

Connect Groups Start-Up Process

1. Pray for God to lead you, to give people hearts to join you, and much more!
2. Invite at least 2 other people to join you in planning and preparing. Monthly meetings and task assignments will help you meet your goals.
3. Read *Activate: An Entirely New Approach to Small Groups* by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas
4. Meet with Pastor and Administrative Council to communicate your vision and plan and gain their support and help.
5. Organize a calendar to write out your timeline. This will include deadlines, tasks, promotional dates, session dates, etc.
6. Assess current groups/activities in your church to see how they may fit the Connect Group format.
7. Brainstorm studies/topics/types of groups that may fit your congregation, as well as considering who might be willing and able to host the groups. Invite individuals who have led groups or classes in the past to offer suggestions of groups they might be willing to host. As you do, assemble a list for future reference as well as the current session.
8. Begin to share information with your congregation through the newsletter or other means, letting them know what's coming, even if it is still several months away. We shared just enough to make people curious, not to give them ALL of the information right away.
9. Finalize your first session group list and prepare a booklet/pamphlet to share with the congregation. Make this available online on your church website as well.
10. When promotion month arrives (we promote one month ahead of the beginning of the session – January, May, and September), keep it in front of the congregation however you can to encourage sign-ups. These are things we have done:
 - a. Announcements during worship
 - b. Sermon series that encourages participation
 - c. Booklets given out by ushers and sign-up inserts in bulletin to leave in offering
 - d. Sign up can also be available online. We used Google docs to create a simple form.
 - e. Brief testimonies by people who have benefitted from small group participation
 - f. Visual display to show how many people are signing up – have a goal
 - g. Facebook/social media posts to highlight specific groups
 - h. Have people available before and after worship to answer questions and help with sign-up. We wear top hats to be visible and show we are a class act!
11. Sometime during promotion month, host a training for your hosts talking about how to meet the challenges of leading discussion, helping everyone to feel safe and welcome, caring for each other through prayer and ministry, etc. There are many online resources that can help with this as well.
12. Have one person keep in contact with group hosts to support them and to troubleshoot any problems that come up.
13. Provide evaluation forms to group hosts and participants to get feedback and make improvements as you move forward.
14. Repeat as necessary!