

COMMUNITY GROUPS

PHASES OF IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE ONE – *COMPLETED!*
2013 – 2017

PHASE TWO -- *BEGINS*
2018 & 2019

PHASE THREE -- *FUTURE*
After 2020

Ready to get started?



PHASE ONE: 2013 – 2017

1. Over the last four years we have been deepening our understanding of God’s Word as it describes the body of Christ (the church). We have been laying a groundwork of preparation to go deeper in ‘life together.’
2. Church members began to experience “**Koinonia Wednesdays**” during the summer 2017, which was very impactful and encouraging to the fellowship life of the church. The church was strengthened greatly.

“OUR MISSION IN THE WORLD”

*¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go **therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰**teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.** And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:18-19

Our Objectives are the path by which we accomplish our mission of making disciples (or ‘fully devoted followers’) of Jesus. Since our beginning as a church we have recognized **three key objectives**:

1. **Win the Lost,**
2. **Disciple the Won,**
3. **Care for the Fellowship.**



OUR 3 KEY OBJECTIVES WITHIN **COMMUNITY GROUPS**

OBJECTIVE ONE—WIN THE LOST:

Because we seek to spread the gospel, we come together on mission infused with gospel intentionality that work to impact our neighborhoods and make Jesus known — **we call these Community Groups.**

Our Mission Field: It is in found within our local community and global community. In order to spread the gospel to our local communities, we have created local community groups.

A community group is *a* group of **“disciples’ on-mission”**. It is formed of our church members that are committed to growing in their knowledge and obedience to Jesus together for the purpose of fulfilling God’s mission in the world. Church Covenant Members that has attended Starting Point Classes, has been scriptural baptized, and has signed our church covenant.

*“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed and how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”***

ROMANS 10:13-15

- Disciples of Jesus are worshipers of Jesus, servants like Jesus, and missionaries with Jesus. *Our calling as missionaries includes two aspects that really matter to our call to missions: **“community-based” and “neighborhood-focused.”***
- It is our conviction that believers are missionaries in local communities and global communities, not lone evangelists sent into the world. *The commission to make disciples is given to the church as a whole, **not individuals Christians in isolation.***
- We believe God has sent His disciples into local and global communities not generally or abstractly, but here in real neighborhoods, among real people with real needs who need to know the real love and truth of Jesus.

OBJECTIVE TWO—*DISCIPLE THE WON*:

1. Because we worship Jesus, we meet weekly to worship Him together— **we call this Weekly Worship Services – Sunday Worship Gathering, and Wednesday Evening Recharge Gatherings.**
2. Because we disciple one another, we join up in small groups of individuals who are intentional about encouraging one another in the gospel and learning from our spiritual leaders of our church— **we call these “Growth Groups.”**
3. Our involvement of weekly **Worshiping together, attending Growth Groups, and attending Wednesday Evening Recharge:**
 - a) It is to prepare our church members to move out on-mission infused with gospel intentionality;
 - b) Where we seek to not only share the gospel message with people far from God, but also build meaningful relationships with them;
 - c) As well as introduce them to Christian community, so that the community formed by the gospel can work powerfully in concert with the message of the gospel;

OBJECTIVE THREE—*CARE FOR THE FELLOWSHIP*:

1. Community groups are one of the primary ways in which we experience community as the body of Christ. We care and serve one another in CG's.
2. We believe in the vital importance of Sunday celebrations where the Word of God is taught (Acts 20:26-32; 1 Tim. 4:11-16; 5:17; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2:2; 4:2-3; Titus 1:9-16) and we participate in corporate worship and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:4; 11:17-18, 20, 33-34; 14:19, 23, 26, 28, 35; 16:2; Heb. 10:25). But one does not typically find community or enter into deeper and more meaningful personal relationships with other Christians simply by attending church on a Sunday.
3. **Community Groups are not in and of themselves local churches**, for in that case they would each require a plurality of elders providing governmental oversight and the authority to exercise discipline among its members (see Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28-29; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). They are, instead, smaller embodiments or missional expressions of the one local church body known as Sheridan Hills Baptist Church.

SHERIDAN HILLS CORE VALUES



SHERIDAN HILLS CORE VALUES DEFINED

TRUTH— *Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!* (Psalm 43:3). God’s truth brings life! Jesus said, *‘I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.’* (John 14:6). Where there is truth, it is God’s truth, and it always leads to freedom and life for those who receive it. All our hope is in the truth of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. We seek to study it, learn it, believe it and live it.

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.”
Jeremiah 15:16

WORSHIP—There is no higher calling and there is no greater joy than worshipping the living God in spirit and in truth. Far more than a weekly service is living moment by moment in the glorious grace of a generous God. Ultimate satisfaction is only found in Him.

“¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
Romans 12:1-2

COMMUNITY—we are not designed to live in isolation but in relationship with one another. Relating within a close community of fellow believers allows us to identify with, trust, support, and care for each other. Through these connections we can spur each other on in our relationship with Christ and the fulfillment of His commands.

“²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
Hebrews 10:24-25

MISSION—Jesus commanded us to reach all nations with the Gospel (*Matthew 28:19*) and He said that his followers would be known by their love for each other. By serving others in the local church, in our neighborhoods, and around the world we can live in obedience to this calling.

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one

another.”

John 13:3

COMMUNITY GROUPS: PHASE TWO 2018 - 2019

1. **Train our church leadership** – we will train all iSERVE and Growth Groups leaders via quarterly dinner meetings in best practices for Community Group establishment.
2. **Launch Community Groups to covenant members** – on February 25, 2018 we will host our main vision and implementation meeting that will facilitate the launch of a limited number of groups.

Our VISION for Community Groups:

It is our vision that every covenant member of Sheridan Hills will develop meaningful, Christ-centered relationships with fellow covenant members who live in close proximity to their home for the purpose of caring for one another, encouraging one another and working together to make disciples of Christ in their own communities.

Our GOALS for Community Groups:

1. That every covenant member of Sheridan Hills will come to meaningfully know the other covenant members in their local neighborhood.
2. That every covenant member will pray for and care for other covenant members in their local neighborhood.
3. That every covenant member will develop a vision and commitment to making disciples of Jesus in their community... through the B.L.E.S.S. initiative.
4. That every guest who visits Sheridan Hills would receive an immediate, basic, friendly visit from a covenant member of Sheridan Hills in their neighborhood.

A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

John 17:20-23 Jesus Prays to the Father for His Followers

20 *"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23** I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

Acts 2:42 - The Church Begins with Power

"And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." – Acts 2:42

The **'GODHEAD'** or **'TRINITY'** (made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is in perfect relational harmony. And we are created in the *Imago Dei* (Image of God) and, thus, made for community and relational harmony. As a church community we have an incredible opportunity to model the beauty of God's very image as seen in the Trinity. Geographically-based small groups are a powerful way to grow and show the love of God to our South Florida area.

- 1. The Trinity:** There is one God eternally existing in three persons. God Himself, biblically defined, is community in being. (John 17:21-23).
- 2. Jesus's ministry model:** He chose a small group of people to "be with him" and invested large amounts of time with them in community. (Mark 3:13-14; John 17:21-26)
- 3. The New Testament Church:** The church founded by the apostles primarily met in small groups in believer's homes. (Acts 2:46; 20:20; Romans 16:5; Col. 4:15; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 1:2; John 13:34; Rom. 12:10 14:19; etc.).
- 4. Created for Relationship:** As human beings created in the image of God, we are designed to be interconnected with one another:
- 5. Relationships are the key to fulfilling God's mercy of reconciling lost and broken people to Himself.** As people come into a relationship with Jesus, they become more in tune with God, others and themselves.
- 6.** Once a person realizes that the church is not about what they can get but instead, what they can give through God's grace, he or she becomes a powerful force used by God to take the responsibility for the care of others and the proclamation of His great love. The Bible explains that this takes place through the many "one another's" of the New Testament (i.e. *love one another, forgive one another, bear one another's burdens, confess your sin to one another or confront one another and*

so on).

COMMUNITY GROUP FIRST YEAR MEETINGS:

1. Church members begin meeting at homes at least **every other month**.

1st CG Home Meeting – **will meet between April 18-21.**

2. Community Group Members will choose the future days and time for their CG meetings at homes.

- 2nd CG Home Meeting -- **June 2018**
- 3rd CG Home Meeting -- **August 2018**
- 4th CG Home Meeting -- **October 2018**
- 5th CG Home Meeting -- **December 2018**

Suggestion: An outreach “Neighborhood Christmas Party”

3. Our community groups will launch the B.L.E.S.S. prayer and mission strategy. Initially, it will be focused on covenant members in the group and eventually the focus will be turned to include your neighbors in your surrounding neighborhood. More explanation below and following pages.

WHAT IS B.L.E.S.S.?

B.L.E.S.S. is a highly effective strategy of sharing your faith with others. It is an easy to remember acrostic that outlines an extremely simple strategy of “*Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, and Share*”.

SIGN UP FOR B.L.E.S.S. ONLINE:

- **Become a “Praying Light” in your neighborhood**— join your fellow community group members ONLINE to begin B.L.E.S.S.

- Mission effort alone is difficult and often fails. **Mission together is biblical and effective.** WE CAN GO FOR IT TOGETHER!

PRAYING FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE:

- What if we got better at the two things Jesus said matters most—**to love God and love our neighbors?**
 - Neighboring requires that we lean into God and step into relationship.
 - Connecting with others and neighbors means you have to act differently.
 - It's a countercultural decision to engage differently with those around you by keeping your heart open to your neighbors.
1. Our church is a Covenant Family of disciples on mission, and we are going to practice living the way of Jesus together in the following by using the **B.L.E.S.S. Strategy**.
 2. In our “Church Community Groups”, we are going to invite our church members to learn the simple steps in the **B.L.E.S.S.** acronym and to put them into practice.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR? We have many circles of relationship. But what if we choose to love our actual neighbors?

- In our Community Groups, we will be challenged to embrace the 20 homes nearest our own—and **not just pick and choose the neighbors** we want to engage with.
 - We will begin praying for the **5 homes on the left, 5 homes on the right**, and the **10 homes across** from our home.
 - No special talent is required. Everyone can be a neighbor!
- 1) Please consider joining our church effort to cover the South Florida area with an intercessory prayer effort.
 - 2) Each participating person or family will receive the names and addresses of 20 homes/names weekly of your neighbors.
 - 3) We would like to encourage you to sign to receive a reminder to pray for 20 homes a week.
 - 4) Divide your list of **20 homes to pray (5 homes a day -- 4 days a week)**.

5 SIMPLE WAYS TO B.L.E.S.S.

Genesis 12:2-3

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."



Begin with prayer:

We *begin to pray* regularly, methodically, faithfully asking God to move in the lives of our community group and neighbors... by name!

Listen with care:

We begin to listen to our neighbors like never before... you *listen* to their life's story, their joys, their sorrows, their concerns.

Eat together:

We realize the tremendous power of *hospitality* and begin to use it to love our fellow community group members and neighbors.

Serve with love:

As you pray, listen and eat together it will become evident how you can begin to *serve* your neighbor in truly helpful way.

Share your story and His story:

Now you have a powerful platform to naturally and humbly *share* your own story of trust in Christ and His power to save from sin.

COMMUNITY GROUPS CAN HELP US BE ON MISSION IN OUR WORLD!



Community Group Job Descriptions

Community Group Leaders & Coordinators

We will seek to develop four leader/coordinator positions for each Community Group:

- Community Group Leader (CGL),
- Prayer Coordinator (PC),
- Care Coordinator (CC),
- Mission Coordinator (MC)

Practical training, informational resources, practical support, prayer support, and spiritual guidance will be provided on an on-going basis to these leaders as we develop each of the roles and the people who fill them. Pastor-Elders, Deacons and other lay-leaders will serve as CGLs. As time goes on, we will seek to slowly staff the other coordinator positions in each group as God provides appropriate leaders.

Role of a Community Group Leader (CGL):

Description:

- The CGL is responsible for leading the Community Group to fulfill our church's vision and goals for their group.
 - Covenant members coming to know one another
 - Covenant members praying and caring for one another
 - Covenant members fellowshiping together
 - Covenant members being 'on mission' together (B.L.E.S.S.)
 - Actively pursue the 'divide and multiply' strategy
- The CGL is successful when he is personally growing in the following areas:
 - Intimacy with God,
 - Community with insiders,
 - Influence with outsiders,
 - Leading others to do the same.
- The CGLs directly report to an assigned Pastor-Elder or Deacon.

Qualifications:

- Covenant church member for at least 1 year.
- Appointed by pastor-elders.
- Preferably participated in CGs at some time in the past.
- Committed and faithful in the other main initiatives of the church.

Expectations:

- Fervently pray for Christ to be glorified through your CG.
- Grow mature and passionate concerning the development of a healthy CG in your local area.
- Lead the group by facilitating the CG meeting, monitoring its health and duration, and promoting participation among group members.
- Communicate 'early and often' with your CG members concerning meeting time, place, meal and care needs.
- Commit to engage in leadership development opportunities provided by our church leadership.
- Identify and develop a qualified apprentice and embrace apprentice leader development as a measure of success.
- Be available to actively train a 'divide and multiply' next-leader
- Actively lead the group to pursue the B.L.E.S.S. initiative
- Regularly report to the assigned Pastor-Elder or Deacon concerning the progress of both the group and the care of the individuals
- Actively lead your CG to meaningfully participate in the other main initiatives of the church family/ministry.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER

SETTING MEETING TIMES: It is up to the CGL to set the first meeting of the group. At the first meeting, reach a consensus on an acceptable time and meeting place for all the members of the group. Please notify the CG Staff with your time and location or contact the iSERVE/CCB Director to ensure the information is correctly entered onto the church calendar. Meet only as often as necessary to accomplish the job, when there is work that a group can do better than an individual.

ORIENTATION OF NEW MEMBERS: Please spend some time at your meetings to help new members become familiar with the group and its function. If you do not want to spend meeting time for orientation, be sure to invite new members 15 minutes early, so you can do it then.

NOTEBOOKS/FOLDERS FOR MEMBERS: Establish early on a way to keep notes for your group. Try to have a folder or notebook available to new members for their first meeting. The contents of the folders are as individual as the group's purpose, but they should give a group member a sense of the history of the group, purpose and goals for the future.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS: The description is meant to help the group or shared ministry team to make possible the specific recruitment of individuals based upon his or her gifts and passions. Job descriptions help define the purpose of your group. They give the volunteer a true sense of what will be expected of him or her. And it leaves a record for the next group leader - so s/he does not need to "reinvent the wheel". The job of the shared ministry coordinator is to find volunteers that will fit your job description!

CREATING CHECKLISTS: Some community groups will find it helpful to create a checklist for a project or goal that needs to be completed. The checklist includes what needs to be done and when, and provides a way to track what other volunteers are doing to help the group reach the overall goal. If someone is having trouble meeting a part of the checklist, it will be apparent sooner - so assistance can be given before frustration sets in and we lose sight of what we want to accomplish.

Role of a Community Group PRAYER Coordinator

DESCRIPTION: A Prayer Group Coordinator serves and encourages a growing group of people who enjoy being together to pray for one another, so that the leader and the entire group may become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. A Prayer Group Coordinator walks with God and takes responsibility to love and influence people so they may continue each of their spiritual journeys.

Qualifications:

- Have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus Christ (preferably for two years or more).
- Recognize the Bible as the authority for their lives.
- Have Community Group experience (preferably).
- Be a member of Sheridan Hills Baptist Church.
- Have the time, emotional capacity, and moral discernment to lead a group.

Expectations: It is expected that the Prayer Group Coordinator facilitates healthy Community groups by using the following essential ingredients:

- 1) PRAYER WORSHIP:** Praising God for who He is and what He has done
- 2) PRAYER FOR ONE ANOTHER:** Listening to and sharing intimately with God; interceding for others and God's work in the world. Lead the members to pray for all the people in the community group each week.
- 3) PRAYER EVANGELISM:** Impacting our society and sharing the Good News so that people become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ by leading the members to pray for their neighbors. Encourage members to pray walk and pray for each neighbor by name in their neighborhood and organize "prayer walk" activities in their neighborhood.

Model Prayer as a CG PRAYER Coordinator

1. Be a person of prayer yourself—pray for your members outside of the group and let them know you are doing so.
2. Take the lead in prayer but don't hog the time.
3. When you pray out loud in the group, keep your prayers honest, authentic, and from your heart.

Guide PRAYER as a Coordinator

1. Include prayer each time you meet.
2. Give guidelines of how prayer will happen during each meeting. Use a variety of methods.
3. Be clear on who will begin and close the prayer time.
4. Keep discussions on prayer brief unless you are doing a study or the group is taking significant time to learn about prayer.
5. Call on someone to pray if you have asked permission beforehand or you know them well.
6. Allow members to pray as they feel, with few exceptions. Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
7. Respect the intimacy level of the group. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster a deeper experience in prayer.

What Happens When Group Members Commit to Pray for One Another?

- Your relationship with Christ and with each other will deepen. You will experience spiritual growth.
- There is less chance of burnout as you put problems in God's hands and trust members to his care.
- You allow the Holy Spirit to work in your group so your time together is filling and refreshing.
- God will answer your prayers in amazing ways, and your faith will increase.

Creative Ideas for Group Prayer:

1. Ask for requests and pray for them.
 - Ask another person to pray for that person immediately.
 - Wait to pray after everyone shares.
 - Gather requests on cards as everyone arrives. Give the cards out after prayer and have them pray for that request during the week.

2. Divide the group up for prayer:
 - Weekly Men Prayer breakfast in a close by restaurant.
 - Women neighborhood weekly prayer meeting
 - Other creative ways.
3. Vary prayer time among the beginning, middle, and closing of the meeting.
4. Pray through a specific portion of the topic of study. Example: If the topic is courage in sharing the gospel, let that fill the entire prayer time.
5. Pray through a psalm out loud together.
 - Psalm 66, 93, 98, 100, 105, 111 are good examples.
6. If someone is in crisis during the discussion portion of the meeting, stop right then and pray for him or her.
7. Themed Prayers of 1-2 sentences: Thanksgiving, Praise, and Requests, etc.
8. “No requests allowed” prayers. Choose an attribute of God and begin describing it back to him.
9. Allow your group to decide how they want to pray.
- 10.

ACTS (Acrostic method) Use the ACTS acrostic to guide your prayer time. These categories are broad enough to allow for adaptation to different contexts.

- **Adoration**- Praise and adore God for who he is. Use Scripture to praise him (e.g., Psalms 103, 145, 150: Rev. 4:8; 5:12-14) or pray his attributes back to him.
- **Confession**- Confess and repent of specific sins. Ask him to search your heart for areas that displease him. Accept and thank him for his forgiveness and cleansing.
- **Thanksgiving**- Give thanks for specific things such as blessings, people, guidance, physical gifts, necessities of life, etc.
- **Supplication**- Ask God to supply your needs, for the needs represented in your group or for those outside of your group. Intercede for specific people, events, country (leaders), missionaries, church (people, leaders, etc.), etc.

Lord’s Prayer- use the different types of prayers represented in the

Lord's Prayer for an extended (entire group meeting) prayer time (see Matthew 6:9-13).

- **Adoration**- praising God for who he is.
- **Confession**- admitting and asking forgiveness.
- **Renewal**- asking for a renewed mind, heart and will to follow Christ.
- **Petition**- making requests.
- **Intercession**- praying for others.
- **Affirmation**- agreeing and submitting to God's will.
- **Thanksgiving**- praise for what he has done.
- **Closing**- final thoughts and offering them to him.

Role of a Community Group CARE Coordinator:

Description: The CG Care Coordinator provides strategic leadership in the areas of community needs and crises community engagement. This position is responsible for actualizing the Community Group Strategic Plan for possible neighborhood crises such as a hurricane.

Qualifications

- Have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus Christ (preferably for two years or more).
- Recognize the Bible as the authority for their lives.
- Have Community Group experience (preferably).
- Be a member of Sheridan Hills Baptist Church.
- Have the time, emotional capacity, and moral discernment to lead a group.

Expectations: It is expected that the CARE Coordinator facilitates healthy Community groups by leading the community group to be a “Friend to our Neighbors”.

- 1) When it comes to the holy task of extending compassion, Jesus’ desire, expressed in John 15, is simple. “You are my friends if you do what I command:
 - Love One Another. At the heart of our church is a desire to be the hands and feet of Jesus to our neighbors – both near and far.
 - **Being a friend to our neighbor** provides a variety of simple ways for church members to serve our community and extend the brand of dynamic compassion that makes a true difference.
- 2) When disaster strikes, the local community group usually provides the first response. The visible presence of the church members is an essential and effective ministry that brings God’s hope and healing to people in times of crisis.
- 3) A community group prepared for disaster ministry has taken steps to safeguard the people and property of the church and is prepared to respond to the suffering of their neighbors in a time of crisis.

- 4) Community Group disaster readiness program designed to equip its members with the information and tools they need to help guide the local community as it prepares to respond to disaster in the community.

Why a Community Group Crisis Plan?

- a) The local community group is a place where people connect— with God, with each other, and with the community.
- b) Neighbors will naturally turn to the local church community groups in times of crisis, seeking meaning, peace, and healing.
- c) A community group that is prepared can help mitigate the emotional and spiritual impact of disaster, and may be a place of hospitality and sanctuary in a time of critical need.
- d) A plan can speed the immediate response and help lessen those feelings of confusion, loneliness, and isolation that are so common after disasters.

CARE Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Develop a disaster plan that fits with the church's mission;
- Connect the church to outside resources and to the community's emergency plans;
- Identify types of disasters likely to impact the local community group and its neighborhood and the needs that may arise;
- Assess the community group's resources to meet those needs;
- Identify the community group's role in disaster readiness and response;
- Create a plan to manage its member service;
- Assign responsibilities;
- And develop a system of communication.