

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERSHIP AT BETHEL UNIVERSITY

Fall 2023

To sign-up to be a Community Group Leader, [click here to complete this form](#).

The Basics:

- Community Groups Promo on Wednesday, August 30 (in Great Hall) and September 6 (in BC)
- Groups start the week of September 13
- Students can sign-up any time, but are encouraged to sign up for a group by September 6.
- The goal is to create a meaningful experience to grow in our spiritual life together
- Remember: these are students with lots of schoolwork (we seek to not assigning more than 15 minutes of prep for group)
- You are in charge of all logistical communication with your students post-September 8 (Christian Formation will send out general announcements and reminders.)

Important Dates and Things to Remember:

- **Christian Formation will email you a list of your group on (or before) Friday, September 8**
- **Contact each member of your group before Wednesday, September 13 to say hello & give details about your group meeting**
 - *If you want to go the extra mile:*
 - *Begin building your group dynamic by starting conversation over email (Sample topics: a summer highlight, favorite tv show to binge watch, favorite late-night snack) OR—even better—start a group text and ask everyone to text a picture of a summer highlight or a picture that summarizes their school year so far*
 - *Call or text each group member and introduce yourself personally so that they have a connection to you*
- **Weekly send out an additional reminder of your group meeting the day before or the day of your first group meeting!** Even the most confident students may experience a mild to moderate level of nervousness as they prepare to participate in a new group (if this is a group of friends, obviously this is lessened). Nervousness may be heightened if they don't know any of the group members, if the meeting location is unfamiliar, or if the leader is unknown to them. A reminder text message or email, given in a very friendly or fun tone (extra points for a video introduction of you), can offer some reassurance to students who might have some level of social anxiety.
- **Start meeting September 13 at the time and location you communicate to students (most groups will be meeting during the chapel hour—10:20-11:00am).** (Students signed up for your group with the date/time in mind.) Plan to use your first meeting to make students feel comfortable with each other and with you. Plan to talk together about expectations/hopes that the group members bring with them. As you discuss expectations and hopes, be listening for clues about the needs of your group spiritually as students come to Bethel in all different places spiritually.
 - *If you want to go the extra mile:*
 - *Have some fun discussion questions ready*
 - *Have some candy or snacks for students (we can reimburse you up to \$5 for this)*
- **Important: Within 24 hours, personally contact the students who missed the first meeting!** Sometimes students miss the first meeting because they had a prior commitment. However, most of the time it's because the student got cold feet and made a spontaneous decision to do something different at that time. If you aren't proactive about telling them they were missed and trying to get that student connected with your group then they may never come, which is not ideal considering they were the one to self-identify their need for a Small Group!

- **Within 24 hours, personally contact the students who missed the second meeting!** The students who missed the second week are probably students who attended the first week and somehow didn't feel a sense of connection to the group dynamic. Maybe they felt different than everyone else, or like the group wasn't deep enough for them, or like it was over their heads. For this student, it may be your personal care for them that makes the difference. As far as it depends on you, try not to let these students quickly slip out of your group unnoticed.
- Throughout the semester:
 - **Be consistent** with your group meetings. Do not cancel (except in extreme circumstances); find someone to lead in your place if you need to (maybe a "special guest" or a student in your group with a lot of leadership potential.) Meet at the same time you had indicated. Meet in the same location every week, so students always know where to find you if they are running late.
 - **If there's space, feel free to add additional students to your group.** We are capping most groups at 8 students so it is easier to build relationships as a group. However, if a student is interested in your group we don't want to turn them away. A group of more than 8 could still be successful (even though it will change the dynamic). It is up to the group and the leader to determine whether additional people should be added beyond the 8. We ask that you email christian-formation@bethel.edu to tell us if you add people to your group. This allows us to shepherd the campus and additionally we will be able to send them relevant community-wide communications including an evaluation.
 - **You will meet through the six-week session that runs September 13-October 18.** Community Groups meet in six-week sessions. After that time, groups can decide if they want to continue meeting, split and grow, or individual people can decide whether they continue or not. The second session starts October 25.
 - **End your session in a meaningful way**—prayer for each other, affirmations of one another, a time of reflection, playing a game together, or something else meaningful or fun.

Any questions, please feel free to reach out to Matt Runion at matthew-runion@bethel.edu

STRUCTURING YOUR GROUP MEETINGS

Before Group Meeting:

- Pray for your group members
- Send out a message to the group
- Do any reading or preparation necessary for your group meeting

During Your Group Meeting:

- Set aside time for check in/discussion—Having time for students to give updates on what is happening in their lives is important. Spiritual transformation will go deep if students are allowed to bring their real and personal self, not just their polished and prepared self, to your group times.
- Set aside time for prayer—A common problem that small groups run into is that leaders may only plan for 5-10 minutes for prayer, and all the time for prayer gets hijacked by prayer requests. If you are going to ask group members to share prayer requests, make sure you allow at least the same amount of time for prayer after the prayer requests, as the request-sharing time itself. Be mindful that praying (and especially praying out loud) is not comfortable for everyone.
- Content for Your Groups—Below are the content recommendations that Christian Formation is making for Spring 2023. Some of our core values when we choose curriculum for students are that our curriculum will allow students to go deeper in faith and to engage God personally, while not competing with the load that they have for their academics. For this reason, we tend to select options that don't require a lot of preparation, or that require action/experience rather than an abundance of reading. If you find that your group isn't doing the homework that is assigned to them for your group meetings, adjust what you are doing as a group so that your students can have a maximal spiritual impact with the least amount of spiritual guilt.

Some great options for groups are trying a new spiritual practice during the week and discussing it together, OR reading, and re-reading, and re-reading the same passage of scripture together, giving some time for silent reflection, and then discussing it as a group (*lectio divina*), OR reading a few paragraphs of your selected curriculum together and discussing only that portion of the reading, OR using the majority of your time together for prayer. Sharing our spiritual lives together is the “bottom line” and “top priority”.

Recommended Curriculum/ideas:

- **4x4 – Spiritual Practices** ([Link Resource Folder on Google Drive](#))
- **Prayer Practice by Practicing the Way** (John Mark Comer)
- **Bible Project:** [Acts Series](#) and/or the second half of the [Luke-Acts Series](#).
- **Book:** [The Deeply formed Life by Rich Villodas](#)-This book includes a guide for group discussion
- **Alpha Series:** You can create a log in [here](#) and have access to a series of videos. They also have resources and training on how to lead a group through the series. (Not possible within the 40 minute chapel slot.)

Other possible Curriculum Recommendations:

- **Book:** [Prayer in the Night by Tish Harrison Warren](#)
- *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, by Peter Scazzero
- *John: 26 Studies for Individuals and Groups*, N.T. Wright
- *The Sacred Enneagram – Finding your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth*, Christopher L. Heuertz
- *The Liturgy of the Ordinary - Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* Tish Harrison Warren
- *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
- *Seven: An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess*, by Jen Hatmaker
- *Worthy: Finding Yourself in a World Expecting Someone Else* by Dr. Melanie Mock
- *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster
- *Bread for the Resistance* by Donna Barber
- *Healing our Racial Divide*, by Derwin Gray

Crisis Scenarios

- Confidential Offices: The Christian Formation Office and Counseling Services are available to meet with students for confidential free psychological or pastoral counseling. (Spiritual Life: 651-638-6372, Counseling Services: 651-635-8540 For a full list of services, visit our web pages on the Bethel website.
- If you need to consult with a campus pastor about a student in your group, please do not hesitate to call or email christian-formation@bethel.edu or call the office.
- All employees (and approved university volunteers) are mandatory reporters under Title IX. For a thorough overview of university resources, protocol, terms, and policies, please visit our Bethel Title IX webpage: <https://www.bethel.edu/people-culture/complaints-concerns/sexual-misconduct/>
- If you have concerns about a student that you would like to flag for the university, you may send an alert to our Student Care and Conduct staff. ...