

Young Adult Small Groups

FACILITATOR GUIDEBOOK - FALL, 2020

DIOCESE OF GARY
OFFICE FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY





Dear Small Group Leader, THANK YOU!

Our young adult small faith sharing groups would not happen if you didn't discern and say yes to the calling to be a leader. Thank you for your service and your willingness to step outside of your comfort zone and allow the Holy Spirit to guide your group.

In this guidebook you will find a general outline for your sessions, helpful conversation tips, prayers, and some best practices for leading a small faith sharing group.

We call this a guidebook because it's meant to serve as a guide to how you want to set up your small group. If your group wants to add something to the small group experience, feel free to do so. If you have a special prayer that your group found that you want to add, do it! The group can make it what it needs to be. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you on this journey!

Peace and all goodness,

Vicky Hatchaway

Ministry Consultant for Youth and
Young Adult Ministry, Diocese of Gary



SETTING UP YOUR SMALL GROUP

The first thing you will do as a Small Group Leader is set up how your group will meet.

Once the groups are made, you will receive a list with the contact information of each of your group members. We try to set up each group based on gender and similar age.

When you receive your list, send an email to your group to introduce yourself and start finding when people are free to meet.

Your introduction email should include:

- Your name/contact info. Feel free to share a little bit about yourself.
- explain that your group will meet at least 8 times over the next few weeks.
- Offer suggestions for where your group will meet (in person location/online platform)
- Best day/time to meet. We suggest meeting at the same day and time each week to make it part of the routine. One way see when people are available is to use the website www.doodle.com You can put in which days you are available and then send it out to the group to see if they can also meet at any of those times.

Example Introduction Email:

Dear Small Group,

Hello! My name is Vicky and I'm so excited to be your small faith sharing group leader. I'm excited to start praying with you and getting to know you.

The first thing we have to do though, is figure out a time when we can meet! Please fill out this link to let me know what's the best day to meet. <https://doodle.com/poll/2pzqc9zadziy2exd> . Once I hear from everyone, I will send the best date to you. We will meet on this day for 8 weeks. Since most of us live in Porter County, we can meet at Uptown Cafe in Valpo. They have outdoor seating. If this doesn't work, let me know.

If you have any questions, please let me know. Once again, I can't wait to start our small group! Know I'm praying for you all.

Peace and all goodness,
Vicky Hathaway



EXAMPLE SMALL GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE

It's recommended that you schedule a small group to last about an hour. If you feel like you might need some more time for socialization, we suggest add optional time before or after the group. Here's an example of how you can structure your group.

Optional Fellowship Time/ Ordering Coffee	15 minutes prior to start time
Opening Prayer	5 minutes
Check-In Time	10 minutes
Lectio Divina and Group Discussion	30 minutes
Wrap Up Observations and Comments	10 minutes
Closing Prayer and Intentions	5 minutes
Optional Fellowship/Hang out time	As long as you want!

LECTIO DIVINA



For small groups, we recommend using Letcio Divina, translated literally to "divine reading," to open up scripture & conversation about participant's daily lives. Facilitators can pick the scripture to read. We suggest using the upcoming Sunday's readings, but you can pick other Gospel readings if you would like. If you would like to use another program for your group, please contact the OYYA.

PREPARE

Help your group prepare for reading scriptures. Try to find a quiet spot and sit in a comfortable position. Have your Bible ready to dive into the Scriptures. If you journal or doodle when praying, have your favorite notebook and writing utensils ready. Put phones away unless using it to read.

LECTIO: READ

Tell your group that you will read over the passage a few times. During the first reading, tell your group to notice what words or images stand out. Write it down to remember it. Be open to what God is saying to you. Have one person slowly read over the passage once. Don't rush through it. Be ok with silence. Then have each member of the group say the one word or phrase that stood out to them.

MEDITATIO: REFLECTION

Tell your group you will read the passage again. Before reading, give them these prompts: "Do the same things stand out? Did you notice something different? Did you find yourself focusing on a word you noticed during the first reading? Allow yourself to go deeper into the text. What comes to mind this time?" After reading pause, then allow participants to share what they noticed.

CONTEMPLATIO: CONTEMPLATION

Read the passage once more time, open your heart, and invite God into your thoughts. Have participants connect what they have learned and experienced while reading the scripture to their every day life, taking note to see how God is working in it.

ORATIO: PRAYER

Question prompts: How are you going to live your life after reading, reflecting, and contemplating this specific Scripture? What would you tell God (praying) now that you have read this passage?



OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS

It's always good to start and end each session with prayer!

Feel free to use these prayers or create your own. You may also have group members take turns leading opening and closing prayers.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to you today asking for your guidance, wisdom, and support as we begin this gathering. Help us to engage in meaningful discussion; allow us to grow closer as a group and nurture the bonds of community. Fill us with your grace, Lord God, as we open ourselves to your Word. And continue to remind us that all that we do here today, all that we accomplish, is for the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of You, and to grow in community. We ask these things in your name, Amen.

Closing Prayer

Create a pray using your own words. One way is to use the ACTS methods:

Adoration: "I love you, Jesus." "Jesus, you are... (good/safe/forgiving/loving... whatever adjectives come to mind!)." "I praise you, Jesus."

Contrition: "I'm sorry for the times this week what I haven't trusted Your goodness." "I'm sorry for..... (present to Him those moments where we lacked trust, virtue, or love)."

Thanksgiving: "I thank You for Your mercy, Jesus, and for delighting in me despite my shortcomings." "Thank you for the abundant blessings that can only come from you." "Thank you for... (bring to Him the many ways of your gratitude)." "Thank You for all You've done, all You're doing, and for all You will do."

Supplication: "Jesus, I come to You today confidently asking for.... (be honest with Him with your needs)." "May Your will always be done."

In Your perfect and saving Name, Amen.



FACILITATOR TIPS

Give and receive welcome. Go out of your way to be radically hospitable.

Be present as fully as possible. Keep your head in the room where your feet are. Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes. Listen with your heart, speak with your soul. Put your cell phone and computer away.

What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand. This is not a “share or die” event! It is okay if you don’t have an answer to a question. Facilitators should help people tell their story.

Empathy is the ability to mutually experience the thoughts, emotions, and direct experience of others. It goes beyond **sympathy**, which is a feeling of care and understanding for the suffering of others. Both words have similar usage but differ in their emotional meaning. **We are looking for empathy.**

Speak in ways that respect other people. This means not interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Use “I” statements. Own what you share. Do not say “you know when you...” or “people say...” A facilitator should not “lead the witness”, show preference for answers that they agree with, judge the responses of some participants, or dominate the conversation with their own experience and opinion.

No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other. This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who make it a habit to help others. But it is vital to welcoming the soul. The goal is to let everyone be heard. The time for “teachable moments” is later, after the conversation is over. Make notes about what you need to follow-up on in your ministry, however.

Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions instead of counsel, corrections, etc. “Tell me more about that...”, “can you explain what you mean by...”

When the going gets rough, turn to wonder. If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself; “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?” Set aside judgment to listen to others –and to yourself – more deeply.

Trust and learn from the silence. Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. Silence should always get its own chair in the group.

Pay attention to your body language. Don’t stand over and apart from your group. Demonstrate you are in this together, by sitting on the same level. Don’t force sharing through non-verbal cues. Nod along to show listening.

Observe confidentiality.



POTENTIAL REDIRECTION STATEMENTS

If you are finding that one person is dominating the conversation, you may need to intervene in a gentle, loving way. Use some of these potential redirection statements to help move the conversation along and to open up the conversation to others.

- Let me cut in and stop you in order to give others an opportunity to speak. What reaction did some other people have to...?
- How about others? What were some of your perceptions of the scriptures?
- I would like to hold off on your comments until we heard from a few other folks first.
- Let me stop you, because I don't think we are listening to each other.
- You have some valid points and I want to give others an opportunity to speak also.
- Alright, you've told us how poorly things are going. Can you think of anything that you feel positive about? Just one thing? (To be used if a participant who is only focusing on negative aspects of situations.)
- Would you mind if we got another opinion on this?
- Can you hold on a second? Several others haven't had a chance to respond yet.
- I didn't understand your joke. Could you tell me what you meant?



CHECK-IN QUESTIONS AND IDEAS

At the start of each session, it's nice to check-in with each other, to see how people are doing, and to build community. Sometimes it happens naturally. Just ask, "So how is everyone doing?" Sometimes you need a prompt. Here are a few to start your conversations.

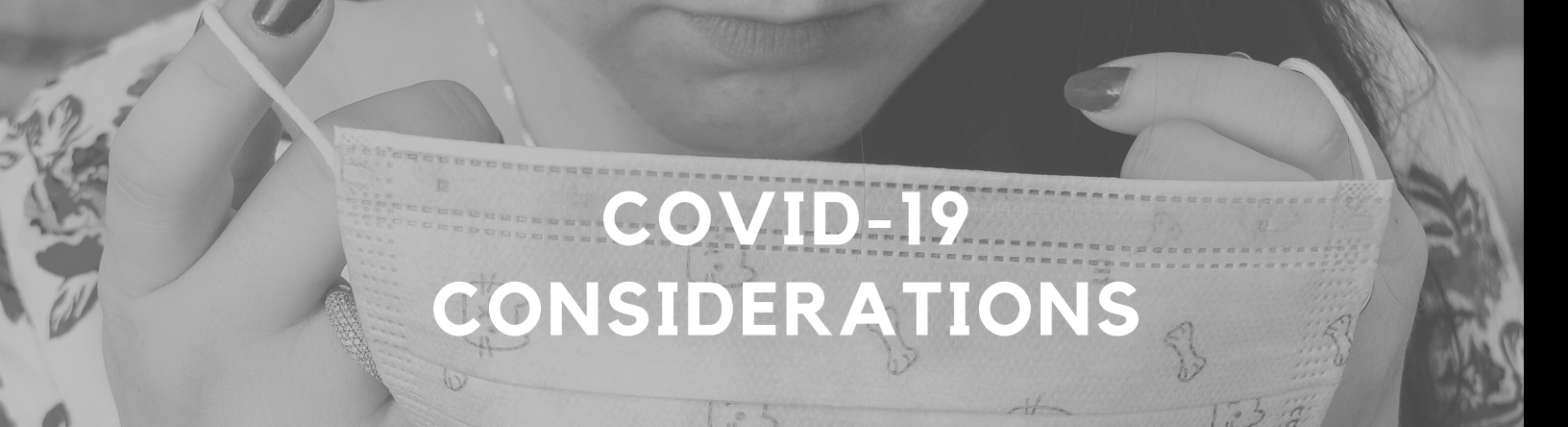
- Thorns and Roses/Highs and Lows/Joys and Desolation: Any catchy title to help people talk about the best part of their week and a lowest part. One rule with this prompt is that a person has to say a high point if they say a low point.
- What color best describes your day today?
- Describe your day or how you are feeling today in terms of a weather forecast.
- What sport is most like your week?
- What movie or TV show best describes your life right now?
- Stoplight: Red-things that you want to stop or aren't going well, Yellow-things you need to watch out for, Green-things that are going well for you
- If you were a magnet, what would you really like to hold on to right now or what would you like to repel?



BEST PRACTICES

Some of our past small group facilitators had some wisdom to share on what worked best for their groups. Enjoy!

- "I tried really hard to share the "leader" experience. Like, I would sometimes guide the group discussions a bit, but for a few different weeks, someone else was in charge of the topic (During May we all took a week to talk about an aspect of the Blessed Mother that we really enjoyed and wanted to share)."
- "I love my group. I'm so proud to call them friends. We had a lot of good conversations during Lectio Divina. We did some service (safely), and we did a movie review. We really tried to keep each other accountable in prayer and in sharing our faith."
- "I connected with several group members and have been praying for them and they have been praying for me and we check in with each other!"
- "The group chat prayer chain was my favorite thing. That and sharing books and movies with the other girls so that we could talk about them as well. We also did a service scavenger hunt. That was a huge hit with my girls."
 - This group had a group chat set up where they would check in throughout the week and message each other prayer requests. Can be done via text messaging, Facebook messenger, or WhatsApp.



COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

- If possible meet outside or in an area where you can sit 6 feet or more apart.
- Individuals from different households should remain spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- **DO NOT share objects.** Participants should bring their own Bible, pens, paper, other supplies.
- No food should be served at meetings or events unless proportioned and individually packaged (example: cookies in zip-lock baggies). Participants can bring their own food/drink (unless at a restaurant). Avoid sharing of foods and utensils.
- If session is held at a restaurant or coffee shop, follow all guidelines as directed by the restaurant. Outdoor seating is preferred.
- **Participants should wear masks while inside.**
- Masks are also requested whenever social distance is not possible.
- Prior to attending a gathering, participants should self-screen themselves.
- **Participants should stay home if:**
 - they have had close contact with an individual infected with Covid-19 within the last 14 days
 - they have had close contact within the last 14 days with an individual suspected of being infected with Covid-19, including individuals exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms.
 - they themselves are currently experiencing, or have experienced in the past 14 days, fever, cough, or shortness of breath
 - they traveled to an area that is under a Level 2, 3, or 4 travel advisory by the U.S. State Department
- Participants should wash for their hands (20 seconds) frequently or use hand sanitizer especially before eating or after touching a hard surface.
- If you are hosting a small group and are in need of hand sanitizer, let the OYYA know. vhathaway@dcgary.org