

VINCENT UMC IS GROWING ITS SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

What is a Small Group?:

“Small groups are gatherings of up to 15 people that are intentionally planned for growing disciples’ faith, spirituality and engagement in the world. They meet at least twice a month, are rooted in prayer, are conversationally driven, and involve study and/or outreach. Each member becomes a teacher and learner through a facilitated sharing. They build relationships with God and people and thus help make the community and the world a better place.” Quote from Rev. Beth Caulfield, GNJAC Small Groups Coordinator

Examples of Small Groups at VUMC include UMW Circles, Sunday School Classes, Prayer Shawl, Pray and Color and Youth Groups.

Some groups are highly spiritually centered, while others may be interest groups with a spiritual component. There may be a wide range.

Who is welcome?:

Everyone is welcome. Members, friends, neighbors and guests.

Where will they be?:

At church and at homes (wherever leaders can lead and hosts can host). The church will arrange

rides for those that need them.

When will they take place?:

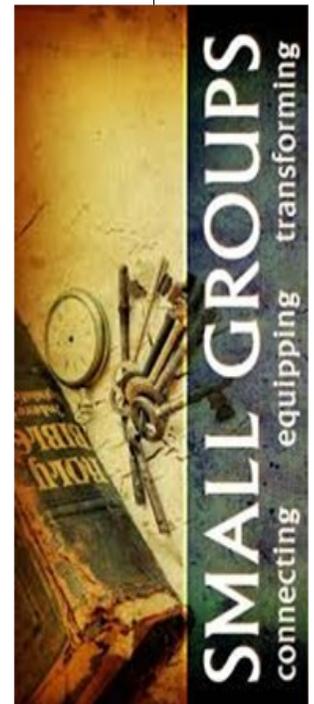
On a weekly or bi-weekly basis. A variety of days and times will be represented, allowing people to choose what works for them.

How will we proceed?:

Committed and caring leaders will be equipped.

The congregation will be polled to determine topics and interests that are compelling to our membership and the people outside of church whom we hope to reach.

See p. 2 for the answer to Why?



WHY IS VINCENT WORKING TO GROW SMALL GROUPS

Why small groups? – *Because they will bless your life*

Small groups are where we learn to love people

In Leviticus 19:18, it says “**love your neighbor as yourself.**” Jesus quoted this scripture directly and called it the 2nd greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). When asked who exactly is our “neighbor”, Jesus told a story about a good Samaritan and made it clear that our neighbor is **everyone**, including those that hate and despise and wrong us (Luke 10:29-37). It’s a tall order, but one of the fundamental duties of a Christian is to show leadership in loving.

So why small groups?

Small groups provide a space for us to be in meaningful relationship with our fellow Christians. Small groups are where we learn to love people.

The apostle Paul wrote in

Galatians 6:10 (NIV):
“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Loving our neighbors is not easy. A great way to take on that challenge is to start with people at church. After all, it should be a lot easier to love



a church-going Christian than anyone else, right? You might think so at first, but you’ll soon realize that the people in your church can be just as annoying, just as “weird”, just as hypocritical, and just as flawed as anyone else you meet in your life – and that’s OK. If you can accept these imperfections you’ll find people who will ac-

cept yours also.

Small groups provide a place to be our authentic selves while also being who we are becoming, a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Spend enough time with the same group of people and you’ll soon discover that the differences - race, nationality, socioeconomic background, and all the other elements of culture - artificial distinctions that we create - don’t matter. What matters is the similarities - especially the big ones: that we’re **all** children of God, **all** sinners, and **all** saved by grace. Before long, you may come to love these people. You might learn a thing or two from them about faith, about hope, about the power of prayer. And you may also be a source of inspiration or encouragement to them without even realizing it.

Small groups work because there’s an unseen person who imparts power and blessing upon them - **Jesus**, who is always in our midst where 2 or more gather (Matthew 18:20), and who commanded us to love one another as he loved us (John 13:34-35).