



# Small Group Information Packet

*Frequently asked questions and Answers*

*[www.wcoc-ohio.org](http://www.wcoc-ohio.org)*

## **1. WHY ACTS 2 GROUPS?**

We firmly believe that small groups are the primary place through which sustained life change & transformation occur. ACTS 2 Groups give you an opportunity to express and grow in your love for others and “live life together.” Our process for developing disciples is to create an environment where people can “Love God, Love Others, and Serve the World.” ACTS 2 Groups become the primary vehicle where people can ‘Love Others’ and be loved in return.

## **2. WHAT’S THE PURPOSE?**

ACTS 2 Groups exist to help us grow together as disciples. The purpose of ACTS 2 Groups is to promote healthy relationships, Bible study, and authentic Christian community. We believe that significant relationships are essential for a Christian for both growth and discipleship. As our church grows larger, we must grow smaller. We’re committed to the ABCD’s of ACTS 2 Groups:

- Accountability
- Belonging
- Care
- Discipleship

## **3. OK, SO WHAT IS AN ACTS 2 Group?**

An ACTS 2 Group is a small group of six married couples or 8-10 individuals (mixed group of married and individuals or 8-10 individuals of the same gender). Groups will be encouraged to meet the first three Sunday nights of the month, with exceptions to fourth Sundays, summer time, and special events and/or holidays, in various homes of group members for fellowship, Bible study, prayer & accountability. We plan to pursue ACTS 2 Groups for adults of all ages, stages of life, and spiritual maturity.

## **4. WHAT KINDS OF ACTS 2 GROUPS ARE THERE AND WILL I BE ASSIGNED A GROUP?**

In the sign-up process, we will have options that you can choose regarding the type of group you’re interested in, which group is completely up to you. Some of those options include:

- **Married Couples** – small groups comprised of married couples in the same stage of life (couples without children, with children, and empty nesters) and area of town. Proximity for each group will vary, but our desire is to see groups develop where life can be shared. We realize that the closer the proximity, the better chance of that happening. Some may prefer to be in an inter-generational mix of people, so we hope to accommodate that option as well.
- **Mixed Groups** – ACTS 2 Groups that have both married couples and single adults.
- **Gender Based** – ACTS 2 Groups comprised of single adults, or married adults where only one spouse is involved in the group. Focused areas include:
  - Ladies’ Ministry - Comprised of women of all ages and stages of life (ex: single, married, moms of preschoolers, divorced, widowed, etc)

- Men's Ministry - Comprised of men of all ages & stages of life.

### **5. IS CHILDCARE PROVIDED FOR ACTS 2 GROUPS?**

The ACTS 2 Groups that are comprised of families with both children and those without children will need to decide as a group how they want to handle the child care. We will be offering several different resources of small group curriculum for children, specifically designed for small group ministry, that the groups can use in another area of the house or meeting place. Also, we will be offering ACTS 2 Groups that are made up of families with children. Those families who sign up for these groups understand that by signing up they are volunteering to take turns with the other couples in the group in helping with the childcare. Again, curriculum will be available at a designated "ACTS 2 Groups Resource Center."

### **6. WHAT REALLY HAPPENS IN AN ACTS 2 GROUP?**

Most groups will have their own look & feel, but there are some similar attributes we hope can be woven into the fabric of each small group. As part of the ACTS 2 Group Covenant, each group will familiarize itself with the ACTS 2 Group DNA (a separate document), and work to hold the group accountable to those common purposes. Similar components include Bible or topical study, fellowship, prayer, discussion of how what you're learning applies to your life, accountability, and, of course, snack food! We also want your group to have fun...after all, 'living life together' can and should be a good time, too!

### **7. HOW DO I JOIN AN ACTS 2 GROUP?**

We hope to have ongoing efforts to form groups. We do plan to utilize the campaign system to help launch groups. The plan is to have 2 times of emphasis each year to get people into groups, launching them in September and then adding to groups and evaluating the need for more groups in January. We hope to work with everyone involved to get people into the right group from the get-go. There won't be any "random" assignment of people into groups. There are two ways to get involved in a Life Group:

1. **Personal Invite** - Someone who is leading a Starter Group may personally invite you to participate in their group, leading up to the main group start-up months of August.
2. **ACTS 2 Group Central** - You can sign up at ACTS 2 Group Central in the Foyer during the month of August, the key group formation & launching time each year. The ACTS 2 Group leadership team will work with you to get you connected with an ACTS 2Group.

### **8. HOW OFTEN (and where) DO GROUPS MEET?**

ACTS 2 Groups will meet the first three Sunday night of the week and the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday night will be "Sunday Night Together," which will be an evening service at the building followed by a finger food fellowship.

Groups will meet between September and May, but each ACTS 2 Group can determine periodic breaks in the schedule during busy times of the year (such as Christmas and Thanksgiving time). As for group location, our *preference* is that most groups would have

their regular meetings take place in a home. The home setting is much more relaxed and conducive to the “environment creation” that we hope we can foster with ACTS 2 Groups. We do understand that there are extenuating circumstances that may make it easier for a group to meet in the church building. We plan to work with each group as they formulate that plan for their group, and help accommodate however possible.

### **9. HOW LONG SHOULD ACTS 2 GROUP MEETINGS LAST?**

It varies, but we think 1 to 2 hours should be appropriate for most groups. Longer is fine, assuming group members agree to go longer, childcare is considered, etc.

### **10. DO ACTS 2 GROUPS LAST...FOR LIFE?**

Good question. ACTS 2 Groups commit to meet for nine months. During the term of the group, the group leader will train an apprentice to be the leader of the next group. In May the term for the groups will end and between June and August we will have a new sign up for everyone, and we will add and train new leaders. One of our main purposes of these groups is to be more effective in our outreach to our neighbors, co-workers, and friends. Small groups create a less intimidating environment to invite un-churched people to. It is our hope that the small groups will all grow past their initial small group number because of the increased involvement of visitors and members, so that during the nine months the groups will have to split and form new groups, upon which the co-leader will start a new group as the leader, and a new co-leader will be named.

### **11. IF “LIVING LIFE TOGETHER” IS PART OF THE ACTS 2 GROUP OVERALL PURPOSE, WHY LIMIT THE GROUPS TO ONLY 9 MONTHS?**

Good question! We don’t expect those relationships to just end and dissipate at the end of the ACTS 2 Group cycle. There are three major reasons we feel this is important:

1. We plan to have an ongoing cycle of new groups being formed, normally in January and September of each year. New people will be signing up for groups, and new ACTS 2 Groups will be launched at these two key times. It’s important that those who have experienced authentic Christian community are woven together with new ACTS 2 Group members to model what a ACTS 2 Group is all about and how it can and should function. We’re called to be Salt & Light (Matthew 5:13-16), and this is a significant way that we can be influencers to those new to the ACTS 2 Group relationship (many of whom may be new believers or new Withamsville members).
2. Our main leadership development will take place in existing ACTS 2 Groups. At the end of a group’s cycle, when multiplication should take place, it’s important that we get these newly developed leaders together with new ACTS 2 Group members.
3. One of the key issues that many small groups deal with is stagnation. We want a culture of growing, thriving Christians in ACTS 2 Groups, and want to avoid creating an atmosphere where complacency in a group can keep individuals from growth.

## **12. WHAT SORT OF STUDY WILL ACTS 2 GROUPS UNDERTAKE?**

Groups and their facilitators will have some freedom to pursue additional study guides, books, etc., with help and direction from the ACTS 2 Group Leadership Team. All resources need the stamp of approval from the A2G Leadership Team. We will encourage the use of the resources in the “ACTS 2 Group Resource Center,” which will be stocked with curriculum and discussion guides that will be assembled by the A2G Leadership Team and the staff. We will be structuring our ACTS 2 Groups around preacher based studies, which is where we will discuss the topics and texts that were preached on in the morning service through a provided study that promotes discussion and life application. We want to take what was preached on Sunday morning and apply it to our lives in a more practical and more personal level so that it will stay with us throughout the week.

## **13. HOW DO WE SELECT LEADERS?**

Initially, leaders will be recruited from within the congregation and led through a training process before assuming the role of group leader. We also know that ACTS 2 Groups themselves can be an “incubator” of sorts for group leaders. Group leaders and co-leaders, working in tandem with the A2G Leadership Team will help in identifying potential leaders and co-leaders. Leader training will be offered periodically by the ACTS 2 Group Leadership Team. Leaders will be church members who have gone through an interview process with a staff member, elder, or member of the ACTS 2 Group Leadership Team and have participated in the leadership training.

## **14. WHAT IF I TRY A GROUP AND IT’S NOT REALLY FOR ME?**

We’re aware that you may land in a group that may not mesh just right for you. We’re simply asking that you get involved in a group. We’re asking you to commit to at least 8 weeks. At the end of the 8 weeks, if it’s just not a good fit, you can go back into the pool and try another ACTS 2 Group. The A2G Leadership Team will assist in trying to help anyone get into another group that has the room and as new leaders and groups are available.

## **15. ARE THESE GROUPS MEANT TO BE EVANGELISTIC?**

Yes, this should always be one of the main focuses of the ACTS 2 Groups. The first century church meet in homes and through their love and commitment to one another others outside of the body of Christ found themselves attracted to what the first century Christians had and they grew by leaps and bounds. It is our hope that our small groups will help us accomplish this same goal. We want to bring people to Christ! ACTS 2 Groups are a great evangelistic tool to invite our friends, family, co-workers, etc... in a laid back; un-intimidating environment where they can build spiritual relationships that can lead them closer to giving their lives to Christ.

**16. IS THERE AN EXPECTATION THAT THESE GROUPS WILL HAVE A SERVICE COMPONENT?**

Yes. We hope that we can get all in our sphere of influence to “*Love God, Love Others, and Serve the World.*” Another one of our goals for our small group ministry is to increase in our service to those in our communities, neighborhoods, and our congregation. One of the ways we want to do this is to challenge each one of our ACTS 2 Groups to participate in some kind of service project each month. These projects will be determined by the individual groups. The goal: *Turn 5+ congregation wide service projects a year into 20+ ACTS 2 Groups doing 20+ smaller service projects a month nine months a year on top of the 5+ congregational service projects.* Think of the added impact the church can have!

**17. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE OTHER PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES AT WITHAMSVILLE?**

Nothing! As we move into becoming a Small Group Church our ACTS 2 Groups are designed to enhance the other programs and ministries of the church as well as encourage new ones. ACTS 2 Groups are also designed to help members grow in their spiritual maturity and to encourage them to develop and use their spiritual gifts so they can bless the church family at Withamsville.