

## Community Groups

Our tag line for Community Groups at Redeemer is, “if you want to join a service, come Sunday mornings, if you want to join a church, come to community groups”. Our heart has always been to push people in our church into community groups for one reason: this is where you get the gospel spoken into your life in specific ways. While it is difficult to really get to know someone during a corporate worship service, Community Groups are designed for people to get to know each other and to be reminded of the gospel.

These groups meet one night during the week and consist of about 10-20 people. Some have childcare, some don't. Most of our groups have young and old, married and single. Some follow along with the sermon series, some study specific issues (like marriage or finances), and some study through sections of scripture or books of the Bible.

You may have been at churches (or are in one) where you have home Bible Studies, Growth Groups, D-Groups (discipleship groups) or the like. We purposefully called our groups Community Groups, because even though they pray, study the Bible, and even sing together, we wanted them to have the over-arching purpose of getting to knowing others and being known. It is not until you get to know someone that you understand where the gospel needs to penetrate their lives the most. In other words, if someone is consistently struggling with anxiety, the goal is to get to know them well enough that you can speak into their anxiety by reminding them that they are loved by God. What is the root of the anxiety? What don't you believe about God providing for you? What in your life story caused you to struggle with anxiety?

One man came into a Community Group saying that he had been laid off at work and was devastated. Typically when this happens, we'd just start praying for a new job. Rather than doing what is typical, we listened to his story and started asking questions.

The guy wasn't worried about money (he had about five years of living expenses saved up), but the problem was that he had based his significance on his work. Until the day the company downsized, he had been told what an excellent job he was doing, and to keep up the great work. He was even used as the exemplary employee on several occasions before his co-workers. And now he was unemployed! The real need of his heart was to hear that we, as believers, have significance in God because of Christ alone. He needed to be reminded of this for weeks by friends in his Community Group. Community Groups are where you are known, and where your friends are purposefully listening to your stories so that they can speak the gospel into your life, reminding you that you are accepted, secure, have purpose, are valued, have significance in God alone through Jesus.

At the very beginning of Redeemer, we put a massive emphasis on Community Groups. We tried to make it as easy as possible to join, and advertised the groups all of the church and website. Community Groups were the one thing we focused on throughout the year. As a result, we now have more people in Community than we do in our Sunday services. I'm not sure how this happens, but I'm thankful that this has become a safe place for people to hear the love of God. Community Groups are in essence 'house churches' where people are ministered to and minister to others in very specific ways. I think the true work of the church is found in these groups. This is where people are exhorted, encouraged, shown mercy, cared for, prayed for, and engaging in deeper ways with brothers and sisters in Christ. If all you do is attend a service and leave, you are neither known by others or know others. You might have a short meet and greet where you shake hands and superficially say hi to one-another, but who knows your struggles, your motivations, and who points you back to the love of God through Christ? A service (through preaching and singing) can do the big work of reminding you that you are loved, but only a group of brothers and sisters that know you can speak specifically into your heart. You need this from your brothers and sisters—they need this from you. This is the true work of the church.

So if Community groups are this important to the church, what is our strategic plan for getting people into groups, and for raising up leadership so that we'll have plenty of groups as the church grows? Let's look at the steps that need to be put in place for building Community Groups, and then how to use the GEM to get the whole church involved in the life of the church. There are several steps that need to be completed before actually diving into the GEM (STEPS 1-4), and then steps that are completed with the GEM (STEPS 5-8), and finally a last step with is evaluations (STEP 9).

### **STEP 1: Pray and Dream Together**

The first step in developing any ministry is to spend time in prayer and asking the Lord for vision and direction. While it might seem easy to just do what you have seen before, because of your demographic and culture, the work that God wants to do in your church may be entirely different than what has been done before. You might gather a few people and spend a night, or even a few weeks, praying and asking the Lord to reveal what He wants for your ministry. It is important to realize that there are so many ways in which you can do Community Groups. Some churches focus on "Home

Bible Studies” while others focus on “Shared Interest Groups”. As you pray, listen to the Lord for His vision, and as you dream together, make sure you name your groups based upon the vision that God has given you, and that the content of the group is also based on what God has revealed. There is no one “right” way so walk in freedom as God leads you.

Once you have prayed together, then start talking out loud about what you have heard and what he has brought to mind – he may have even given some people visions. Make sure you take time to dream big – think in terms of 3-5 years out...think about what you would do if you had plenty of resources and people. When you dream about your ministry, you are not really thinking about what is possible right now, but rather what you want this ministry to look like as you develop it. Although your dream will probably not be possible right away, it is a picture of what you are aiming for in the long haul. So dream about what the Lord wants to do – hold nothing back!

Make sure that you are taking time to dream together as a team. Pick the people who you think would be great leaders in this area of ministry, and ask them to pray and dream together. As you share out loud about what you have heard, you’ll have a great picture of what God wants to do in your church. Dream about the size of the ministry, dream about what you want to teach, dream about life-change, dream about people connecting with Jesus both as leaders and participants, dream about raising up trained and confident leadership, dream about how you will make this area of ministry fun and inspiring. Let God give you His picture of what He thinks is possible for you to accomplish.

Once you have dreamed, then you can start to figure out how to divide this dream into pieces that are possible for the season that you are in. Make sure that you keep the main dream alive (you know where you are heading), but also make sure that your immediate steps are possible.

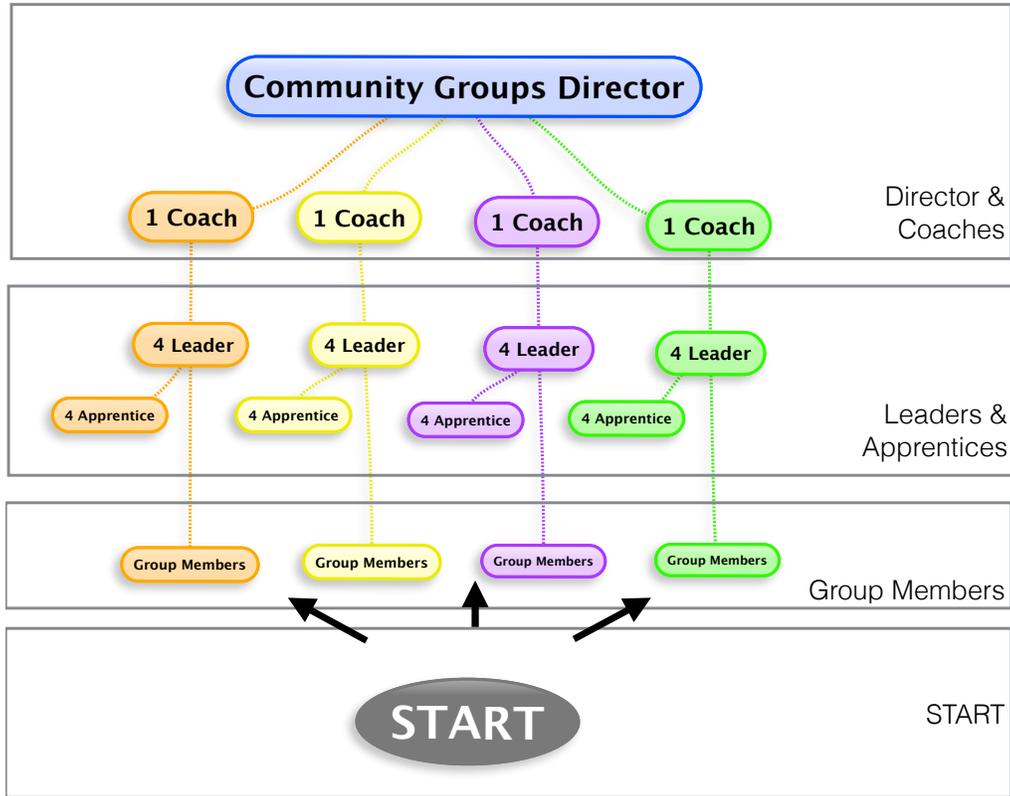
## **STEP 2: Build an Org Chart:**

The second step is to build an org chart that will allow you to see (on paper) the structure of your community group ministry. The org chart lets you see who cares for who, how questions get answered, and where training occurs. It shows you that one person is not the end all for the ministry, but rather there is an organizational structure in place that helps any one person’s job from becoming overwhelming. Your org chart should be much larger than you think you need, because ultimately you are not planning for today, but rather for a future version of the ministry. This org chart might look something like this:



The CG Director oversees four coaches who in turn oversee four leaders. These leaders each have an apprentice whom they are training. Apprentices can also be helpful in co-leading the group. The org chart above enables a church to have 16 groups with 10 to 20 people in each group (160-320 people total). If you are just starting a church, your first thought is “that example is way too big for what we are doing!” Currently you may not need a coach, but start thinking about what will happen as you start with one group, add another, and keep doing the same process. An organizational chart doesn’t just exist to organize the present, but rather it helps you know the positions that you need to be training for the future. While one person might fill many positions on this org chart in the beginning (you might be leader, coach and director in the beginning), as the church grows, you will know how to divide and conquer and be able to hand-over responsibilities based on the existing structure.

The idea is to get an org chart established so that you can see where you need people now and in the future, and what sort of training that you need to provide both now and in the future. Notice how the org chart follows the GEM model. Here’s another way to look at it:



Notice that we put numbers by the positions in the org chart. This number signifies how many of those specific positions another person can oversee. If the org chart says “4 Leader”, then we see that a coach can handle no more that four leaders before we need to add another coach. If you have five groups, hopefully you have been raising up another coach who can help that leader while you add more groups.

An org chart also helps others see the structure of the ministry in more detail than the GEM. It helps people see the needs in the ministry (something they may never have been aware of), and how to get to the next level. Most people do not look at an org chart and understand it innately; therefore you must spend time explaining it. I would recommend that you include the org charts during your training.

**STEP 3: Job Descriptions**

Once you have decided on the specifics of your org chart, the next step is to build job descriptions that detail what that job entails. If you’ve ever worked on job descriptions before, you already know that this is one of the most boring and tedious jobs in the world. I would urge you to make this job fun by limiting your job descriptions to no more than one page (no one will read more than one page anyway), and by

building a template from which you can build every job description<sup>1</sup>. Having a template helps in your thought patterns, but it also helps keep your ministry uniform. I would suggest that a template be set for the entirety of the GEM, and not just in one ministry area. The job description should include the following:

- Title of the position (we list these as “Opportunity”)
- Summary of the position
- Time requirements
- Who the position reports to
- Who reports to the this position (if applicable)
- Responsibilities and Authority
- Prerequisites
- Training

Here is an example job description:

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<sup>1</sup> One job description template should be used across all ministries, not just within community groups. Changing templates means more training. Keep it simple!

**Redeemer, Community Groups.  
Job Description for Community Group Leader**

**Opportunity:** Community Group Leader

**Summary:** As a Community Group Leader you are a shepherd that takes responsibility for part of the flock. Your primary role is to create an environment, week to week, in which people can gather to be disciplined, cared for and encouraged to go live on mission. Your secondary role is to develop new community group leaders from within your group.

**Time Requirements:** 3-5 hours per week. This depends on the size of the group and which responsibilities you have delegated.

**This position reports to:** Community Group Coach

**In this position, you are responsible for:** Your apprentice, and the members of your group

**Responsibilities and Authority:**

- Along with your group members, continually identify people who are not in community and invite them to be a part
- Continually look for and invite potential leaders to get involved
- Work to disciple the people in your group
- Help others identify and develop their spiritual gifts
- Connect with your Coach twice per month
- Connect with potential leaders and members of your group outside of regular group as needed
- Attend Community Group Leader trainings, 2-3 per year
- Encourage those in your group to live on mission, personally and corporately
- Work to build a care structure within your group so that needs can be met and the gospel can be spoken into each others lives.
- Continually evaluate that the people in your group are growing in Christ, caring for one another and loving the people around them

**Pre-requisites:**

- A follower of Jesus and a faithful servant-leader in your own home
- Redeemer is your home church, this means you regularly attend, give and serve here
- You will need to have completed the leadership development process

You might be tempted to think that certain positions on your org chart are so easy to do that they do not need a job description. Remember that you are not writing this job description for yourself, but rather for the person who has never done this job before. The job description is for the purpose of clearly explaining the specifics to anyone who wants to be involved. Although a tedious task, you will find that doing this 'behind the scenes' work will pay great dividends in the next steps. If writing job descriptions are not your cup of tea, you might have an evening in which you invite a few friends to help you put these job descriptions together. Remember that job descriptions can be

edited, so your first efforts will not be your last. Keep a great filing system so that you can easily access for editing<sup>2</sup>.

#### **STEP 4: Develop Training**

At this point in the process, you have still not invited anyone to serve in Community Groups; you are still working behind the scenes. As you think about inviting people to serve, you now need to offer training for the job descriptions that you put together. Although you might train everyone in one training session (coaches, leaders and apprentices), remember that each job has certain nuances that need to be thought through. As your church grows, you will need to offer individual training for each job description. A well developed training will include the following four elements:

1. An Explanation of the end goal of the training.

What are the results that you want from this training? If I train people correctly, what is it that I am hoping that they will do? Remember that others cannot see the vision that you have in your head. How can you articulate the 'end goal' you have in your mind so that others can see the purpose of this training? You might say "at the end of this training, I would like you to be able to", or "after our training today, Community Groups will function like this..., and look like this...". You'll be surprised how quickly people will catch onto to the concepts that you are teaching if you lay out the end goal ahead of time. Remember also that many of the people you are training are not coming with a blank slate; they come with experience from other churches that have community groups or home bible studies. They might have even received training in these groups, and therefore assume they already know what it is you are training them to do. While their prior training is incredibly helpful, you must help them to understand the what, why, and how of Community Groups in your church. If your vision of Community is interaction on a personal level and their prior was for a Home Bible Study, you'll need to help them see the vision before they tune out thinking they have already gone through your training.

Laying out the end goal is also useful in helping you develop training. How many times have you been to a training time where the teacher almost seems to be teaching by jogging his own memory; "oh, and another thing...". Knowing your end goal will help you know what is essential to your training time and what can be neglected for the sake of memory and brevity. If you make your training sessions brief, to the point, and purposeful, the people that you are working with will not find fifty ways to avoid them.

The ultimate goal of being in Community is to build purposeful relationships that we can then in turn use to remind each other of God's love! This is what a Community Group leader is trying to accomplish in its groups members, but this also needs to be

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<sup>2</sup> If multiple people are involved, use "Dropbox" or other cloud services. The worst scenario for working as a team is that the team shares your computer. The second worst scenario is that you try and use email as editing tool. Like a software company, add something like v1.0 or v1.2 when you make major revisions. This will help you keep organized and know which version is your most recent.

established in the Community Group Leadership team. In your training, make sure to include your expectations for coaches interacting with leaders, as well as leaders interacting with apprentices. Coaches, leaders, and apprentices will face different pressures and challenges as group members, so to develop an environment in which they can encourage one another is helpful. It is great to be able to admit the fact up front that not everything is going to go as planned, and that there will be tension that is created as we do life together. However, in these moments, there is great opportunity to speak the gospel into one-another's lives. This is the true end goal of the training...so don't skip it! How the leadership cares for one-another, will trickle down to how the group members care for one-another.

## 2. The "how to" of the job

The how to of training is for the practical tasks included in the job. The people you are training need to walk away understanding not only the expectations and tasks but 'how to' do them. There is no doubt that you have a certain methodology in mind when you think about a task that needs to be accomplished. If you do not develop training for this methodology, be prepared to accept any methodology possible...even ones you do not agree with. Since this methodology may already be inside your head, make sure that you lay out each individual step, and then do your training based upon it.

The 'how to' of training should start with you thinking through all the various parts of what you would like your community groups to look like and how a leader can make this possible. What is the time-frame of a group? How should a room be set-up to foster conversation? Should there be food? What should happen during the group time (prayer, conversation, teaching, reading from the word)? Do you expect interaction outside of the group? Do you think it is a good idea for the men and women to separate at some point so that they can talk privately? Write down each of these parts and then begin to work on a training document. Remember that this includes much more than training the community group leader how to fill ninety minutes of conversation. What is the point of conversation? What sorts of discussion questions are appropriate? How do you get the person who never shares to share? When I think about a great community group, I envision people sitting around a room that feels warm and comfortable, with easy person engaging in conversation. The talkers in the group give way to those who don't speak as much, and the leader is helping everyone express what they are feeling inside. If this vision is going to be a reality, training must occur.

Training includes the expectations of work that are to be done inside and outside the Community Group. For example, if you expect your leaders to make time to train their apprentices, you might help them with ideas on how to keep in contact. One idea might be to have dinner as Leader/Apprentice before group each week. Just helping your people think through their schedule can help them be successful in the task you are giving them.

## 3. How to get to the next level

In every training session, you should address the next step on the GEM. If you are training apprentices and leaders, take time to tell them about the next step:

coaching. You might include the expectations, pre-requisites, and time commitment. Although not everyone who is a leader will become coach, the few who will take that next step have just learned how to do so. Make sure you include the next steps that a person should take if they are interested in going to the next level.

#### 4. How can I live on mission inside and outside the church with this training?

The training you are doing has ramifications for building the kingdom that goes beyond the church. The skills that people have as a result of what was taught can be used in their homes, neighborhoods, communities and beyond. Isn't it wonderful to think that one training could have so many potential practical uses? In order to make this a reality, you'll have to help people connect the dots.

In *Engage the Church*, we spent time learning about living on mission inside and outside the church. We learned that mission includes working in all parts of our community for the purpose of building purposeful relationships. Remember, just like church, the end goal of knowing 'how to' serve in Community Groups is for building relationships with people whom you can hear from and speak to the life giving words of the love of God. In the same way that this is our goal inside the church, this is also our goal outside the church. How can we build purposeful relationships with people so that they can hear that they are loved by God? The training you have just given is a 'key' that will open the door to many opportunities for building purposeful relationships. Here's a few ideas that you can use in your training to help people connect the dots:

Position	Internal Mission	External Mission	Non-Profit Mission
Apprentice/ Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite people to be in community from the church at large</li> <li>• Disciple people</li> <li>• Pray and Care for people</li> <li>• Build purposeful relationships where you speak the gospel into each others lives and teach them to do the same.</li> <li>• Visit the sick, take meals over in times of hardship.</li> <li>• Financially give to one-another and share resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help people build community outside of the church so that purposeful relationships can be built.</li> <li>• Figure out ways you and your group members can encourage, pray for, and show kindness in your neighborhoods</li> <li>• Lead a Community group at work during lunch</li> <li>• Ask your community group if, as a group, you can help a specific neighbor in a purposeful way (like cleaning up their yard or taking meals)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend some of the non-profit events or classes so that you can invite people into your community</li> <li>• Train those working in the non-profit how to create community in their classes and their areas of expertise.</li> <li>• Train them how to ask questions so that everyone in the class can be known and know others.</li> </ul>
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pray for, disciple, and train your leaders and apprentices.</li> <li>• Look for potential new leaders and apprentices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take on leadership positions at work coaching teams and individuals</li> <li>• Encourage people you know to reach their potential</li> <li>• Work with the city or county committees that work to build values in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take on leadership positions in the non-profit to coach leaders to help build community through the non-profit.</li> <li>• Look for potential leaders from your leadership team that could serve in the non-profit and encourage them to do so.</li> </ul>
Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to the Lord for vision for the CG ministry</li> <li>• Set up and Maintain organizational structure for CG's</li> <li>• Care for and Train Coaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with City Manager and County Supervisors to build community in neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Work with principals and school administrators to build community in the schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up organizational structure for kids and adults that provide community for those attending non-profit classes programs</li> </ul>

All this organizational structure and training is wasted unless we are building purposeful relationships inside and outside the church. It is exciting to think that the Holy Spirit has gone before us preparing peoples heart to hear God's love, and even to speak God's love back into our hearts. In our compartmentalized world of work, sports, family, church and automatic garage doors that keep us all separated, to see our

training as the 'keys' to opening the doors for purposeful relationships is helpful for disciples who know they are called to 'go and make disciples'.

You might use a team of people to develop training for each position. We have always found that professionals, like counselors and teachers, are invaluable. This is because they have been trained to think through so many scenarios, that they offer incredibly helpful and time-saving suggestions. Counselors know how to ask "entry gate" type questions that enable you to get people to open up. They are also good at asking questions that cut to the chase. It is also helpful to call other churches to find out what their training programs are like and adapt it to your situation.

#### Practical thoughts on training:

If you want your training to be successful, there are some easy planning items that you might consider.

First, provide childcare, food, and drinks. Recognize that people are giving up time for training, so make it as convenient as possible for them. We do most of our training on Sundays directly after the service and we provide lunch and childcare each time.

Second, training is never a one-time activity. Although you might have an 'intensive training' two or three times a year, you can also do 'VIP' trainings throughout the year if you plan well. I introduced the concept of 'VIP' trainings in *Engage the Church*. The idea is to share Vision, Instruction, and Pray, all in about 10 minutes. You might do them VIP times at the beginning of each month. This can be done in via email or by posting a video on your church website. In VIP times you can reiterate the vision, give short but useful instructions, and pray for the team. Think of all the other creative ways that you can train: books, emails, podcasts, blogs, videos and the like. Don't inundate your people, but by providing a variety in your training will actually help people feel connected and cared for.

Third, training needs to be multi-tasked. Training needs to extend beyond that of the classroom lecture...people need to be told what to do, see someone do it, do it with some-one, have someone watch them, and then they are finally ready to do it themselves. This is the goal of having an apprentice. When a person graduates from med school, all they've done is the book portion of their training. After med school, they then intern in a hospital, some for upwards of five years, before they are able to take their exams to become a doctor. I can't imagine someone saying to me that they are qualified to do open heart surgery because they read a book and got an "A" on the quiz! Thank God for this system of internship that works in conjunction with book learning.

As a Community Group leader, I am always praying that God would lay on my heart who my next apprentice is going to be. After I have found that person (from inside my group), I start hanging out with them, letting them see what I do, and then asking them to specifically care for another person in the group. I coach them through this, and we have frequent conversations where I ask what they are doing and how it is going. Often times I'll have the apprentice take over portions of the night that they have watched me do. They might take over the prayer time or discussion time. This

enables them time to lead and gain feedback from me. Eventually I'll let the apprentice oversee the whole group while I'm there, and then the whole group without me there. It's always great to see a people who never thought they were capable actually lead the group well. When setting up your training system, make sure that you are teaching your leaders and coaches to model/mentor by following using the following steps.

- Tell me what to do
- Let me watch you do it
- Let me do it with you
- You watch me do it
- I do it by myself

Fourth, don't be afraid to demand a lot of your Community Group leaders and Coaches. Some of the worst situations come out of churches that have rushed people into leadership because they needed to fill positions. The better methodology is to set the standard high, make your leaders attend all the trainings before they are able to serve, and don't back down. In so doing, you will create a culture where it is a privilege to serve and those leaders and coaches will realize the grave responsibility you have put them in when it comes to shepherding the flock. I once heard that The Village Church in Texas (Matt Chandler) had a huge waiting list for getting into a Community Group. On one hand I can imagine that this is painful for the leadership...they want people in groups. On the other hand, I can imagine that this protects those who are on the waiting lists from great pain and hurt.

I recommend using training material that is already established (if you don't have time to develop your own). "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand" by Paul Tripp is an excellent resource to train Community Group leadership, as is "How People Change" by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane. CCEF (The Christian Counseling Educational Foundation) has certificate programs available for those who want to lead. These programs are not cheap, and the time investment is hefty, but the results will be well worth it. You might think of resources that are appropriate for apprentices, leaders, and then coaches. Each level should come with significant increases in their commitment level and training.

#### Training at Each Level of the GEM:

Make sure that you provide specific training for each level on the GEM. While you want to start out with "Orientation Training" for the process of going from the Group Member to 'apprentice, you also want to provide separate training for the next two steps (leader and coach). The more specific the training, the more confidence you will build in your team. While a member might not think that they could ever lead, if you provide the correct training, they will begin to realize that there is a possibility. Training that gives specific instruction brings security.

At first, you can do a large training for each level of the GEM, but as your church grows, you will want to divide your training up into the areas of your org chart. You might do three different "Orientation Training" sessions for each level.

Developing training will take time, but it will pay great dividends as your church begins to grow. Many churches grow to a certain point (say 150 people) and plateau until they realize that their growth has been limited by the fact that they have not really set up an organizational system or trained anyone. Sometimes churches that don't recognize this problem can thwart growth for years; they say they want to grow and to see people come to know Jesus, but the work that they are doing behind the scenes doesn't match up with this mission. This was certainly the story at Redeemer...seven years of relying on the people who came to us disciplined/trained by other churches to do the work at Redeemer. I can't tell you that setting up an org chart, writing job descriptions, or developing training is easy work, but I can tell you it is profitable work for your ministry: it will pay huge dividends both in your ministry and wherever God calls your people over their lifetime.

### **USING THE GEM**

Now that you have done the behind the scenes work, you are now ready to start working with the GEM. Keep in mind that the GEM has two pin-ultimate purposes: First, it serves to show people how to get connected into the church. Second, it serves to help you (as the leader) know how to get people connected and onto the next level. The ultimate purpose is building purposeful relationships inside and outside the church.

### **STEP 5: Get People Involved Using the GEM (Attract)**

The first goal in building purposeful relationships through Community Groups is to get people involved. How can we get people who have just joined the church (been a part for six months or less) to start thinking about joining a community group? How can we get them from the "START" to "group member" and onto the next level (apprentice, leader, coach)?

One of the main reasons that people do not get involved is because they do not know what they are signing up for. What do we mean by "group member" or "Leader" or "Coach"? Therefore, to get people involved, you must spend time clearly articulating what each position is. You can do this task by answering the following five questions:

- What you are asking the person to do
- What their commitment will be
- The prerequisites (if any)
- The training requirements
- The next step(s) to take

Here are examples that you can use for each segment:

## Community Groups

### Group Member

We are committed to living in community. We believe we are called to live lives not as individuals but as part of the Body of Christ (Romans 12). One of the ways we carry out this call to share our lives with others, is in Community Groups. We want everyone who calls Redeemer home to be in a Group.

These groups meet on different nights of the week in different locations throughout the city. Some discuss the sermon, others go through a book and others do a Bible study. While the groups may look different the purpose is the same, to glorify God by enjoying Him and to speak his love into each others lives.

#### **PRACTICALITIES:**

As a new group member the only requirement is to show up at a group and participate. Most groups meet once a week for about 2 hours.

If you have a desire to learn, grow and live in the Gospel, then a Community Group is for you!

#### **NEXT STEP:**

- Sign-up for a group!

There are several ways to get into a Community Group. One way is to get a Community Group Catalog from the Information Counter, choose a group, fill out the sign up card and drop it into one of the Giving Boxes. Also you can sign up at [www.redeemermodesto.com](http://www.redeemermodesto.com), click the Community button, click the Community Group Sign-Up Button and select a group. After you have requested to join the group the Leader will contact you.

Contact Info: [info@theredeemerchurch.com](mailto:info@theredeemerchurch.com)

## Community Groups

### Apprentice and Leader

As a Community Group Leader you are responsible for the duties/health of a Community Group, which includes, but is not limited to: Hosting, leading discussion, training an Apprentice leader, discipleship/counseling of the group members, pursuing new members, inviting people, keeping your group on Mission. This does not mean that you have to do all of this but that you coordinate and delegate to make sure these things are happening.

As a Community Group Apprentice, you are in the process of learning to lead. Apprentice leaders are trained by their group leader, as well as by the Community Group Coaches and Director.

#### **PRACTICALITIES:**

- Becoming an Apprentice is the first step to becoming a leader.
- A group leader will commitment to 5-8 hours per week, including there group time. *Don't let this scare you, if the Lord has led you to become a CG Leader he will sustain you.*

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- If you in a Community Group, talk to your leader about your desire to lead by becoming an apprentice.
- If you are an apprentice, work with your Community Group Leader until you are ready to lead your own group.

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

- Must be a believer, and a member of Redeemer who has a track record of serving and giving.
- Must be in a Community Group

Contact Info: [info@theredeemerchurch.com](mailto:info@theredeemerchurch.com)

## Community Groups

### Coaches and Directors

Community Group Coaches are responsible for the training and health of no more than four community group leaders. Coaches assist the Leadership by praying for them, encouraging them, providing them with necessary training and resources, and meeting with them on a monthly basis.

The Community Group Director is responsible for the training and health of no more than four coaches. In the same way that coaches assist leaders, the directors assist the coaches.

#### **PRACTICALITIES:**

Coaches spend time with each leader on a monthly basis. Coaches might visit a Leaders Group to offer insight and training for the Leader and the apprentice. Coaches commit to serving approximately 5-8 hour per week.

Directors spend time with coaches on a monthly basis. Directors also provide necessary training for apprentices, leaders and coaches. Directors commit to serving approximately 5-8 hours per week.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Talk to your existing coach and/or director about your desire to serve at this next level.

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

- You are already a Community Group Leader.

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Once you have defined each position on the GEM for Community Groups, you can now invite people to be involved. Since the GEM is divided up into 10 slices, it works to 'market' one ministry from the front per month. If your church is starting with fewer slices (church plants should start with three to five slices max), then this only increases the amount of time for promotion.

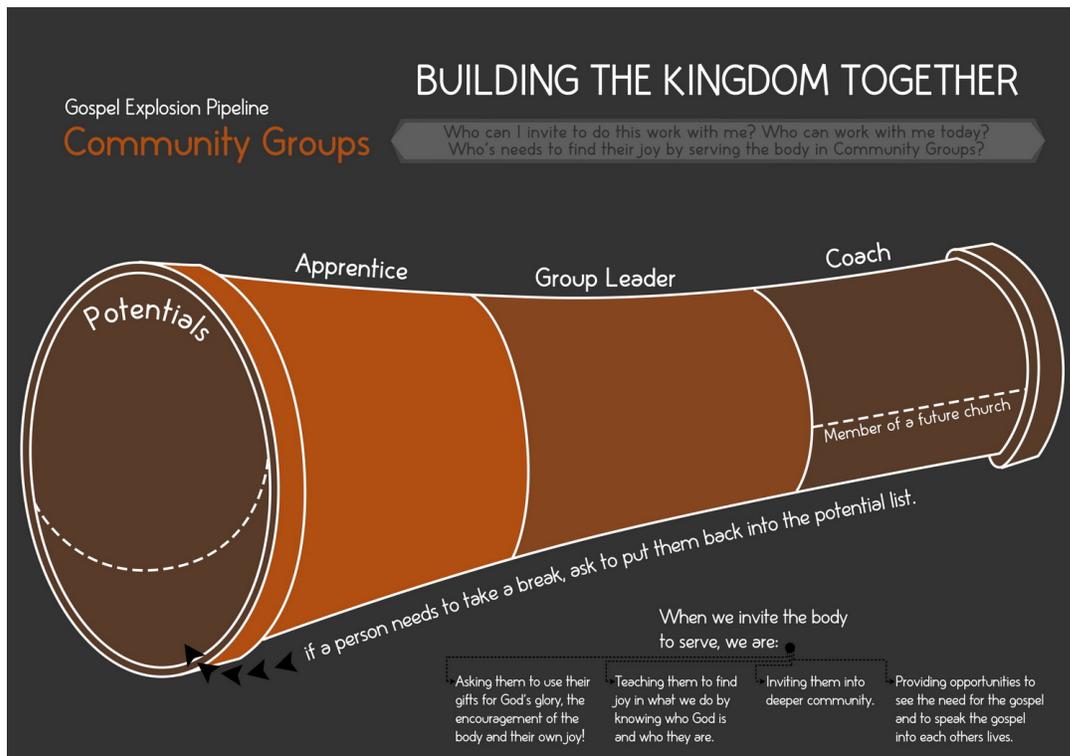
Attracting people to Community Groups should be well defined and strategic. Most ministry leaders strategy is to announce it from the front and think they are done. How could you purposefully develop a strategy that would work in conjunction with numerous ideas for getting people involved? Here are some ideas for promoting Community Groups

- Sunday Service:
  - Announcement by Pastor or Community Group Director
  - Testimonies by CG Leaders and Coaches
  - Bulletin Bullet, Slide (on screen), Insert flier in bulletin
  - Invitation by group members in the congregation (turn and invite)
  - Table in Foyer/Narthex with information and invites to sign up.
  - GEM poster, with your info cards for each segment of your ministry on display.
- Mid-week:
  - Email, letter, or postcard invite.
  - Phone Call
  - Facebook and/or Twitter campaign
- Personal Invitation
  - Existing members, apprentices, leaders, coaches and directors invite people they know to join their groups.

Whatever your methodology for inviting people to join Community Groups, think about fitting it into the larger context of your work. We typically run community groups in two rotations: January to May, and Aug to November. We avoid Christmas because it's a scheduling nightmare, and avoid June/July because this is when most people are on vacation. Running Community Groups in two rotations have been helpful for two other reasons. First, rotations are helpful because they give Leaders a rest. We suggest that you tell your community group leaders to truly rest during these breaks, and if the community group still wants to hang out (which is typically the case) then have another group member organize a event at their own house. Group leaders need to rest! The second reason rotations are helpful is because they give natural on-ramps and off-ramps to each group. By stopping and starting, people who want to join feel like there is a natural place to jump into the group. We spend a lot of time announcing the groups in the months of January and August (as they start up), and make sure that everyone knows they are welcome to attend. Also, if a person want to jump ship, then leaving at the end of a rotation is a natural place to do this. As you think about promoting your groups, think about what rotations you'd like have, and what would be most helpful to the culture of your church and your city.

As you think about the start of each rotation, consider the needs in your org chart that need to be filled. Do you need more apprentices? Leaders? Coaches? During your training times, begin to talk about these needs out loud, and pray that God would bring the right people to step up.

Whether you are inviting people to become group members, or asking for apprentices or leaders, personal invitation is, by far, still the best methodology for getting people involved in your ministry. The key to doing personal invites in an ever growing church is to make sure that you are training everyone in your groups to do invitations. Train group members to invite people to join. Train apprentices to find other apprentices. Train leaders to find leaders. Train coaches to find coaches. As the church grows, your ability to know or reach everyone is only limited by how many people you train to invite people they know. In *Engage the Church*, I introduced the concept of “Pipeline” as a way to help your whole team do the work of personal invitation. The idea is to list each person already participating, circle those who are potentials for moving to the next level (i.e. to leader), and then use a portion of your VIP time to invite others to serve. It is important to help your team know the correct motivations for including others—those are listed on the Pipeline. Fill this document in before coming to your VIP time, then distribute it to your team asking if there is anyone else that we might add to the potentials list. Here’s a picture of the pipeline for Community Groups:



The pipeline does not include 'group member' because there would be too many to list. Becoming a Group member is something that we should be talking about constantly in the church and in the Community Group; whom can we invite into our group so that we can remind them of the gospel too?

Remember that the GEM has two purposes in terms of attracting people. First, to get people from the "START" to involved in a specific area of ministry. The second so that you can disciple people, taking them to the next level. As you think about promotion of your ministry and using the pipeline, don't forget to keep both of these purposes in mind. The hope is to help those who feel called and help them get into a team that will ultimately go and start another church.

#### **STEP 6: Get People Trained Using the GEM (Build)**

Once you have attracted people, it is now time to put your training system (developed in step 4) to work. Remember the phrase "more is caught than taught"? This is a good reminder to us that training needs to include modeling/mentoring as well as teaching. This is why the next step is so critical.

#### **STEP 7: Get People Connected Using the GEM (Connected)**

Most of us are nervous about doing something new. This is no exception with members, apprentices, leaders, coaches, and directors. While we look back and think about how easy it was, sometimes we have a hard time remembering what it was like to step into that new arena for the first time. This is why it is so important to get people connected while they get established in whatever new role they are doing. Think of it like putting a stake next to a tree until the root system is solid. How can you connect new members of your group specifically with other members? How can you help leaders connect with other leaders and their coaches? There are many easy ways to do this (like sharing email and phone numbers), but the most critical step is for you to be purposeful in developing a system to make sure the connection happens.

What is the system you are using to make sure that Leaders are connecting with their apprentices? Are you tracking whether or not your coaches are connecting with your leaders? You cannot manage what you cannot measure, so putting a system that can be measured in place is a great step to making sure that people are connecting.

As established prior, the ultimate purpose for an organizational system like the GEM is build purposeful relationships. It is important that you don't just assume that people are connected, but rather you make sure. At first it might seem awkward to make people feel connected, but the more it becomes common place, people will say that they would be glad to do for others what someone else did for them.

#### **STEP 8: Get People to the Next Level Using the GEM. (Developed)**

Growth is innate to the GEM. A person who gets connected on the first level is aware that there are other levels. As they look at the GEM, they immediately see that a group member is only the first step, and that there are two above it. As leaders, we are aware that in order for the church to grow, we must help people get to those next levels. If we are to have more community groups, we need more leaders and coaches.

And, if we are going to plant or replant churches, we know that we must develop fully functional teams that we can send out: we need directors! So how do you get someone to the next level in Community Groups?

Before you do anything: pray. Pray that God would lead people into your ministry that actually desire to get to the next level. Pray that God would bring people that you could train. Pray that God would give you eyes to see these people. So many times I've gone with my own instincts and hunches and ended up with set-backs that cost me six months in training. When I get ahead of God it is typically because I'm not living in the gospel myself. I forget that God provides, and I start trying to provide. I forget that God calls and motivates people, and instead I try to play Holy Spirit. Spend time praying that God would bring the right people at the right time...you'll be very surprised with what God does.

After you've spent time in prayer, begin to assess the people in your ministry already. There are several types of people serving in your ministry. There are those that you don't even need to ask to get to the next level...they are already working every angle to get there. There are those that you know should be at the next level but they are not stepping up. And there are those in a specific level and that is exactly where they need to stay. Your role as a leader is to figure out who is who on your team and help them get to where they need to be.

After praying and assessing, don't be afraid to challenge people to move to the next level. Often times we feel as if it is rude to encourage people to step up out of their comfort zones, but it doesn't seem that God shares that opinion. The important issue is to see God given potential and help someone achieve it. It is amazing to me how many people I have challenged to get involved or to get the next level that have come back and thanked me for the great joy they have in their hearts because I encouraged them. Manipulation for the sake of filling positions is wrong and will be sniffed out in no time at all—seeing God given potential and encouraging people to step out in faith will be rewarded.

So what are some specifics of getting people to the next level?

### Start to Group Member

Step 5 is the section on attracting people to Community Groups. Remember that attracting people to Community Groups is not a once a year activity, but rather is year round. Even raising up leaders to the next level is an ongoing work. We should always be considering who can we invite or take to the next level with us. Remember that if you train everyone who is involved in Community Groups (from member to Director) to constantly think about personal invitations, not only will you never lack for group members, but no one who visits your church will ever be able to say "I didn't feel welcome there".

### From Group Member to Apprentice/Leader

Not everyone who is a group member should become an apprentice or leader. After you have prayed and asked for God's direction, next you need to look at the fruit

of a person's life. Are they participating? Do they come with suggestions? Are they engaging with people in the group? Are they engaging with people outside the group? While fruit is not the final say on whether or not to take a person to the next level, it is a helpful indicator. Some people would be good at the next level, but display no fruit in the present because no one has disciplined them. There are many reasons people don't share or engage—there is a healthy introvert and an unhealthy introvert in the same way that there is a healthy extrovert and an unhealthy extrovert. The whole purpose of community is to be able to speak the gospel into each other's lives. This means that you get to know people, their hurts, fears, and anxieties; their gifts, loves, and desires. Challenge them to live as loved and take steps towards healing, and to take steps into leadership that they might never have thought possible.

Be careful not to coerce people! Whatever you use to motivate people to take the next step, you'll have to use to help them maintain at that next level. Therefore, if they take the next step because you talked them into it, you'll have to continue to talk them into it for them to stay. However, if they truly felt the calling of the Lord, then God's calling will be the motivation to continue.

On a practical side, don't be afraid to ask people to step up and try. What if you gave people in your group the chance to lead portions of the Community Group? You can learn a lot by watching people, and they can develop confidence by taking very small steps.

Make sure you listen for their fears and self-assessed shortcomings. Teach into these fears and shortcomings, but also remember that speaking the gospel is as important as any instruction that you'll be giving. Often times we think that training is the answer when in fact people are quite competent on a mental level, yet it is their heart that holds them back. To encourage with the fact that we are loved by God is an amazing fear breaking tactic, and one that can only be claimed by those who know Christ.

After you have prayed, assessed, and 'tested' to see if someone is ready to step up as an apprentice, invite them to be your apprentice. Invite them to make the commitment and do the training that you have developed.

Once they have received training, some will be ready to apprentice or lead, while others will still be on the edge. Continue to mentor them, speaking the gospel into their lives as they continue to take small steps.

Like the stake in the ground that helps the newly planted tree, be a continual source of encouragement for those who are stepping up. Some trees take root quickly, while others take years. Whatever the process, it will be wonderful to see the results as you get members to step up to become apprentices and leaders.

#### From Leader to Coach:

Coaches are the ones that help leaders make their groups great. Coaches interact with Leaders on a weekly/monthly basis encouraging them in their work, and giving them ideas that will enhance their leaders and group meetings. Coaches work to provide training for the Leaders and Apprentices.

Sometimes great Community Group Leaders can step into the coaching role to give many Community Groups their help and expertise. Recognize that leading a group well, and being able to coach group leaders is an entirely different skillset and job.

As your groups grow in numbers (you had 4 groups and you now have 5), you may want to pair up a great community group leader with that 5<sup>th</sup> group leader to see if they have the skillset to be a coach. As you train them in coaching skills, add more groups until you hit the recommended maximum of 4 Community Group Leaders to a coach.

#### From Coach to Director:

The Director is the person who sees the big picture of the Community Group ministry. This person understands the organizational structure, and knows how to plug holes when things are not going as planned. Directors can also coach the coaches, encouraging them in their roles with the kids.

Some Coaches have such a good grip on what they are doing, that you know that in a pinch, you could ask them to do just about anything and they would help you. They could encourage a leader, work out group conflicts, or just pinch-hit for a group that needs help. This is a good sign that this person might be a great Director. When you recognize a coach who has these skills, ask them to consider becoming a director. Have them manage another coach (or two) and see what begins to spawn out of those relationships.

Once you have a director position filled, you are now ready to either expand the ministry in tremendous ways (another 180-360 people), or you are ready to send this person out as part of a church planting or replant team.

#### Don't wait until there is a need to take people to the next level

One of the biggest mistakes in any organization is to wait to attract and train leaders until there is an opening. In other words, we don't start looking for Community Group Leaders or Coaches until our existing ones tell us they need a break, starting today. We have all been there. In short, we don't attract and train until we are in the middle of a problem. Why is this? We know that God said he will build his church, we know that we are called to make disciples, and we also know that people who are currently serving will need a break. It is baffling to me when we think that the current situation will continue indefinitely, as this has never happened in all of human history.

No matter what your current need is, your role in the church (more specifically in Community Groups) is to get the whole church involved in the life of the church. Imagine the day when a Community Group leader can say "I need a break", and you can reply "no problem" without grimacing or immediately panicking. This day is possible when you don't wait to take people to the next level, but pray, assess, train and develop people constantly.

One of the biggest arguments I hear against constant training is "if I train more people, what are the people who are currently in those positions going to do?" The verse that comes to mind when I hear this is Matthew 9:37 where Jesus tells the disciples that "the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few". The very next verse

Jesus tells them “therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”. The earthly argument might be ‘shouldn’t we wait to see if there is a harvest before we find the workers?’ Jesus says that the harvest is there, but our job is to pray that God would send out laborers. Don’t worry about the harvest; it is plentiful There will be plenty to do. Let’s spend our time praying and raising people up and God will make it very clear how he wants to use people as disciples that make disciples.

### **STEP 9: Evaluate Constantly**

The term evaluate refers to assessment or measurement. So in order to evaluate, you have to know what you are assessing or measuring. In reference to Community Groups, we want to assess and measure if our efforts in using the GEM are actually working. We want to look at our results and evaluate whether or not are systems need to change.

One of the easiest evaluation tools is your org chart. If you built an org chart and placed numbers on each position, you can evaluate STEP 5 (Get people involved) and STEP 8 (Get people to the next level) by updating your numbers. The evaluation is not “is every position full” but rather “are we making progress?”. If you are not seeing progress in having people join Community Groups, then you need to revise the way you are doing STEP 5. If you are not seeing people progress to the next levels of the GEM, then you need to revise the way you are doing STEP 8. In our office, the org chart for Community Groups along with the number of people involved and open positions are posted on the wall. This serves as a constant evaluation tool for us to either celebrate how we are doing STEPS 5 and 8, or as a sign that we need to revise our efforts. Here are some questions that might help in evaluation using the org chart:

- Do people in our church know the one step they would need to take to get into a Community Group today?
- Do people in our Community Groups know how to become an apprentice?
- Have we made progress in filling the positions in the last month?
- Does our “Pipeline” have the same names in the same sections as they did at the end of our last rotation?
- Are we able to confidently fill positions when people need a break?

The answer to these questions will most likely give you another set of questions. Answering those questions will result in making revisions to the efforts you have made in STEPS 5 and 8 to help you continue to move forward.

Outside of the org chart, another easy evaluation tool is a simple survey. Once, during each rotation, you might ask your apprentices, leaders, and coaches to fill out a short survey to help you evaluate the training they have received and the connectedness they feel. This survey will help you evaluate STEPS 3, 4, 6, and 7. Here’s a sample of a survey that you might use:

## Redeemer Community Group Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: Apprentice    Leader    Coach (circle one)

Who is your leader or coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following using the scale:  
1 Strongly Disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree.

1. I understand my role and my duties in Community Groups	1 2 3 4 5
2. The training I received for my role in Community groups has enabled me to do my job well.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I feel like I am a part of the team.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I got to know other CG leaders by serving	1 2 3 4 5
5. I understand how to get to the next level in serving	1 2 3 4 5
6. We used the 'pipeline' to help get others on the team	1 2 3 4 5
7. I feel like I could take a break from serving if I needed to.	1 2 3 4 5
I suggest that...	
Comments:	

When you receive the results of the survey, this will help you evaluate what needs to change in the training and the way in which people feel connected in Community Groups. The survey is not conclusive evidence that something needs to change, but it is a great starting point for discussion.

Both these tools are great for creating a way to evaluate what you are doing. You might also consider doing a meeting for your key leaders to get their evaluation. There are several methods by which we can evaluate, and each method comes with its own built-in biases. Whatever you do, don't see evaluation as an attack, but rather that somebody is taking the time to help the ministry improve. There is no ministry that is done growing and changing, just like there is no perfect iPhone. It is great that Apple constantly fixes bugs, provides updates, gives new software, and replaces outdated hardware. Imagine if Apple produced their first iPhone and then just spent the next twenty years defending it instead of improving it. Seems obvious when we are pointing at a piece of hardware like a phone, but in essence all ministry is a piece of hardware

that helps us build purposeful relationship; why wouldn't we want to improve it in every way we can?

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Now that you have a basic understanding of each step you might be feeling overwhelmed! As you look at what needs to be done, remember the way to eat an elephant is always one bite at a time. With everything else you have on your plate, it might seem difficult to spend this much time working on this one ministry. The answer is to divide and conquer!

There is a lot of work to do if you are going to have a thriving Community Group Ministry at your church. Remember what we said at the beginning though...“if you want to join a service, come Sunday mornings, if you want to join a church, come to community groups”. It is a privilege to get to know people so well that you know how specifically how to help them to live as loved. This is the privilege found inside a good community group, and it is a privilege worth working hard for.