

Becoming a Caring Community

A process guide for beginning a small faith community in the Marianist tradition

I have been forming and nurturing Basic Christian Communities (a.k.a cell churches, small faith groups, etc.) in the Catholic church for over twenty years. During that time I have searched for materials that were appropriate for beginning groups. What I looked for was a format with the right combination of group process, faith sharing, prayer and a few other essential features. I found parts of the puzzle in various places, but never all the pieces in the right combination in the same place. Out of this need I was compelled to develop this guide for beginning groups who desire to become a basic Christian community.

This guide assumes a model for cell church in which all members are responsible for the success of the group and are called to lead at some point. It does not require an experienced or designated leader / facilitator. It relies on the simplicity and depth of scripture as the central focus for sharing, learning and growth. Scripture is examined at an experiential level that does not require the moderation of a scripture scholar or theologian. Questions are designed to accommodate any level of understanding and self-revelation.

The material also includes the group process guidance essential for the formation of any tight knit group. The group process instructions are brief and simple. The material permits the group to address and review the ground rules for its operation. At the concluding session, the material enables the group to determine how and if it will continue after its initial formation.

The scriptures and reflections have been substituted to create versions for slightly different purposes (eg. Lent), however, the basic format has been stress tested my many forming communities. The most recent version in development focuses on forming faith communities in the Marianist tradition and spirituality.