include:
  - 10-week message series with Connect Group questions for further study and discussion

### **Fill Factor #7: Newsletter and Mailings**

“Promotion requires creative redundancy, saying the same thing but in new and different ways.”

- People need to hear the same thing over and over again before it begins to “stick”
- Written Pastor articles specifically on the Vision of St. John: “Growing in Grace. Living by faith. Serving with Love.”
- Testimonies written in The Eagle of how God is changing lives (testimony ticket)
- This includes the E-Newsletter, which is in the works

### **Fill Factor #8: Selling the Previously Sold**

“Your best customer is the one you already got!”

- Keep clean data of contact info and group leaders, coordinators, hosts, and participants (If we don't have the data, we can't measure growth and evaluate.)
- The best potential group members for the upcoming semester are people who were in groups the previous semester.

### **Fill Factor #9: Promoting Groups to Newcomers**

- Pull a list of first/second time guests and pray for them.
- Thank God that He has entrusted them into our care and feel the weight of this responsibility.
- Prepare a targeted email with a special invitation to consider joining a connect group the next semester, letting them know when sign-ups are in the future.

### **Fill Factor #10: Creating Urgency**

- People respond to a sense of urgency.
- Urgency motivates people to action.
- “People don't do what is important; they do what is urgent.”
- “We do not do what we ought to do when we ought to do it, but we do what we have to do when we have to do it.”
- Set a clear deadline for sign-ups (though in reality someone could still join a group up to two weeks after the start).

**Fill Factor #11: No Sign-up Left Behind**

- Everyone who signs-up either online or at Worship needs to be placed in a group.
- It's easy to let things slip through the cracks, e.g., lost emails, phone calls go unanswered etc. Stay on top of communication. Don't let this happen to you.

## Facilitate

Calendar fill months: February, June and October

1. Connect Group Training: scheduled three weeks prior to the start of the semester (3 times a year).

Q: Who should come?

A: All group leaders, either returning or new; coordinators (apprentice); and potential future group leaders.

Training to include:

- a. Purpose of Groups: connect groups as a vehicle through which life change, transformation and disciples of Jesus Christ are made
- b. Leaders/coordinators/host responsibility
- c. Connect Group Covenants: read, signed and returned by no later than one week after training (to be given out June 29 and turned back in within two weeks)
- d. Vision casting for what is forthcoming in the life of the church

2. Communication

- a. Monthly: Pastor will email all group leaders to “check in” with how things are going in their groups
- b. Weekly: Leaders (coordinators) will email all group participants of reminders, weekly readings or assignments, and/or important upcoming dates
- c. Weekly: Leaders (coordinators) will email group members prayer requests to encourage prayer
- d. Follow-up: Leaders (coordinators) will follow-up by email or phone with those who have missed a meeting to check in to see if everything is okay