



Home Fellowship

Groups

Members Manual



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GLORIFY • NURTURE • PROCLAIM

Westminster Presbyterian Church

HOME FELLOWSHIP MEMBER'S MANUAL

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.” Acts 2:42

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1. Definition of a Home Fellowship (HF)

The small group ministry at Westminster is referred to as Home Fellowship. A definition of this type of group is given by Neal F McBride in his book, [How to Lead Small Groups](#), (Navpress):

“A voluntary, intentional gathering of three to twelve people within the church, regularly meeting together with the shared goal of mutual Christian edification and fellowship.”

Edification is the building up of our spiritual lives in Christ Jesus to know, love, and serve him more and more. Fellowship is sharing our life and our relationship in Christ Jesus with one another.

2. Vision

In a large and growing church, like Westminster, how can people be given practical pastoral care, training, and loving support to do God’s work in the world?

The early church met in house churches: *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.”* Acts 2:42. Today large group meetings are effective for worship and teaching, while small groups are effective for nurture, fellowship, pastoral care, equipping for ministry, discussing the Bible and mentoring potential leaders.

Home Fellowships help Westminster members to work out the implications of the gospel in an informal setting. They allow people to: relate more personally, pray more knowledgeably, and apply Biblical truth specifically. Believers will grow in their relationship to the Lord and to one another as each person encourages and serves others. Everyone is encouraged to approach HF with a loving attitude that asks, “How can I serve?” and not simply, “What is in it for me?”

Proclaiming the “Good News” credibly, inside and outside the church, requires face-to-face, ongoing, relationships.

3. Purpose

The Bible assumes that a significant relational life exists between members of the church. When it does not occur naturally, the church’s responsibility is to cultivate this relational life. One way this can be done effectively is through HFs. (Adapted from Redeemer PCA, NYC, Small

The purposes of HFs are to provide an informal personal setting where Westminster members can: care for one another, experience redemptive change, and engage in outreach.

- A. CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER – HFs will help you develop a sense of belonging through Christ-centered friendships. In these small group communities you can more effectively care for others. (Please read the “one another” passages of the New Testament on the last page).

- B. REDEMPTIVE CHANGE – As we study the Scriptures, listen to each other, speak truth in love to each other, and pray together, we will individually and collectively mature in the faith. We will come to reflect, know, love, and serve Christ more.
- C. OUTREACH – God draws non-believers to himself as we demonstrate Christ’s love, truth and mercy to a sinful and broken world.

4. Benefits

- A. The ministry of Westminster is personalized with a sense of depth so that we have close friends in the church.
- B. HFs provide a setting where our Bible studies can be discussed and applied in more
- C. depth. Members of Westminster are supported in their work of ministry both inside and outside the church.
- D. HFs raise up and develop leaders for new small groups as well as for the church.

5. Various types of small groups

Each HF chooses its central activity, such as Bible and Christian book studies, service, evangelism¹, prayer, missions, special interest (parenting, pro-life, addictions), music, etc. Members can be grouped as singles, married, men or women, a particular age range, parents, occupations, a common interest, or a mixture of these.

Consider mixing middle-age members, younger members, widows, widowers and retirement-aged members within the HF. This can be beneficial, because it combines new ideas, energy, wisdom, experience, and spiritual maturity. Many groups with only retirement- aged members cease, because eventually their declining health leaves fewer and fewer members to care for one another.

¹ **Evangelism:** For many non-believers a home environment may be less threatening than a church building or a corporate worship service. So consider inviting non-believers. Some groups decide to invite non-believers regularly while others make outreach the focus for a season. At the beginning of the Bible study, invite non-believers to participate in discussion, ask questions, offer their thoughts and then come to their own conclusions. Thank them for their attendance and their participation. Seek to understand how each non-believing person self-identifies. Do they consider themselves a skeptic, a seeker, questioning, indifferent, curious, spiritual, non-religious or someone who adheres to another religion? Seek to know them and what they believe. Draw them out as appropriate. Doing so tends to further dialogue as they respond in kind. Share honestly what you believe. Clarify the gospel message in simple to understand terms. Remember that every non-believer has elements of God’s truth because of general revelation (God’s law is written on their hearts, God’s invisible nature is seen in creation), so agree with them whenever you can. But also, draw clear contrasts between biblical Christianity and other perspectives. Even when you strongly disagree with them, thank them for their courage to share honestly.

6. Commitment

- A. Make attending the designated meetings a priority.
- B. Pray for and minister to one another.
- C. Avoid gossip about any sensitive information that is shared with the group.
- D. Invite others to experience HF by welcoming interested Westminster members, neighbors, and friends.
- E. Begin and end meetings at a mutually agreed time.
- F. When the group becomes too large in number, share the benefits of an HF with others by forming another HF with its own leader.

Our commitment in HFs should strive for what Larry Crabb states in the following excerpts from his book [Inside Out](#):

“I can think of nothing more important for spiritual growth than good relationships in the Body of Christ. Much has been written about the “one-anothering” commands of Scripture.”

“Observing a few cautions might help us realize the good potential of honest fellowship and minimize some of its dangers. First, remember that honest sharing is not the final goal. Love is. Love will restrain me from saying what I judge may hurt you needlessly. Sharing must be limited not by self-protection, but by sensitive love. Second, good fellowship is characterized by support and kindness, not by confrontation. Healthy group dynamics don’t happen automatically, they grow in the rich soil of time, prayer, and trust.”

7. Meetings

Home Fellowships are strongly advised to meet twice a month during the weeks following the second and fourth Sundays of the month in order to avoid causing members to miss HFs due to other church meetings. Please note that HFs which meet only once a month have more difficulty realizing the vision of Westminster’s home fellowship ministry.

HFs may meet the entire year, with each HF determining the availability of members to attend during the summer months.

The following is a suggested schedule:

- 30 minutes – Opening prayer, refreshments and social time.
Serving refreshments at this time allows the group to have conversations with one another before beginning the Bible study and prayer. This also provides a buffer time for those who are delayed in arriving. Refreshments may be supplied by the host home if the meetings are rotated among the members’ homes. If the meetings are usually held at the same host’s home, other members should take turns providing the refreshments. Refreshments should consist of a beverage and one or two items of food with simplicity and ease of preparation as the guide.
- 50 minutes – Bible study.

- 30 minutes – Group prayer
- 10 minutes – Discuss schedules and agendas for future meetings. Close meeting.

8. Curriculum

Within our guidelines, choices are provided to allow each HF to meet the specific needs of their group. Each HF chooses their own study topics for discussions such as: specific books of the Bible, portions of scripture, DVDs, streaming videos, and Christian books. Sources beyond the Bible, including study guides, need the approval of your coach. This process is part of the training of each HF leader. Whatever curriculum is approved, we ask that it be presented in a discussion and sharing format – not as a lecture. We also ask that the study and discussions stress personal application. Allow in-group time for members to work out the implications of God's truth. Don't use up all the time on careful observation and interpretation.

The HF leader may delegate to any communing member of Westminster Presbyterian Church in good standing, man or woman, to be a discussion leader of the Bible as they are under the formal jurisdiction of the church.

9. Oversight

All HFs are under the oversight of an HF Coach, who is a member of the Home Fellowship Oversight Team, which reports to the Membership Care Committee of Westminster's Session.

10. Starting new Groups

New HFs may be formed in several ways – by a few people in the new member class, by a few friends, or by a married couple. These people who begin and lead a new HF must be members of Westminster, and they will receive help from the HF Oversight Team.

Another way new groups form is when an existing oversized HF starts one. The maximum recommended number of *regularly* attending members in a HF is **twelve**. When an HF grows beyond that size, the unique benefits of a small group typically diminish. The HFOT does not recommend splitting an oversized group in half. It usually works better to recruit 4 members willing to form another separate HF with separate leaders. The HF Oversight Team will assist the oversized group, and help them through this transition.

The HF Oversight Team does not desire overly rapid multiplication of small groups, because we primarily want members to have the opportunity to develop close relationships within their small group. Generally speaking though, a healthy HF that meets twice a month tends to be ready to multiply after 2 to 3 years.

11. Appendix: Helpful resources recommended to all Home fellowships

A: Follow this [Link to Basic Bible Study Skills](#) by Peter Kroll

B: Follow this [Link to the Peace-Maker's Principles](#) by Ken Sande.

C: Thirty-seven "one-anothers" of the New Testament (See Next Page)

Thirty-seven “one-anothers” of the New Testament

From Carl George's [Nine Keys To Effective Small Group Leadership](#)

Accept one another as Christ accepted you. Admonish one another.	Romans 15:7
Bear with one another	Colossians 3:16
Be at peace with one another	Colossians 3:13
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love	Mark 9:50
Be kind and compassionate to one another	Romans 12:10
Be patient, bearing with one another in love	Ephesians 4:32
Build each other up	Ephesians 4:2
Carry each other's burdens	1 Thessalonians 5:11
Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another	Galatians 6:2
Confess your sins to each other	1 Peter 5:5
Consider others better than yourself	James 5:16
Do not grumble against each other	Philippians 2:3
Do not lie to each other	James 5:9
Do not slander one another	Colossians 3:9
Encourage each other	James 4:11
Forgive each other	1 Thess 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews 3:13, 10:25
Greet one another with a holy kiss	Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13
	Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20,
	2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Peter 5:14
Have equal concern for each other	1 Corinthians 12:25
Honor one another above yourselves	Romans 12:10
Instruct one another	Romans 15:14
Live in harmony with one another	Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 3:8
Love one another	Jn 13:34,35,15:12,17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thes 4:9;1
	Peter 1:22, 4:8; 1 Jn 3:11, 23; 4:7,11; 12; 2 Jn 5
Make your love increase & overflow for each other	1 Thessalonians 3:12
Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling	1 Peter 4:9
Pray for each other	James 5:16
Serve one another in love	Galatians 5:13
Spur one another toward love & good deeds	Hebrews 10:24
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs	Ephesians 5:21
[Stop] biting and devouring one another	Galatians 5:15
Stop passing judgment on one another	Romans 14:13
[Stop] provoking and envying each other	Galatians 5:26
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ	Ephesians 5:21
Teach one another	Colossians 3:16
Use whatever gift received to serve others	1 Peter 4:10
Wash one another's feet	John 13:14
Wait for each other when you come together to eat	1 Corinthians 11

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Lancaster, PA

Mission Statement

The Mission of our Congregation is:

- To **GLORIFY** and enjoy the living God by striving for worship that is pleasing to Him.
- To **NURTURE** believers of all ages to become mature disciples of Jesus Christ: rooted in the doctrines of Scripture, zealous in prayer, holy in character, and committed to one another.
- To **PROCLAIM** good news of faith in Christ by words of witness and deeds of mercy, in Lancaster County and to all the nations of the earth.

Core Values

Glorify

God-centered worship

Scripture regulates the elements of our worship. We approach the Living God with both reverence and joy in accordance to the Word of God. We participate with praise, prayer, singing, confession of sin and of faith, thanksgiving, petition; as well as, hearing and responding to Bible-centered preaching. Regular worship has transformational power as the people of God meet and see God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. Biblical principles and community inform our expressions of worship but no expressions of worship may go beyond that which may be deduced from the Scriptures. Our style takes into account church history and the culture in which we live.

Nurture

Bible-Centered Teaching

The Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God in its original manuscripts. The science of textual criticism has provided certainty that the extant text accurately represents the original manuscripts for 99.9% of the Bible. The remaining minor textual problems do not affect any doctrine or major teaching of the Bible. We can know with certainty that the Scriptures declare what God declares. We believe the Bible is the highest authority, and both reason and tradition must be judged by Scripture. Our constant goal is to hold forth the Word of God to a dying world and to always seek to be *reforming* according to the Word of God.

Christ-Centered Living

Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is at the center of our shared life as a congregation. We seek to be a Christ-centered, gospel-focused church in our faith and practice. The grace and truth of God in Jesus Christ is central in our preaching and teaching, in our worship, in our outreach, in our relationships, and in all we do. Our goal is that when people come to Westminster, they see Jesus Christ. Our church has several distinctives, but being Christ-centered is foremost.

One-Body Community

Community among members is a high priority. Our culture tends to be self-reliant and individualistic, but God sees us as intimately connected to each other because we are all part of the body of Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Just as the parts of our human body cannot function independently, so members of the church cannot function properly apart from community. We need each other to grow and thrive. We minister to one another with the same compassionate grace that God has lavished upon us and spur each other toward maturity in Christ. Elders shepherd the flock by encouraging and equipping every member to fulfill his or her role in the church.

Proclaim

Graciously Reformed

Salvation is completely by God's grace. We do not contribute to our salvation in any way. Yes, we respond to the initiative of God, but even that response of faith is by God's grace. We see reformed theology, as specified in the Westminster Confession of Faith and catechisms, as the best summary of the theology of the Bible. This theological structure is the "bones" of our church body but we "flesh out" our reformed views by explaining them in a winsome manner and welcoming those who do not hold to these distinctives.

Gospel-centered outreach

The great commission constantly calls us to an outward orientation. Jesus the "*Light For The Nations*" must not be hidden under a bushel. In love, we will both speak and show the gospel as we reach those captivated by every form of brokenness, sin, and ignorance. We sacrificially support missionaries, both locally and around the world. We believe that taking the gospel to those outside the church counteracts our natural inclination toward ingrowth and refreshes the joy of our salvation. We equip members to personally share the gospel and serve the local community with Christ-like love.

Explanatory Note:

The Session wants to proactively develop leaders within our congregation. As part of this effort, we desire to state Westminster's core values in a simplified and memorable format to facilitate their regular use. Every generation shares much in common with previous generations, but they also face unique challenges and 'never-before-seen' opportunities. Church leaders need to wisely adapt to the times without compromising the truth or diluting the potency of gospel living. We believe these core values reflect the essential foundation of Westminster. In the future, many things can and should change at Westminster, but these are the values that will help our church maintain its godly heritage and keep it moving in a healthy direction. These core values are organized according to the three parts of Westminster's Mission Statement: ***Glorify, Nurture*** and ***Proclaim***.

*Approved by Session with revisions on 3-20-2003 Revised 1/05, 2/05, 7/07,
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