

A FIELD GUIDE TO CLASS MEETINGS



Class Meetings are where people do *life together* in a relationship with God.



Starting a Class Meeting is easy.

Just have your group start with the resources provided freely at TrinityGMC.org/class-meetings

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WESLEYAN DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is a comprehensive relationship pursuit with God in a life-long journey of bringing new life, reconciliation, and the presence of God to all people, and to helping each person reflect the character of Christ. As such, this lifestyle will look different in various contexts, but will always be guided by three underlying principles.

The life of a disciple is:

DEVOTIONAL

Disciples devote their hearts, minds, souls, and bodies to God through prayer and the reading of God's word to receive the teachings, to join ourselves to them, and to apply the life which has been given to us.

TRANSFORMATIONAL

Disciples will encounter the Holy Spirit of God and through those encounters be changed. As you follow a teacher, you become like Him, developing His skills and vision. As a Christian, we believe this is not just a metaphorical expression – we become like Christ.

MISSIONAL

To follow Christ is to go where He goes and do what He does. His disciples will be led into spaces of self-sacrifice loving and serving the world, developing more disciples as we go. As we become like Him, then we can do more of His work in the world.

CLASS MEETING BASICS

WHAT IS A CLASS MEETING?

A Class Meeting is a small group of people who meet weekly to give testimony to and encourage one another in the pursuit of developing a robust, transformational relationship with the living God who cares deeply for each of us.

WHY ARE CLASS MEETINGS IMPORTANT?

Class meetings help us to grow in our relationship with God through a commitment to intentionally pursue how He would best like us to live our lives through the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. They give us space to surrender and follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, and to join with others on our journey.

HOW DO CLASS MEETINGS WORK?

- 10-12 people meet weekly for a maximum of 1.5 hours. Groups are encouraged to be diverse in age, gender, and faith experience.
- 1-2 leaders facilitate (preferably trained laity – 7 week class and pastor-led periodic leadership meetings).
- All members share their weekly life by responding to questions such as “How is your life with God?” or “How is it with your soul?” Your soul is your mind, your will and your emotions. Each week, these general questions may be used, or the leader may select a different question to help members consider various aspects of their spiritual life and walk with God using Jesus Christ's teachings and the Holy Spirit's leading.
- Members pray aloud for one another as members ask and are led by the Holy Spirit.

HOW TO GET STARTED

PREPARE

PREPARE LEADERSHIP

- All pastors, as well as any laity who would like to facilitate classes, are encouraged to participate in a 7-week class using the 'The Class Meeting' by Kevin Watson.
- An optional and helpful resource to learn and communicate the basics of Wesleyan teachings is the 'Absolute Basics of the Wesleyan Way' by Phil Tallon and Justus Hunter.
- A pastor is encouraged to lead the first group especially through the 7-week class and then another group member can begin to facilitate the meetings.

RECRUIT MEMBERS

- Identify participants (always, ongoing) (example: new members)
- Invite to training (6 weeks out),
- Post dates as early as possible (8 weeks)
- Emphasize praying and paying attention for participants
- Purchase materials: The Class Meeting, by Kevin Watson

REMEMBER, CLASS MEETINGS ARE:

- Not a bible study or based on any informational curriculum
- Not a therapy session
- Not a social group

TRAIN

Training (7 weeks):

- Book: "The Class Meeting" by Kevin M. Watson
- By Week
 - » Week 1: Orientation
 - » Weeks 2-5: Chapters 1-4, one chapter each week
 - » Week 6: Tips and Best Practices
 - » Week 7: Sample Class Meeting

DEMONSTRATE

- Each Week
 - » Answer a transformational question, such as
 - "How is it with your soul?" (Soul defined as your mind, your will and your emotions)
 - "How is your life in God/Jesus Christ this week?"
 - » Practice active listening as others are speaking
 - » Testify to what God is doing right now
- Encourage the Group
 - » Ask questions versus giving advice
 - » Listen for the Holy Spirit
 - » Guide the work of holiness by giving language to what each member is experiencing in God and accountability
 - » Speak into members casting a vision of prayer
 - Have members ask themselves first, "How might God like me to pray for me?"
 - Encourage to pray aloud with others

SUCCESS

- Just Start
- Resist the temptation to over-program
- Identify potential leaders and show them how
- Continue support from leadership

SAMPLE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. **Life-update.** How is it with your soul? (Your soul is your mind, your will and your emotions) How is your life with God this week?
2. **Baptism or confirmation story.** How did you experience God when you were baptized or through the confirmation process? What is different about your faith today?
3. **Closeness to God.** If you rated your connection to God on a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your connection to God this week? What stirs your affections for Christ? (meaning, what things when you do them or participate in them, help you feel closer to God and create a deeper love within you?) — What robs your affections for Christ? (meaning what things, often which are morally-neutral, dull your affections for God or distract you from Him?)
4. **Corporate worship.** What are your favorite parts of Sunday corporate worship? How does Sunday morning church and worship influence your faith? and/or what questions about faith does it cause you to ask? How does the “gathered” worship help you focus on your relationship with God? How have you encountered God recently in worship?
5. **Faith background.** What is your faith background? Did you grow up in church? Did you grow up in a Christian family? How is your faith different today than when you first began following Jesus?
6. **Fullness of God.** Is there anything holding you back this week from experiencing the fullness of God’s presence? Sin? Lack of living in the spiritual disciplines? Distractions? Explain.
7. **Friendship with Jesus.** Jesus calls us not just to be his followers, but his friends. In what way are you experiencing or developing this aspect of your relationship with Jesus? Or are you challenged to move from student to friend? If so, why?
8. **Forgiveness.** How have you given forgiveness or experienced forgiveness in recent weeks?
9. **Gifts.** What are some of your gifts (talents)? How are you letting God use these gifts right now?
10. **God’s grace (undeserved favor).** Where do you see God’s grace in your life right now?
11. **God’s presence.** How/When have you experienced or been most aware of God’s presence this week? Is there anything you sense God is doing in or through you? How do you need God to “show up” in your life or circumstances? Where are you seeking guidance from Him?
12. **Growing deeper.** How are you growing deeper in your faith and becoming more like Christ? Reflect on the “fruit” or “output” of your life rather than just (or in addition to) what you are doing to foster deep faith. John Wesley’s original class meeting question was “How is your soul prospering?”
13. **Holy Communion.** When taking communion, what are your thoughts about your relationship with God? Can you describe how grace has challenged you when receiving communion recently?
14. **Justifying grace** in your life — the realization of God’s love and forgiveness; possibly an aha moment or when you felt the beauty and weight of the Gospel slam into your soul. Tell a story of when you felt an awareness of God’s justifying grace. Have you felt God in a similar way recently? If so, how?

15. **Learning.** What have you been learning or noticing from scripture, sermons, teachings, etc? What is God teaching you or highlighting for you now?
16. **Prayer.** How do you pray or talk to God? What is prayer like for you? What has been happening in your prayer life? What is one way the group can pray for you specifically? What is your ask of God? How have you experienced God this week?
17. **Reflection.** Reflecting on recent weeks: What is helping grow your faith? What has hindered it? How can we pray for you?
18. **Relationship with God.** What word or adjective would best describe your relationship with God this week? Why?
19. **Scripture reading.** How is reading / listening / studying scripture a part (or not a part) of your life? How have you encountered God in Scripture this week?
20. **Striving.** Are there areas you found yourself striving and falling short? How have you experienced suffering or disappointment? Are there places you recognize in your life you have opportunities to surrender to God? Be specific. What are the things you do to cope / deal (whether healthy or unhealthy)? How do you experience (or don't experience) God during times of intense stress?
21. **Thriving.** Are there areas where you found yourself intentionally surrendering, letting go, finding strength in the Spirit's doing?
22. **Victories.** How have you experienced success or victory lately? How are you experiencing God in and through these circumstances?
23. **Wisdom / Insight.** What do you sense God is doing in your life? How can we pray for you specifically?

OTHER RESOURCES

BOOKS - SEEDBED.COM

- “The Class Meeting” by Kevin M. Watson – 7-week class study
- “Absolute Basics of the Wesleyan Way” by Phil Tallon and Justus Hunter

ARTICLES

- The Value of the Class Meeting For the 21st Century found on Seedbed.com’s website
- Essential Office for Wesleyan Revival: The Class Leader (Parts 1 and 2), Firebrand Magazine. firebrandmag.com

VIDEOS – YOUTUBE.COM

- How to Start a Class Meeting: Class Meeting Webinar with Dr. Kevin Watson:
- Spirit and Truth Webinar with Kevin Watson and John Wayne McMann:
- What Methodist Small Groups Looked Like - (Kevin Watson)
- Feb 2023 – ETXGMC Conference - Wesleyan Discipleship: Class and Band Meetings in the Local Church - Dr. Marc Donaldson
- July 2023 – ETXGMC Conference – Follow Me: Moving from Spectator to Living the Story of Jesus - Dr. John Wayne McMann

FAQS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Do I have to pray out loud?**

- » No, you do not have to pray out loud.
- » However, God's word calls us to pray out loud.
- » The class meeting will give you the opportunity to practice praying aloud.

- **Do I have to share if I am uncomfortable?**

- » No, you do not have to share at first.
- » However, your share can help others.
- » As you become comfortable, you will find opening up and sharing is freeing and can be life-giving for you and others.

- **Is the Class Meeting a Bible study?**

- » The Class Meeting is not a Bible study. Most Class Meetings start out with the book "The Class Meeting" by Kevin Watson, as a resource to wean us off of curriculum.
- » The Class Meeting is designed for transformation so Christians may be made more in Christ's likeness.
- » The Class Meeting is organized around the desire to support and encourage one another to be faithful Christians.
- » The Class Meeting does not replace Bible studies. Sunday School classes and Bible studies are still important gatherings for learning God's word.

- **What is the best number of members in the group?**

- » 10-12 members are ideal.
- » Different ages and backgrounds are helpful.

- **What do I need to know before joining a class meeting?**

- » Just show up. You really do not need to know anything.

- **Does the meeting have to happen at a certain time and place?**

- » The meetings can take place at someone's home, at a neutral location, or at church
- » The important aspect is consistency. Weekly is best. However, a day, time, and place which encourages regular attendance is the key.
- » Childcare is an important consideration.

- **How long do class meetings go?**

- » Timing. Maximum of an hour and a half. The time limit is decided by the group, and is committed to by everyone in the group.
- » Frequency. Meeting weekly is best, some groups commit to bi-weekly, adding social events as well.

- **Are class meetings open or closed groups?**

- » It depends on the group. To start, groups are better off closed until the members are comfortable with how a class works.
- » Eventually all groups are encouraged to consider how to show more people how to experience a class meeting through invitation or multiplication.
- » Keeping in mind that class meeting dynamics are built on trust, groups should remain attentive to the current needs of their group when determining if they are ready to invite others or multiply.

- **Is it wrong we are not studying the Bible or learning something?**

- » Our churches are full of information. Class meetings are focused on helping us to live out what we have learned.
- » Classes help hold us accountable to learning more about how Jesus would like to encourage our growth through the means of grace.

Remember, it is all about relationships.

CLASS MEETINGS

Class Meetings are where people do life together in a relationship with God.



“The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds, which is the fundamental secret of caring for our souls.

Our part in this practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him.

In the early time of our ‘practicing’ we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits — not the law of gravity — and can be broken.

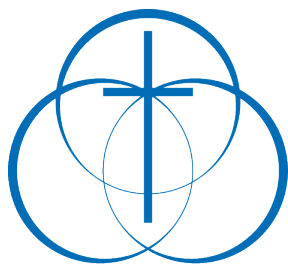
A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north.

If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings.”

DALLAS WILLARD

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Just have your group start with
the resources provided freely at
TrinityGMC.org/class-meetings



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CONFERENCE
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A FAMILY OF CHURCHES IN TEXAS, LOUISIANA, AND ARKANSAS