

# Adult Formation Resource Guide



GRACE & HOLY TRINITY  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*In this resource guide you will find:*

- An outline of what adult formation looks like at GHTC
- A guide to creating a small group
- Basic guidelines for groups to follow

# How To Get Started

## **Our focus for adult formation is “Formation Groups”**

Instead of a traditional adult forum on Sunday morning model, we are concentrating on helping parishoners find and form small groups that focus on the kind of content the people in the group prefer.

The small groups may meet on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. or at another time, such as Wednesday evenings, at the the home of a parishioner. *You get to decide and this guide will help.*

### **Step 1 - Check out one of our existing groups or start your own.**



### **Step 2 - Use the resources in this guide to refine or help self-define your group.**

*(see Part 1 of this guide)*



### **Step 3 - Create helpful guidelines for your group.**

*(see Part 2 of this guide)*

# Part 1

## What is formation?

Christian formation simply refers to the process of becoming more like Christ, and this is something we do in community.

To examine faith formation is to ask how we are growing and maturing in our faith. Jesus called people to follow him. This implies we're going somewhere on the journey of faith. Paul, in his letters, talks about Christ being formed in us, implying we are to mature spiritually. There are countless ways to grow spiritually, with some ways seeming to fit some of us better than others.

One of our hopes at Grace and Holy Trinity is to help you — wherever you may be on your journey — learn how you are being called to grow and mature.

## What are we offering?

### Formation Groups

Our primary focus will be on strengthening existing groups and establishing new ones. Small groups or what we are calling “formation groups” can take a variety of forms, and our goal is to offer several options. Formation groups allow parishioners different opportunities to grow in their faith in the ways that make sense to them and their real lives. This guide includes available groups and ways to establish new ones.

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## Occasional Studies & Forums

Another focus of adult formation is to offer occasional studies or opportunities for spiritual growth. These could be special events, art exhibits, seminars, or even guided hikes around the city.

## Retreats

We plan to offer two retreats a year for a chance to dive deeper into exploring issues and themes around prayer and putting our faith into practice.

## Leadership Training

Seasonally we will gather a group of leaders here at the church who are invested in the direction of adult formation. Those who gather may lead groups, plan events, or support the efforts of the team.

# What is a formation group?

Small groups are simply a group of people gathering around a common purpose and sharing their lives together. A formation group is a small group with the express intention of its members growing spiritually.

The idea of getting a small group of people together to be formed in faith together is as old as Christianity itself. When Jesus called people to follow him, it wasn't an idea or a political pitch. While countless people were drawn to him, he established a small group of twelve to be his inner circle. When he sent people out, he sent them in groups. This is what the church has always done. From the early church to the Sunday school movement, we've known that to follow Jesus, and grow in our faith, we need to walk with others.

Groups can be formed around any common interest. A group could form around a mutual goal, stage in life, zip code or a love for good wine. There's no wrong way to form a group, but a unifying core identity is needed. The following pages offer key ideas to help form a group's purpose and clarify its identity.

# Suggested Steps for Forming a Group

## 1 Identify Purpose

The most important question for a group is “what is our purpose?” It could be to “deepen the group’s prayer life” or “get to know our church community.” The clearer and simpler the purpose, the easier it will be to invite others to join, and to stay focused in the future.

## 2 Purpose vs. Content

A common confusion when forming a group is mixing up the group’s purpose with the content the group might enjoy. Content is what the group studies, explores, experiences or enjoys, yet content is not the purpose. A group may have the purpose of learning about the Bible together, but the books of the Bible they study or the videos they use to do so are the content.

## 3 Who Should Be Here?

Once a group has a clear purpose and an idea of some of the content they’ll explore, the next step is to ask who would benefit from this group experience. Who are we trying to reach and whom should we invite? Not every group can reach every person.

## 4 Ask the “Clarifying Questions”

On the following page are a series of filters to put the formation group through that will help the group self-define. But having a clear purpose is needed first. These clarifying questions help the group find its unique identity. While there is no right or wrong answer to these questions, they will help offer clear information for those interested.

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## Find the Content For You

Once the purpose is refined and the clarifying questions have been answered, then it's time to focus on the content the group will explore. The following pages offer recommendations and proposed guided studies from staff for groups to use.

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## Set An End Date

It's important that every group has a beginning and an end. The suggested length is four to twelve weeks. A group could always decide to reform after it ends; a definite end date gives people a graceful opportunity to step out or join the group. A predetermined end date keeps groups from fading without formal closure.

# The Clarifying Questions

**What's the group's purpose?**

Why are we here?



**What binds us together?**

What do we hold in common that connects us?



**Head, heart, or hands?**

As a group do we focus on learning, sharing, or experiencing something?



**Open, closed, or in-between?**

Can people come and go freely or does this group have a private or confidential nature?



**In person, online, or hybrid?**

How will the group meet?



**Where will we meet?**

What location makes sense for your group?

### **How long will we meet?**

What is the time commitment for each gathering? How many weeks will the group meet?



### **What does a group meeting actually look like?**

What form or order will your gatherings have? What's the format? Will it open with silence or perhaps use a set of recurring prompts to spark discussion?



## **Part 2**

### **Suggested Guidelines for Formation Groups**

For any existing or newly formed group, here are some helpful guidelines for a group to follow. It is also a good idea to establish some ground rules at the group's first gathering. Make sure everyone has a voice and input to the group's commitment.

*These guidelines come from Parker Palmer's Center for Courage & Renewal.*

- 1 **Create Spaces That Are Open** and hospitable, but resource-rich and charged with expectancy.
- 2 **Commit To No Fixing** advising, “saving,” or correcting one another.
- 3 **Ask Honest, Open Questions** to “hear each other into speech.”
- 4 **Explore the Intersection** of the *universal stories* of human experience with the *personal stories* of our lives.
- 5 **Use Multiple Modes of Reflection** so everyone can find their place and pace.
- 6 **Honor Confidentiality.**



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For information on formation groups and more,  
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