

# **REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

COMMUNITY GROUPS:  
WALKING TOGETHER IN THE  
GRACE OF THE GOSPEL

*Fall 2022*

# MISSION STATEMENT

Redeemer Presbyterian Church exists in Edmond, Oklahoma to make disciples *devoted to the glory of God for the good of others*. This includes being a Hospital for the Broken, Rehabilitation Center for Healing, and Gym for Strength and Service.

## **Hospital for the Broken**

The church is made up of broken, needy, sinful people. It is not made up of people who have it all together. Jesus came not to call the healthy, but to call those who are sick. Because we are all sick, the church must be a hospital where the proper diagnosis of your problem (sin) and proper treatment (Gospel) is administered.

The church should be the safest place in the world for broken people to come find hope, help, & healing. We should gently come alongside to restore sinners (Gal.6:1-2), acting as ER nurses who comfort and help the afflicted and lead others to Jesus, our Great Physician—the only one who can heal, mend, and restore.

## **Rehabilitation Center for Healing**

The greatest challenge to sinners following Jesus is battling unbelief. We may know about Jesus, and even confess our sins and repent. Our broken habits of the heart and mind, however, cause us to live according to lies that we need something besides Jesus to be happy.

In this Rehabilitation Center for Healing, there is a training routine that cannot be done without the support of others (Church family). In this rehabilitation process, we are committed to: proclaiming good news, not giving good advice; finding rest in Christ's work for us; holding onto the hope of new life by learning to stand on His grace; and nurturing Gospel-growth in people's lives.

## **Gym for Strength & Service**

God made our nature such that we are hard-wired to work. The Church is a diverse body made up of many different parts. It is not a place where we only accept certain people & cater to the latest fads. We are to equip all who Jesus saves. As we learn to walk in the grace of the gospel, we become an instrument in the Redeemer's Hands to bear each others' burdens, and help each other grow in their understanding of the gospel. This requires training, equipping, and preparing people to do works of ministry.

## VISION & GOALS

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**T**he vision of Redeemer Community Groups is closely tied to its mission statement: making disciples who are devoted to the glory of God for the good of others. Community Groups offer the people of Redeemer a more intentional opportunity to *exercise this mission together*. There are two primary reasons our mission is a communal one.

First, the treasure of the Gospel is meant to be shared, praised, studied and relied upon as a community. In light of this, Paul writes to the Colossian church, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing *one another* in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts toward God.” (Col. 3:16)

Second, our saving relationship with Jesus brings us into communion with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We are truly *one body, united in Christ* (I Cor. 12). Healthy unity within the body occurs when deep friendships are formed. Unlike acquaintance-level friendships, deep friendships recognize needs, provide support and safety, and lovingly confront when beliefs have gone astray.

For these reasons and more, Community Group attendance is *strongly recommended* for its unique ability to foster Gospel-growth within the church.

## **Gospel-Driven Fellowship**

This is the most important goal of our Community Groups. We hear Jesus speak through His Word, we speak to Him in our prayers, and we see Him working through His Spirit in our lives and in the lives of those around us. As a result, Gospel-driven fellowship within Community Groups is a time *dedicated to prayer and the Word*.

Prayer should be focused on adoring, confessing, thanking, and asking God according to the riches of His grace. Community Group members are also encouraged to pray for each other throughout the week in more specific ways as they are shared in meetings.

Coupled with an emphasis on prayer is time with the Word. As Paul writes to Timothy, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness ...” As community group members share life experiences, struggles, victories, and burdens, the Bible guides them (as directed by the Holy Spirit ) into further Gospel growth.

Knowledge of Scripture as an end in itself is inadequate, however. As the resurrected Jesus shared with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” *Knowledge of Scripture is therefore knowledge of the person Jesus Christ.* Just as growing in knowledge of a close friend, family member, or spouse deepens the relationship, how much more so with the Living Word?

### **Gospel-Driven Relationship**

Sunday morning worship is primary and necessary in the life of the Christian. The Community Group, however, provides a unique opportunity to build relationships in a more relaxed and intentional manner.

As Paul mentions in his letter to the Thessalonians, “we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also *our very own selves*, because you had become very dear to us.” The relationships we form by meeting in homes provides a unique and natural environment where personal exhortation and encouragement can occur.

### **Gospel-Driven Safety**

Critical to healthy growth in any relationship is the notion of safety. This kind of safety, however, is different from the world. It is not merely about accepting others. It is a safety that allows people to ask questions, wrestle with truth, confess struggles, and ask for help. It loves everyone where they are, but is not content to leave them there. It is a safety that comes from holding the Truth together with Love.

This kind of safety is built upon the reality that we are all suffering sinners. As Barbara Duguid writes in *Extravagant Grace*, our posture toward sin in our lives and others' is "often one of exasperation and judgment toward repeat offenders, rather than one of loving compassion and understanding."

God knows our sins more completely than we ever could. And he is the one chiefly offended by those sins. And yet, in un-merited love, he sent his beloved son Jesus – meeting us in our sin with gentleness and compassion. And now, the same Spirit that spent eternity past in perfect communion with the Trinity now dwells within our hearts.

This assured love and forgiveness of God should therefore create a safe environment within our community groups where sin is confessed, but, like Paul, is quickly followed with praise: "Who will deliver me from the body of death? Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord!" (Rom 7:24-25).

Understanding we are all sick and in need of the Great Physician allows community groups to act as a hospital where sin is diagnosed and the Gospel balm of rest in Christ's finished work is applied.

## **Gospel-Driven Service & Care**

As the Gospel takes root, both love for God and others blossoms. Each community group is encouraged to exercise that Gospel growth in their own unique way with service toward others. This may be meeting tangible needs for community group members (i.e. meals, carpools, etc) or special opportunities through the RPC Mission & Outreach team. Community groups are encouraged to be creative

and empowered to pursue Gospel service toward others (Galations 6).



# STRUCTURE & FORMAT

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**A**s the vision and goals of Redeemer Community Groups take shape, the question then turns to how this can be implemented. While there should be great deference to individual community group dynamics, there are general principles that can be followed.

## **Frequency**

In an effort to maintain consistency amongst Community Groups, it is recommended they meet on standard days. This allows a consistent schedule for regular attenders, but also enables predictability for visitors and those who are unable to consistently meet.

Biweekly meetings (1st/3rd Sundays each month) is recommended. This would also allow for limited

interference of church-wide Fellowship Meals that occur on fifth Sundays. Particular meeting times are left up to each community group.

## **Location**

Ideally, Redeemer Community Groups are geographically diverse. This allows both regular attenders and visitors to plug into a group that may be near their home. *While proximity to a particular community group location does not “assign” a member to attend, it does allow for added convenience, increase likelihood of attendance, and allow for demographic diversity.*

We encourage our Community Groups to consider rotating host responsibilities within the group to allow equal participation and cultivate Gospel-driven fellowship. Individual groups may have the freedom to choose other locations (parks, restaurants) if that helps meet the needs of the group.

## **Size**

In an effort to promote organic conversation where all can participate, and to make sure all are cared for, an ideal Community Group size consists of 8-12 adults. It may therefore be necessary to split a Community Group after a semester/annual review.

## **Leaders**

Community Group leaders help shepherd the groups toward the vision and goals previously discussed. This position can be held by any church member who desires

deeper relationship and Gospel growth not only within a particular community, but also within Redeemer as a whole.

Traits consistent with other church leadership positions should also be found in community group leaders—gentleness, humility, ability to facilitate/lead, hospitality, and service. Community group leaders may be recommended, but only instituted by vote of the Session.

## **Format**

As previously discussed above, the emphasis of Community Group meetings should be on prayer and the Word (with Gospel-informed application). But how should this look for each group?

Implementation of this vision is largely at the discretion of each community group leader. While the Session may provide general resources and direction, it is up to community group leaders to foster an environment in which the members are able to grow in relationship to each other and Jesus Christ.

It is important to consider that community groups are not synonymous with Bible study groups. Formal, dedicated time of didactic learning may be done in one of Redeemer's book or Bible studies. Members who desire this of their community group should be encouraged to attend RPC book/Bible studies.

## **Fellowship Meals**

Every fifth Sunday, Redeemer gathers for lunch following the morning worship service. All members, regular

attenders, and visitors are encouraged to stay for a meal and time of fellowship.

In order to alleviate the burden of planning these meals on an individual few, each community group will be responsible for “hosting” a Fellowship Meal. This includes organizing a menu, setting up tables/chairs, praying for the meal, and cleaning up. A SignUp genius regarding food and drink may be utilized to solicit church-wide participation.

### **Attendance & Signup**

The Session, community group leaders, and congregation at large should regularly encourage and advocate for community group attendance both from the pulpit and in the pew. For the first several weeks of each semester, a regular Sunday morning announcement regarding community group meeting times and locations should be made. Additional information may be available in the bulletin, website, and social media.

### **Kingdom Growth**

In addition to advocating members and regular attenders to join Community Groups, we encourage everyone to invite visitors. While this may include visitors on Sunday mornings, it may also include co-workers, friends, neighbors, and others who are seeking rest only the Gospel provides.