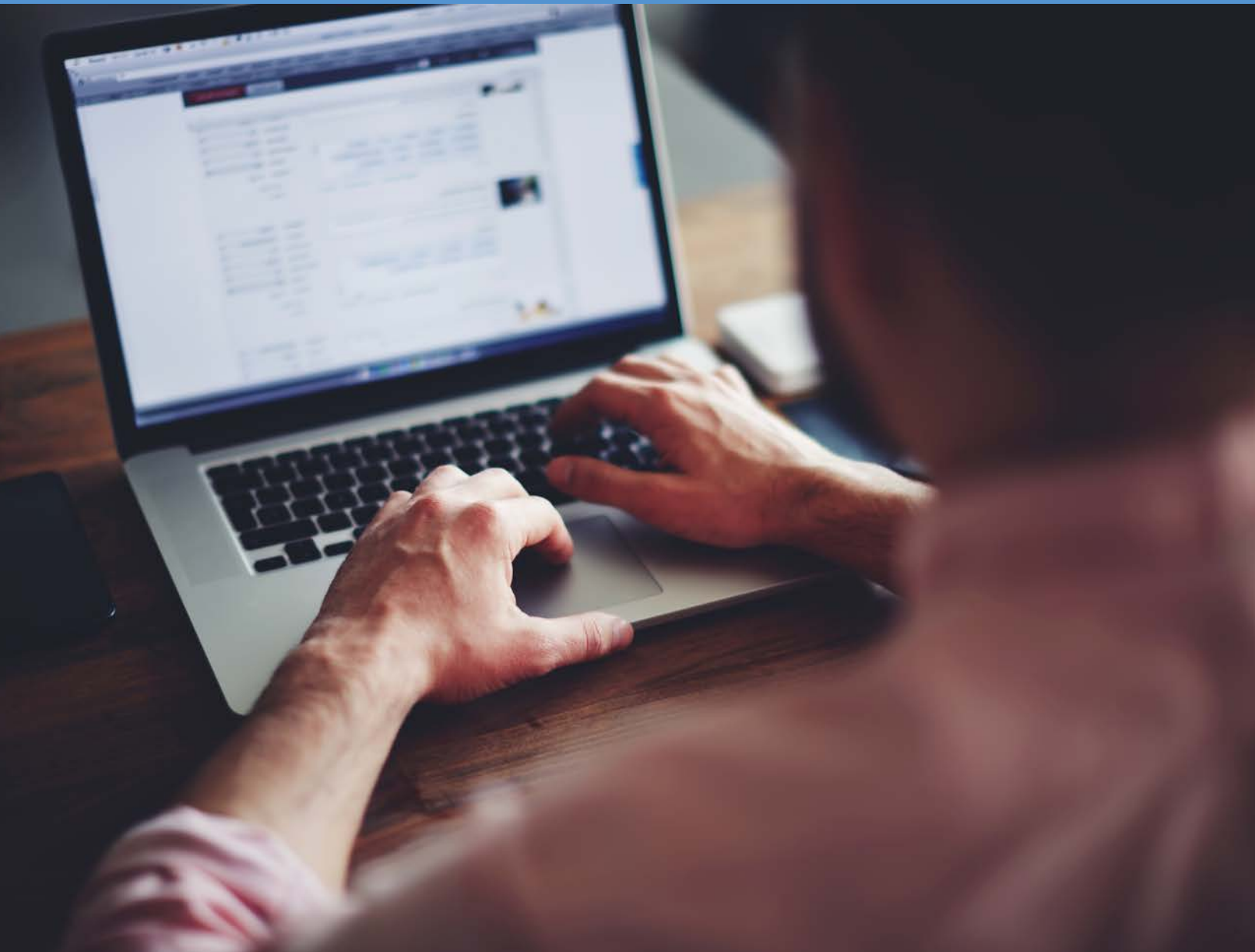


# Small Groups Ministry



Guidebook and Checklist  
for Technical Support and Best Practices

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# Letter to Small Group Participants

March 25, 2020  
Annunciation of the Theotokos

Dear Small Groups Participant,

The Christian life is about communion with God and neighbor.

We're working with ministry leaders across the Church to develop new online ministry resources to help you continue to learn and grow in your relationship with God. You can find those resources at [Y2AM.org/AtHome](https://Y2AM.org/AtHome).

Unfortunately, even under the best circumstances, communion with our fellow Christians can be difficult. We can get lost in big gatherings of people.

And, at times such as these (when everyone is stuck at home), it can be that much harder to establish a deep and real connection with others.

That can change when we come together in small groups.

## **WHY SMALL GROUPS?**

Small groups have the advantage of being, well, small. It's an opportunity to look your fellow Christians in the eye and get to know them. And it's an opportunity to be known by them as well.

In short, it's an opportunity for real communion and connection.

It's an opportunity to learn together, pray together, and grow in Christ.

Together.

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And this connection with our fellow Christians can, in turn, help lead us into deeper communion with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **HOW SMALL GROUPS WORK**

Small groups are made of 6-8 people who meet every week for an hour. Each group is led by a Small Group Leader who coordinates meeting times, sends out reminders, and moderates the discussion to make sure that everyone is heard.

The basic structure of a Small Groups meeting is simple:

1. Opening prayer and introduction by the Small Group Leader;
2. Discussion and reflection based upon questions supplied by the Small Group Leader; and
3. Wrap-up and closing prayer offered by the Small Group Leader.

It's great to be a part of big gatherings of people. It's great to watch videos and webinars offered to the entire nation.

But it's also important to connect with people in a more personal way. And that's where Small Groups can be so important and helpful in our spiritual lives.

I hope that the connections you develop with others in your Small Group will be spiritual fruitful for you in the weeks to come. And I hope that we can continue working with our brothers and sisters in Christ in these Small Groups in the months and years ahead.

We may be starting these Small Groups digitally and with online tools, but I hope one day these groups will bring us together face-to-face.

In Christ,

Steven Christoforou  
Director, Y<sup>2</sup>AM

# Why Small Groups Ministry?

## **WHY SMALL GROUPS?**

We often measure the success of a ministry based on how many people attend.

But bigger isn't always better.

Big groups of people have a place in our ministries, but they don't necessarily help bring people together. It's hard to be vulnerable and share difficult things in front of a big group. It's hard to be heard and seen when the room is stuffed full of people.

And it's even harder online. It's far too easy to get lost in a crowded online chat.

Small groups give us an opportunity to foster more personal connection. Everyone has a chance to speak and be heard. Everyone has a chance to be seen. Everyone has a chance to be more than a passive participant in a crowded presentation.

## **NORMAL HUMAN INTERACTION TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL**

Small Group is simply the application of normal human interaction for the purposes of spreading the Gospel, and caring for the people of God.

Our job and purpose in small group discipleship programs is to foster deeper relationships, and stronger commitments for those desiring them in all categories, and to move everyone to a higher level of commitment and spiritual experience.

There is no magic involved and whenever you have groups of people there will be a learning curve, mistakes, and great growth in depth and numbers. Loving and praying are what make small group leaders successful.

-Father John Peck  
Parish Priest, All Saints of North America Orthodox Church (Sun City, AZ)

# What is Small Groups Ministry?

## **BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL GROUPS**

- Weekly meetings (one hour long) of 6-8 participants
- Led by a Small Groups Leader
- Can either be based on existing ministries (for examples, Smalls Groups made up of only teens or young adults) or can bring together parishioners of different ages and backgrounds
- Begin with a prayer and introduction to the topic by the Small Groups Leader
- Time for discussion and reflection moderated by the Small Groups Leader
- End with a prayer and wrap-up by the Small Groups Leader

## **CORE PRINCIPLES OF SMALL GROUPS**

INTENTIONAL: very clear goals and objectives

FACE TO FACE: designed for interpersonal relationship

3-12 PEOPLE: for interpersonal communication and support

REGULAR TIME SCHEDULE: groups meet once a week

COMMON PURPOSE: agreed upon contract that explains goals and objectives

DISCOVERING: the group is for people who are open to Christian teachings

GROWING: the group is for people who are looking for a deeper growth in Christ

POSSIBILITIES: willingness to stretch, dream, and share openly outside of your comfort zone

-Lyman Coleman  
*Training Manual for Small Group Leaders*

# Making the Most of Your Group

## **WEEKLY PARISH-BASED SMALL GROUPS MEETING**

Each Small Group will have an assigned Small Group Leader.

This is the person who will coordinate the weekly meeting time for your Small Group, distribute study questions and materials, and coordinate the online video chat that will allow you and your Small Group to meet (more about that on the next page).

Your Small Group will give you an opportunity for deep discussion and reflection with your fellow Christians. It's an intimate setting that will help develop meaningful relationships and give you opportunity to learn, pray, and grow with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

To make the most of it, make sure you review the materials your Small Group Leader will distribute every week. Reflect on study questions prayerfully. Complete any Scripture readings prayerfully. Open your heart to a personal and transformative ministry experience.

## **GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW GROUP MEMBERS**

The core of any successful Small Group is relationships. While it may be tough to know everyone in a larger ministry group full of 20 or 30 (maybe even more) people, it is possible know the 5-7 other people in your Small Group.

Take time to get to know your Small Group Leader. Make an effort to get to know your fellow participants.

This can start before your first meeting, when you receive that initial email or message. And this Christian fellowship can continue to develop in the weeks and months after that.

# Video Platform for Meetings

## **WHAT IS ZOOM?**

Zoom is a platform for video conference.

It is easy to use on both your smart phone and laptop or desktop computer.

And, best of all, Zoom offers free accounts that will help you connect with others in online small groups.

## **USING ZOOM IN 4 EASY STEPS**

1. Go to [zoom.com](https://zoom.us)
2. Starting signing-up for a free account by clicking on the blue sign-up button on the top right hand corner.
3. Follow the steps prompted on the screen to set up your free account.
4. To join a scheduled small group meeting, click on the appropriate link at the time of the meeting, and the link will bring you to the video call.
  - A. You can find links to the National Small Groups Meetings on the previous page.
  - B. Your Small Groups Leader will send you a link for your parish-based small group.

If you have any questions, see the Technical Support links on the next page.

# More Links and Best Practices

## **TECHNICAL SUPPORT LINKS**

HOW TO JOIN AN ONLINE ZOOM MEETING: [Y2AM.org/HowToJoinZoomMeeting](https://Y2AM.org/HowToJoinZoomMeeting)

FULL LIST OF ZOOM VIDEO TUTORIALS: [Y2AM.org/ZoomTutorials](https://Y2AM.org/ZoomTutorials)

LIVE, INTERACTIVE ZOOM TRAINING DAILY: [Y2AM.org/DailyZoomTraining](https://Y2AM.org/DailyZoomTraining)

ON-DEMAND/PRE-RECORD ZOOM TRAINING: [Y2AM.org/OnDemandZoomTraining](https://Y2AM.org/OnDemandZoomTraining)

## **Best Practices for Small Group Participants**

- GET TO KNOW YOUR SMALL GROUP LEADER

Your Small Group Leader is generously stepping up to help create a personal ministry experience for you and your fellow Christians. Get to know him or her one-on-one.

- GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANTS

You and your fellow small group participants are coming together to know the Lord and build authentic Christian community. Get to know each other. Feel free to connect apart from the larger group.

- BE A GOOD LISTENER

The better we listen, the more we create an atmosphere of safety where people feel free to open up. Good listening is a simple expression of God's unconditional love.

- BE PRAYERFUL

Every small group is a gathering of people in the Lord's name. Be mindful of his presence as you spend your time together in His name.