

Small Talk

fall 2007



Who Can Say this Group Is *Small*?

It began with a dream and a small group. But what God has in mind for Dream Church in Seattle, WA, is not small!

Desiring a fresh start among the Korean-American community in Seattle, Rev. Bomsu and Aesook Kim began with two very small groups – four women in a Coffee Break Bible study and their children in a Story Hour group.

Two women came with very different stories and backgrounds. Mrs. Ryu and her two-year-old daughter had no religion, even though her husband was a sincere Christian. Mrs. Park, a long time church member, had never attended a Bible study and did not have a good reputation in the community. These two women came together in that first small group and became the spark that launched Dream Church.

Aesook led the group, being sensitive to the different needs of her group members. The women were happy to attend because of the excellent Story Hour program and the comfortable setting. Pastor Bomsu provided transportation and additional easy Bible materials for the seekers. God worked in powerful ways, and one month after the first small group met, Dream Church began Sunday worship. Mrs. Park softened and admitted her need for Bible study as God gently touched her heart! Mrs. Ryu accepted Christ as her Savior and was baptized along with her daughter and six others!

The energy of changed lives continues to fuel the expanding vision of Seattle Dream Church to reach out. It's been just two short years since that first group met.

Dream Church desires to be a multi-site church, taking advantage of many opportunities for small group ministry. Praise God! Each Sunday morning, 40-50 people meet for worship *and* a Coffee Break Bible study small group.

This summer, as Aesook and Bomsu Kim were enjoying the many small flowers that covered their back yard, Aesook had another dream. Her new dream is that the Coffee Break small group ministry of Dream church will cover the entire city of Seattle!

Pastor Bomsu Kim

"The best form of evangelism is *Emmanuelism*, people recognizing that God is *with us*."

(Wayne Cordeiro, *Doing Church as a Team*, Regal Books/Gospel Light, 2004)

Following God's Lead

A year after a couple of friends and I sponsored a home Alpha small group, I was eager to try it again. After all, our neighbor, an acquaintance of my husband Dave, had become a Christian through Alpha, and I wanted to experience more of the joy of opening people's eyes to the wonder of Jesus.

I asked those same friends to join me again, but we couldn't coordinate our schedules. I called and invited a number of people to explore starting a new small group, but

they were all "too busy." I got the sense that some were avoiding me completely. My husband noticed people's discomfort and gently informed me that though he appreciated my enthusiasm, I probably should back off a little. The door for starting another small group was closing. People weren't responding. I was frustrated.

At the same time, I noticed that our neighbor who had become a Christian was expressing a desire to know more about the Bible and to be part of a small group. He wanted to get to know other Christian men. A couple of other guys were receptive as well. So finally, I gave up trying to press my own agenda and said to my husband, "I think the opening for starting a new small group is *yours* this year."

Dave had never led a small group before, but he was game to give it a try. All four of

the men he invited to join him for a Friday morning small group said yes. Together they set their agenda, chose materials, and committed to meeting at a local restaurant. That was almost two years ago. They continue to meet on Friday morning, rearranging their schedules to be a part of it. "Guys take longer," Dave reminded me, but they are beginning to share both their faith journeys and their lives with one another. Dave has become a passionate believer in the power of a small group.

I learned a valuable lesson as well—to walk through the doors *God* opens naturally, not the ones *I* try to force open. But I'm keeping my eyes and ears open. You never know when He may show up!

Betty Veldman Wieland



Talk Back

Talk to us! E-mail us your stories, questions, or prayer requests at smallgroups@crcna.org.



Christian Reformed Home Missions



Plan to attend the **Small Group and Evangelism Conference** July 18-20, 2008 at the Westin Hotel in Lombard, IL (near Chicago).
(www.smallgroupministries.org, click on Conference)

Grow in your spiritual walk as Rev. Harvey Carey, Joyce Heron Rees, and Dr. Timothy Brown teach from Zephaniah 3 during the plenary sessions, and participate in uplifting worship to the God who created us to live *In Community*.



Resources

New! *Algunas palabras* - Hispanic Small Talk is now being written. To receive it in the mail, e-mail your mailing address to Vivi Cornejo at cornejov@crcna.org. To view it online check out the Resources at www.crhm.org or www.minhisp.org.

Two Small Group Training resources have become available on CD for use by churches and Small Group Managers in training and resourcing small group leaders. *Launch and Lead Your Own Small Group Training Resources* (#216415) offers training suggestions and handouts for new small group leaders. To be used with the red manual with the same title. *Next Steps for Small Group Growth, Advance Leader Training* (#216425) is now available in binder plus CD format and is effective for ongoing small group evaluation and growth. Available from www.faithaliveresources.org, or 1-800-333-8300.

Men's Fraternity – Men's lives are being transformed by this initiative that includes teachings by Robert Lewis on DVD followed small group discussions. Todd Wessels, former Small Group trainer for CRC Home Missions, testifies to its effectiveness in the Chicago, IL area. The foundational curriculum, "The Quest for Authentic Manhood" is a 24 session study that focuses on a man's core identity and gives an overview of basic manhood issues. (www.mensfraternity.com)

Ice? No Thanks!

I have an aversion to the term, *ice breaker*. It sounds so negative and truth be told, that's often our experience - these exercises feel awkward or forced. So why not call them *community makers* and encourage people to build community rather than break the ice?

Community makers begin with leaders and greeters who are warm and friendly but not overpowering. They continue with words of welcome that put people at ease, perhaps a funny story or amusing event in the welcomer's week. If the study focuses on the wise and foolish builders, one might begin with a quiz about buildings—the tallest, largest, oldest, etc. inviting participants to call out their guesses.

The community maker activity may continue with "Building Bingo" squares requiring another's initials such as ... Live in an apartment; lived in 10 or more homes; live with 2 or more unrelated roommates and so on. Or keep it very simple and ask, "Describe the house you grew up in."

A community maker is an open-ended exercise/activity that is used to nurture a sense of connectedness. An effective community maker and the resulting life-sharing is important because it helps "level the playing field" and warms people's hearts and minds to one another. It leads to discussions about life and faith at

deeper levels during the study portion of the gathering. Here are some important things to keep in mind as you select or prepare community makers.

- A good community maker does not have right or wrong answers. The person answering the question is the expert when it comes to their response.
- The question(s) should be safe enough that everyone feels comfortable answering.
- Usually the leader(s) should answer first, modelling the type and length of response desired.
- When possible, community makers should help set the stage for the study-discussion time. This helps the group connect their life stories and God's truth.
- For the first few group meetings, good community makers will help participants get to know the basics about each other (family, work, hobbies, pets). Exercises should feel informal, light-hearted, fun.
- The longer the group meets, the deeper the community makers will become.
- Don't get stuck in a rut, be creative, keep them guessing!

When community makers are designed and executed well, people will look forward to them rather than getting cold feet!

Karen Wilk, Small Group Ministry Developer, Western Canada

Community Maker Resources:

Serendipity icebreaker books and the *Serendipity Bible*

The Complete Book of Questions, by Garry Poole, Zondervan 2003

Warm ups and Wrap Ups – 101 Great Ideas for Small Groups, Group 2003

Getting Kids to Mix- Creative Ideas for Youth Group Interaction, Victor Books 1993