

Survey on Small Groups

Compiled by Mark Yeakley from CEA E-mail Forum responses

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Lynn Leaming
E-mail: lynn_leaming@tx.rr.com

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Richardson East Church of Christ
City/State: Richardson, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

600

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Sunday PM & other times

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Most Sep-May; some all year

Where do your small groups meet?

Homes & church building

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Groups form on their own.

What size are your groups?

10-20

Focus of the groups

Most spiritual growth & accountability; some fellowship

What study material is used?

Minister suggests, but group choice

Do the groups serve food?

Group choice

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Go to building for lessons, crafts, and activities.

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

Getting more people involved; forming more groups

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Don Kuhn

E-mail: dakuhn@swbell.net

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Burleson Church of Christ

City/State: Burleson, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

800

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

3rd Sundays

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

All months but June & December

Where do your small groups meet?

21 groups in homes, 1 at the building

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Sign-up

What size are your groups?

12 (Some have more)

Focus of the groups

Spiritual growth

What study material is used?

All groups study same material

Do the groups serve food?

Full meal

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Most separate lesson; some babysitting

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

Keeping groups from growing too large. Group leaders work with groups to prepare for "birthing" new groups.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Tim Shoulders
E-mail: tim.shoulders@sugargrove.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Sugar Grove Church of Christ
City/State: Meadows Place (Sugar Land in SW Houston), TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

650

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Most Sunday PM; some other times

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Groups break for 1st and 5th Sundays and Christmas holidays.

Where do your small groups meet?

Some in homes, some at building

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Various ways. We don't assign people to groups.

What size are your groups?

Groups decide.

Focus of the groups

Some spiritual growth; some evangelistic

What study material is used?

Groups choose from written material or other options

Do the groups serve food?

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Group choice

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

We have been doing groups for 5 years and the issues have evolved over time. We started with tremendous energy but many quickly wore themselves out by making each group meeting like a dinner banquet so we had to help everyone learn to pace themselves and be more realistic in what group should look like.

We then encountered a problem with people who had previously been accustomed to sitting in a Sunday night worship service and being served suddenly having to step up and serve which caused them to want to go back to like things used to be. The issue ultimately revealed itself when leaders began stepping down because they were overworked and could not get anyone to help them with the groups. We solved this through training and teaching everyone why we were doing groups and how a healthy body of Christ worked - we all do our part and are not focused on ourselves but others. We also encouraged groups to develop a leadership team so that there was not any one person or couple leading the group but instead a number of people in the group who all shared the leadership of the group. Most groups were not able to change an existing group to adopt a multiple leader strategy but we discovered that when new groups formed they easily adopted this strategy so we began to encourage new groups to form and group leaders who had groups that would not share responsibility to allow those groups to come to an end and shuffle into new groups.

Five days before Hurricane Ike we had a Life Group Leaders Planning Session focused upon raising to the surface what were our strengths and weaknesses. Since then we have been focused upon 3 areas that surfaced as our primary issues that need attention; growing the focus on serving and service in the groups, growing the number of members and guests involved in groups, and growing the number of new leaders. We have been pleased with the congregation's acceptance of groups but we want to continuously bring more people into groups because of the power for life change in our church and in our community- currently around 50% of the church membership (950 people) or around 75% of the average Sunday morning worship attendance (650) is a part of a group and any given week 50-90% of the total number of people in groups are able to meet in a Life Group at member's homes throughout the region. Our goal is 100% participation.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Joe Tudor

E-mail: parapetsafety@gmail.com

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: South Baton Rouge Church of Christ

City/State: Baton Rouge, LA

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

500

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Groups choose meeting time (most Sunday PM); one meets at building Sunday PM

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Some meet year round, some break in summer. We don't have official 5th Sunday breaks, but some have a cookout or other special event on 5th Sundays. We learned that if you cancel group meetings on 5th Sunday in lieu of a special event at the building, most people don't come to the building.

Where do your small groups meet?

Homes, building, college student center, anywhere they can find a spot.

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Members choose. Most geographic or ethnic. We have 3-4 Chinese groups and 1 Hispanic.

What size are your groups?

12-15. Some are twice that large.

Focus of the groups

Spiritual growth, fellowship, relationship building

What study material is used?

Group leader decides. For a time we had a minister who provided follow-up notes for the Sunday AM sermons. The current minister provided a resource magazine and small budget from which we could order materials, but now each group leader decides.

Do the groups serve food?

Group option. Our group found that having a full meal really interfered with our ability to focus on praying and studying. So, we gather with coffee, talk about prayer concerns for a bit, pray together, work through our study material, then have a small dessert and visit a while.

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Each group decides. Our current minister (who set up the program a long time ago when he was the Associate Minister) told me that is the single most difficult issue with small groups. And there is no single answer that will work for everyone. We've had small toddlers in our group who just played (usually quietly) among the adults, some older kids (like mine) who would either watch movies or play outside. You can provide ideas, but each group will have to settle on what works for them.

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied - We've been worshipping with this congregation 6 years. Small groups have been active here 15 years. It's a huge success.

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

Some issues include making sure the group leaders have the resources they need, encouraging more people to participate, and trying to ensure there is an active group in each area of the city (so people who want geographic convenience can find it). My biggest challenge is attracting new members of the congregation to my group. I live in a growing part of the city, and quite a few people move out here, but I haven't been able to attract any of them to our group meeting. Then again, there are some others within 5-10 miles, and I know some of those people are meeting with other groups. As I mentioned earlier, one of the biggest issues is what to do with the children during meeting time.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Cindi Cervas

E-mail: ccervas@westhoustonchurch.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: West Houston Church of Christ

City/State: Houston, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

950

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Groups choose

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Monthly

Where do your small groups meet?

Some in homes, some at building

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Groups form on their own, mainly by geography or life stage. We tried assigning, but people won't attend if the group is not suited to them.

What size are your groups?

Focus of the groups

What study material is used?

Do the groups serve food?

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Groups decide how to take care of their children - we had children K-5th meet at building for a number of years and then started care for all ages for several more years but our church geographical demographics are so widespread now that it takes too long for groups to bring children to the building. We are still struggling with this decision.

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

One of the best things about small groups is that it is easier to know when a family needs assistance of some kind. Usually their life group takes care of them. The problem is for members who do not attend life groups, their problems are sometimes not known. Another issue with those who don't attend life groups is WHO takes care of that family when problems arise. (In years past we had a meal coordinator who called to help distribute meals but we don't have someone for that right now.)

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: David Compton
E-mail: compton.dave@yahoo.com

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Mt. Hope Church of Christ
City/State: Webb City, MO

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

360

Do you use small groups?

Yes, for over five years

When during the week do your small groups meet?

We have groups mainly on Sunday evening, but have a "small group" that continues to meet on Sunday evening at the church. We have a couple that meet on Thursday, one at noon and one in the evening. I think there is one that meets on Friday evening too. The groups choose what day and time they will meet.

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

At the present time, groups meet during the school year only, with a break at Christmas. We are exploring the idea of year round groups for 2009.

Where do your small groups meet?

Groups meet in homes, other than the one that meets at the church.

How is the congregation divided into groups?

The groups form on their own. We have a couple that are based on geography, some are age-based/life-stage based. Several are based on the topic (e.g., The Truth Project).

What size are your groups?

5-20+; We like for groups to stay smaller than 16 adults.

Focus of the groups

Some service groups, some Bible study, some mixed

What study material is used?

Groups choose their own material. Most use pre-written or produced material.

Do the groups serve food?

Yes, most of them. (My group is self-titled "Soul Food")

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Each group is different; some offer lessons, some don't. My group is mostly pre-K in age, so they are free-range.

Are you happy with your groups?

Yes, for 2008-09, we began in the spring with a new committee that had a passion for small groups. We made a lot of changes to the groups this year. We brought a lot more focus and energy to the small group ministry, recruited more teachers, a lot more marketing to encourage more members to join. We even changed the name to "Connections Small Group Ministry". We formerly called them

LIFE (Love, Involvement, Fellowship, Evangelism) Groups. I would love of course to have more groups and more members actively participating. We average just under 200 each week.

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

We have not had a lot of major issues to deal with since small groups have been used for quite some time. I think with the new committee there was a lot more excitement and interest in small groups and that has improved our enrollment. I would recommend the book *Growing People Through Small Groups*, by Stark and Wieland. It is a good book on small groups and is an easy read.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Scott Waltman
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What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Central church of Christ
City/State: Wichita, KS

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

310 (We started groups when we had 700.)

Do you use small groups?

Yes. 20 years now.

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Most meet on Sunday evening, but have the option of other times. We still have a small group that meets at the building for a "semi-worship" service.

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

We start in September after Labor Day and end around mid-May. We give each group the option of not meeting on holiday weekends and also on 5th Sundays.

Where do your small groups meet?

Most of our groups meet in homes. We had one group that felt it would be better to meet at the building. It killed the group, like I warned.

How is the congregation divided into groups?

We have sign-ups in late summer/early fall with leaders' names and approximate location in the city that the group will meet. Most groups form by life stage or friendships.

What size are your groups?

We have no set rules for group size. We've tried unsuccessfully to limit or split large groups.

Focus of the groups

For the first 15 years our groups focused on Bible study and care for each other. Now we have shifted to allowing each group to do what it feels the group needs. We have some who still do a Bible study. Others just pray and have a meal together. Some have work projects (care for the elderly, work at Carpenter Place, work with homeless, etc.) PS. This switch was very hard for me because Bible study is my "comfort zone." It was pointed out to me that we have other times where Bible study is offered (Sundays and Wednesdays) but no times scheduled for just prayer, or intimate fellowship, or visiting or work projects. Duh!! So we now allow the groups the leeway they need to best minister to their group. This frees up a lot of Bible teachers who were feeling burned out from being used so much.

What study material is used?

For those groups who want to study, I have a list of resources. We don't do "approved" lists; we do "approved" leaders in whom I have confidence. If they wish they can do their own thing. I do ask them to let me know what they are doing. Sometimes our elders request that we all study a topic together and I facilitate that.

Do the groups serve food?

Every group does its own thing. We have groups that do no food. We have groups that do desserts only. Some have a full sit down meal together that the host provides. Some have what each person decides to bring.

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Again groups choose what to do with their children. Some just babysit. Some have a lesson for them in a separate part of the house. Some allow them to be with the adults for sharing and prayer and then turn them

loose. We have a full hour on both Sunday and Wednesday for children's Bible classes. I personally don't see the need for kids to have a lesson every time they are together. It makes them dislike being with other Christians because everything demands a Bible study. There is more to being a Christian than that. I want them to have a good, fun experience in the company of other Christians. The church I attended in the 1950's in Corpus Christi had small groups for the adults and turned the kids loose to play. Most of us turned out pretty good.

Are you happy with your groups?

It takes different outcomes to satisfy everyone. I'm satisfied with my group and I know other groups are quite satisfied. Overall, I'm concerned that our groups are getting smaller (due to older folks dropping out and the mobility of many younger families which takes them away on Sundays) and the consistency with which some members attend. Those in groups are becoming very attached to the group and supportive of each other sometimes to the exclusion of others in the congregation. Should we not have groups because of those problems? Absolutely not. Most of our groups reach out to new people and bring them in immediately. Most of those who are in groups have grown exponentially in their spiritual lives.

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

I've addressed most already.

What to do with children? Leave it to the group.

Consistency of attendance. Insist that group leaders chat with group members each week and encourage attendance.

Material. Your prerogative. Easiest is to have all study the same thing. Our experience is that this will leave some groups unhappy and unfulfilled. Not everyone has the same needs or wants.

Leaders. Must be trustworthy, faithful and people-oriented. We have a few dictators and their groups aren't all they could be.

What to do when the group meets? This is probably being addressed in your reasoning for having groups. We originally formed groups because we were large and people were falling through the cracks. It was our first line for discovering spiritual needs, physical needs, likes and dislikes and trying to remedy the problems. Bible study does not do this for all and we have adjusted. Our groups now are for the purpose of internal care and developing friendships that matter. Our leaders use them for accountability and information sharing (by the way every elder is in a group (except one who ministers to those who come to the building) and every minister is in a group. Almost every group has an elder or minister in it, not by design, it just happened that way. Many are group leaders.

Advice: Be flexible. Give people options. Don't settle for what you are comfortable with. Not everyone will see the world through your lens (or the elders'). Young people will have different needs than older people. Your strongest groups will be from the 40-60 age groups. They need to talk!! Let the group be self governing. (In other words, let them decide how the group will function.) I can get into some touchy areas here. Forgive me if this is not where you are. We allow women in groups to pray and also lead if the group is comfortable with that. We chose not to make that an issue and believe me we've studied every conceivable biblical angle on those subjects.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: John Grant

E-mail: jgrant@collegehills.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: College Hills Church of Christ

City/State: Lebanon, TN

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

1000

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

1st, 3rd, and 5th Sunday nights

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Year round

Where do your small groups meet?

Mostly in homes

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Basically by life stages (age). I would say geographical division is unlikely to work (people will drive to be with friends), allowing groups to form on their own is too loosey-goosey (structure helps groups get started), and assigning members to groups is a REALLY bad idea.

What size are your groups?

Five to fifteen is the ideal, but some grow a little bigger than 20.

Focus of the groups

Spiritual growth, evangelism, and much more. (See the article below, written by a lady who was baptized on Jan. 4, 2009.)

What study material is used?

We write our own, the material has ties to Sunday AM sermons, and all groups study the same thing. Check the LIFE groups tab at www.collegehills.org for more on this.

Do the groups serve food?

Group option. We recommend snacks only, but some groups love the meal, especially older groups.

What do the children do while the groups meet?

We let each group choose. Check the article on our website.

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

You name it, and we've faced it. But the payoff is so strong, we're willing to keep working to build healthy groups.

I suggest attending one of the 2009 Purpose Driven Small Group Conferences listed below.
<http://www.purposedrivenchurch.com/smallgroups>

February 19-21	Lake Forest, California
March 26-28	Houston, Texas
April 23-25	Atlanta, Georgia
May 14-16	Cincinnati, Ohio

Justina's Story

I was raised in a traditional Buddhist family in Hong Kong, China. In 1997 I married Chris and came to live in the US with little knowledge of Christianity and no desire to become a Christian whatsoever. I began going to a small, local church with Chris out of respect to him and his family. For seven years, I did not grow spiritually because I did not have any desire to. I believed that simply being a good moral person was enough.

Then Chris and I joined the family of Christ at College Hills in 2004. Slowly, I began to notice the love Christians had for everyone and wanted to be like them. I loved participating in the many outreach programs sponsored by the church, but still did not necessarily believe in Christ because I was not convinced that miracles could really be done.

My attitude began to change when I became part of a Life Group. Everyone knew I was Buddhist, but still they loved and respected me anyway. Nobody pressured me to become a Christian. Instead, they modeled the love of Christ and spent many, many hours patiently discussing and explaining spiritual matters to me.

The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. God provided me many opportunities to learn through Life Group meetings, Sunday school classes, sermons, and religious materials (especially the video series on the Gospel of John). He opened my eyes and showed me the true nature of His love.

After many years of struggling, I was finally ready to accept Christ on Sunday, January 4, 2009. The journey to become a Christian was not easy for me. I could never have made it without the help of my College Hills family, my Life Group, and my Sunday school class. But most of all, I could not have come to Christ without the unconditional love from our Father.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Shannon Rains

E-mail: srains@cebridge.net

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Kingwood Church of Christ

City/State: Kingwood, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

400

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

In place of Sunday PM, though we still have an Anchor class on Sunday nights for those that wanted a Bible class. Some groups choose their own meeting time.

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

We have been meeting during the school year only, but we are re-visioning our groups now and will probably meet year round. We also have 5th Sunday fellowships. We used to set a small group calendar that detailed holidays off, but have chosen to put that in the hands of the small group leaders to decide beginning this year.

Where do your small groups meet?

A few at the building; most in homes. Some meet over lunch on Sundays for part of their meetings.

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Groups form on their own, usually around life stages and then around geography. We do not assign. We actively invite new members and visitors into the groups but do not assign them to a group.

What size are your groups?

We try to start with 4 to 5 couples. Some groups did not feel comfortable with such a small group when they've had groups of 20 or more in the past. We plan a "grow and plant" model over time and will suggest splitting a group around 15 people.

Focus of the groups

We use "Love God, Love Each Other, Serve the World" as our philosophy for discipleship. Our small groups serve as our "Love Each Other" activity. While we have study material, we try to keep this focused on interpersonal growth, pastoral care, etc. We are trying to make a more clear distinction between the function of Bible classes and the function of small groups.

What study material is used?

We provide suggestions for the groups but also encourage groups to explore the material that would work best for them.

Do the groups serve food?

Depends. My group meets on Tuesday nights and we do potluck. Groups at the building do not typically do food. Other groups in homes on Sunday nights choose. The planning team feels strongly about the meal time and encourages it as it encourages fellowship.

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Almost all groups are on Sunday nights and we do have Sunday night classes at the building on for kids.

Are you happy with your groups?

We are re-visioning. The problem has been that they were too much like Bible class in a home instead of having their own function in our overall vision. Bible classes are having to make the same decisions about how they fit in the vision. The idea of small groups for us is to provide members a family within our church. We hope that small groups will be a place that members will feel transparent and real, while providing spiritual food and encouragement.

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

The transition this year has been difficult. Also, we believe in programs not competing with each other. Our children's program essentially competes with our small groups since it limits the amount of time small groups meet and how far they can meet from the building. However, the programs are excellent and we have to work to find a good balance. We've also had to redefine the parameters for success for small groups, which, for us, has meant not focusing in numbers in a particular group but overall involvement of all members and the care and connection being formed between the members in a particular group.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Rick Johnson

E-mail: rick@eastsidechurchfamily.com

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Eastside Church of Christ

City/State: Antioch, CA

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

200+

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

Each group chooses its own meeting time. Some meet in place of the Sunday PM service and some in place of Wednesday PM service. We treat our Wednesday classes as small groups that meet at the building, responsible for their own offerings, instead of a class offered by the church as a whole.

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

They have periodic breaks. We are currently running a 12-14 week "official" small group cycle in both the spring and the fall. Most of the groups meet less often through the winter. During the summer we plan to do some "all together" things like fellowship events, worship times, picnics, game nights, etc.

Where do your small groups meet?

Some in homes, some at the building

How is the congregation divided into groups?

We recruit most leaders and hosts and groups form on their own.

What size are your groups?

Most are 10-20, but we let the groups decide.

Focus of the groups

Various: body life, spiritual growth, ministry, outreach – not all groups will have all these goals, and we encourage each group to develop some purpose beyond meeting for Bible study.

What study material is used?

Groups pick their own from an approved list of material that we write.

Do the groups serve food?

Group option, but most have some food component.

What do the children do while the groups meet?

This varies by group. Part of "getting started" is deciding what the group will do for the kids. We suggest options, but the groups decide.

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied. We have found that to keep the groups fresh and the participation up we need to keep groups on the "front burner" by talking about them, changing forms or styles occasionally, being flexible as to form and content, and providing ongoing training and resources.

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

Many of the “should we do groups” kinds of questions were handled long before I came to Eastside. Whether people participate or not, there is a general attitude of acceptance for small groups. Even those few in our Sunday night “building circle” (which chooses to look pretty much like a traditional Sunday evening service) mostly have a good attitude about the other groups. Probably the biggest issues we have are those two common to most groups ministries: 1) effective ways of handling children in adult groups, and 2) getting groups that have grown too large to “birth” a new group instead of just staying together. We just encourage them but don’t force anything.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Philip Nichols

E-mail: pnichols@gardenridge.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Garden Ridge Church of Christ

City/State: Lewisville, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

550

Do you use small groups?

Yes

When during the week do your small groups meet?

In place of Sunday PM service

At what times of the year do your small groups meet?

Year round

Where do your small groups meet?

Various homes

How is the congregation divided into groups?

Groups form on their own.

What size are your groups?

10 to 20

Focus of the groups

Spiritual growth and evangelism

What study material is used?

Groups pick from an approved list of material that we write.

Do the groups serve food?

Group option

What do the children do while the groups meet?

Group option

Are you happy with your groups?

Very satisfied

What major issues have you faced with small groups and how have you addressed them?

Child care and staying a group too long. I suggest reorganizing the groups yearly if possible.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Eddie Lewis

E-mail: eddielewis@gtownchurchofchrist.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Germantown Church of Christ

City/State: Germantown, TN

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

900

Do you use small groups?

No. We have a strong youth program that meets Sunday PM & a strong "Lads to Leaders" program that meets Sunday afternoon. We let our Sunday AM Bible classes be our small groups. One elder is assigned to each class and shepherds that class. They have fellowship groups, visitation groups and care groups in each class. Also, Sunday PM is a great time of fellowship for the whole church & we offer our Bible Hour (3yr-2nd grade) during the PM service.

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: Steven Yeakley

E-mail: syeakley@faithvlg.org

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Church: Faith Village Church of Christ

City/State: Wichita Falls, TX

What is your average Sunday AM attendance?

650

Do you use small groups?

No. Although I think weekly groups would be a great tool for our church, our elders have resisted the idea of weekly groups that would take the place of either a Sunday night or Wednesday night program. We have shifted our Sunday night service time from 6 p.m. to 5 p.m. which could give us the chance for groups to develop after our regular service. In short, the primary reason for not utilizing groups is because of a resistance in our eldership. (We have used once-a-month small groups in the past, and will probably do that again. I do not consider that a small group ministry, though.)

Responder name and e-mail address

Name: James Trent

E-mail: jteastside@gmail.com

What is the name of your congregation and the city/state where it is located?

Former Church: West Freeway Church of Christ, Fort Worth, TX

Current Church: Eastside Church of Christ, Midwest City, OK

My input (based on small groups experience at West Freeway):

- Take time to prepare everyone in the congregation that small groups in being considered.
- If the preaching minister and elders are not on board, the small groups ship will sink.
- A major decision must be made prior to the launch of small groups about your philosophy of small groups. Do you want to be a church WITH small groups or a church OF small groups?
- Buddy Bell's material is very good.
- Read everything you can on small groups, go to seminars, attend a small group church and experience their small groups.
- Continue your research from your survey.
- Again - GO SLOW - especially if your church has never experienced small groups meeting on Sunday evening in place of a regular PM worship service.

My current congregation, Eastside, would like to do small groups, but it will take a long time to prepare the people for such a ministry here.