

# MENLO PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

## SAMPLE COVENANTS

Small Groups are groups of *people*, and people come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Every person is “fearfully and wonderfully made” in the *imago Dei* (image of God) and brings to a Small Group a valuable set of perspectives, experiences and wisdom all wrapped up in a unique personality. As a result, no two Small Groups are alike. Each group has its own dynamic character, reflecting the sum of its parts.

Yet within that diversity, there is a common core for Christian Small Groups – Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus’ name that our Small Groups gather, whether the group’s purpose is to explore faith, grow faith or both. With that common core as the anchor, a Small Group is better able to know why it exists and consider for what purpose it is meeting.

Small Group Covenants are a valuable way to help groups affirm (and subsequently, remember) their common core. The exercise of creating a Small Group covenant requires members to consciously and deliberately commit to growing with one another in Christian fellowship. This includes not only an overt acknowledgement and clarification around a group’s purpose but it also provides common language that members can use to keep a group healthy and focused.

On the following pages, there are eight different sample covenants. Our hope is that within these pages, every Small Group will be able to find ideas that will spark meaningful discussion and lead Small Groups toward greater clarity in their purpose and common core of Christian faith.

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## MPPC Small Group Covenant Template

Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-leader: \_\_\_\_\_

1) The purpose of our group is to...

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2) We will meet for \_\_\_\_\_ (timeframe), after which we will evaluate our direction.

3) We will gather on \_\_\_\_\_ (meeting day and frequency), from \_\_\_\_\_ (start / end time). We will arrive on time so that we can start and end on time.

4) We will gather at \_\_\_\_\_ (location)

5) We will connect with Christ and each other by....

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6) We will develop and grow by....

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7) We will serve the church and the world by ...

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8) We will agree to the following primary values for our group:

a) Participation:

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b) Confidentiality:

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c) Relationship-building:

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d) Community:

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9) We will seek to share some of all of the following roles and responsibilities:  
Leader, co-leader, apprentice leader, subgroup leaders, host / hostess, prayer  
coordinator, event planner, administrator, service project coordinator, etc.

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## MPPC Sample Small Group Covenant

Leader: Suzy Q

Co-leader: Regular Joe

1) The purpose of our group is to.....

Share our lives through prayer, sharing and study, so that we grow our faith more deeply in community.

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2) We will meet for 1 year (timeframe), after which we will evaluate our direction.

3) We will gather on Fridays every 2 weeks (meeting day and frequency), from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm (start / end time). We will arrive on time so that we can start and end on time.

4) We will gather at rotate between our homes. (location)

5) We will connect with Christ and each other by....

regular prayer and sharing.

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6) We will develop and grow by....

engaging in a regular study.

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7) We will serve the church and the world by ...

volunteering as a group at least once a year; encouraging individual participation in serving.

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8) We will agree to the following primary values for our group:

a) Participation:

Everyone is given the right to their own opinion, and "dumb questions" are encouraged and respected.

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b) Confidentiality:

Anything of a personal nature that is said in the meeting is not repeated outside the meeting without the person's permission.

c) Relationship-building:

We will be honest and open in our sharing and will pray for one another between group meetings.

d) Community:

Our children will be welcome at our meetings and be a part of the meal time. Our hope is for the group to be like an extended family for our children.

9) We will seek to share some of all of the following roles and responsibilities: Leader, co-leader, apprentice leader, subgroup leaders, host / hostess, prayer coordinator, event planner, administrator, service project coordinator, etc.

Hosting – Will rotate meetings between homes in alphabetical order of last name.

Leader – maintains contact with MPPC Small Groups Ministry, coordinates scheduling, leads study lessons.

Group (together) – Selects study materials.

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## DEVELOPING A SMALL GROUP COVENANT

A covenant is basically just a set of statements, agreed upon by the members, that spells out the group's purpose and operating procedures. By talking through commitments, you can prevent problems that can damage the group later on.

*Take about 15-30 minutes at the first meeting, again after 6-8 weeks, and once or twice a year thereafter, to discuss and agree upon your responses to the following topics.*

### **Purpose:**

This group will meet for the following reasons:

### **Guidelines:**

We agree to:

### **Meeting specifics:**

When and where will we meet?

Is punctuality important, both starting ending on time?

Who will we call if we need to miss a meeting?

### **Membership:**

Will new people be welcome at any time or just when the groups size drops?

Are house guests welcome to visit?

What about childcare?

How shall we handle telephone interruptions?

Our commitment to this group is for how long?

When will we evaluate and re-covenant?

### **Refreshments:**

Will we have them?

If so what kind and who's responsible?

When will they be served?

### **Confidentiality:**

What exactly does it mean and why is it important?

**Bible Study:** *(Hint—Choose a study specifically designed for small groups!)*

What will we study, and for how long?

Is homework required or optional?

Who will lead? If we rotate, what is the schedule?

Where can we find resources to help the leader prepare? *(Handbook for Leaders, etc)*

### **Task or Mission of the Group:**

Is there a group project we could undertake together now or should we evaluate this later?  
What? When?

Who will research this and report to the group?

Should we encourage everyone to find their own area of ministry or service, and bring news to the group for prayer support?

## Sample Group Covenant (Common Purpose Statement)

1. The reason our group exists is:
2. Our specific group goals include:
3. We meet \_\_\_\_times a month, and this covenant will be in effect for \_\_\_\_weeks/months. At the end of this period, we will evaluate our progress and growth.
4. We will meet on \_\_\_\_\_ (day of the week), from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_ (beginning and ending times).
5. Our meetings will be held at \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We will use \_\_\_\_\_ as a basis for study or training.
7. We will agree on one or more of the following disciplines:
  - \_\_\_ Acceptance: We will affirm one another's contributions.
  - \_\_\_ Confidentiality: What is spoken in the group remains in the group.
  - \_\_\_ Openness: As we are able, we will be honest and forthright with one another.
  - \_\_\_ Graciousness: We will not speak about a person who he or she is not present.
  - \_\_\_ Self-discipline: When the group agrees to homework, we will come prepared.
  - \_\_\_ Courtesy: When the group meets, we will come on time.
  - \_\_\_ Listening: None of us will monopolize our time together, making it difficult for others to speak.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Our Purpose

We are a group of Christians meeting regularly to provide a venue for spiritual growth, prayer, nurturing care & communication and worship in an encouraging, supportive, fun environment.

2. Our goals:

We encourage one another in good times and bad, pray regularly for each other, and study and grow together in our walk with the Lord

- |              |             |                 |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 3. We value: | Prayer      | Scripture       |
|              | Honesty     | Confidentiality |
|              | Affirmation | Accountability  |

4. We will meet at \_\_\_\_\_ except for agreed-upon setting rotations and special events

5. We will meet Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:30. We will endeavor to start on time and honor each other's time commitments. We will generally conduct our Biblical equipping study from 7:45 until 8:45. We will meet weekly except for breaks and holidays mutually agreed upon.

6. We will ground our studies in the Word but will study a variety of Christian materials. We will discuss and choose our materials as a group.

7. Our group will remain open to new members up to a maximum of 12.

8. We will plan a fun/recreation night every 4-8 meetings.

9. We agree to the following group disciplines:

Participation-everyone is given the right to their own opinion and all comments are encouraged and respected.

Ownership-we agree to share responsibility for the group and our goals.

Confidentiality-we agree to keep here whatever is shared here and avoid gossip, nosiness, and unsolicited advice. Addresses and contact information will be shared with others in the group.

Accountability-we give each other permission to hold each other accountable for the goals we set as a group or pledge individually. Accountability pledges will be documented in writing in a group log.

Attendance-we will be here whenever possible. The group will be a priority. If we are unable to attend, we will let someone who will be attending know.

10. Signature below acknowledges that I have read, understood, and agree to this covenant:

\_\_\_\_\_ (name)                      \_\_\_\_\_ (date)



# Our Small Group Covenant

## 1) **The covenant of Affirmation**

I will love you and affirm you no matter what you have said or done. I love you as you are and for what Christ wants to make of you.

## 2) **The covenant of Availability**

Anything I have -- time, energy, wisdom, myself, finances -- are all at your disposal. I give these to you and the covenant group in a unique way.

## 3) **The covenant of Regularity**

I covenant to give a regular part of my time to this group when it decides to meet. I consider that time to be of highest priority on my schedule.

## 4) **The covenant of Prayer**

I promise to pray for you, to uphold you, and to attempt to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit concerning your needs.

## 5) **The covenant of Openness**

I will show myself to you, letting you know who I am as a person in feeling, history, hopes and hurts. In other words, I will need you!

## 6) **The covenant of Honesty**

I will be honest in my mirroring back to you what I sense and feel coming from you.

## 7) **The covenant of Confidentiality**

What goes on in this group stays here. I will say nothing that may be traced back or that could be injurious or embarrassing to my covenant partners.

## 8) **The covenant of Accountability**

You have a right to expect growth from me so that I may give you the fullness of the gifts which God has bestowed upon me and fulfill my God-created designs. Therefore, I will not languish in the process of growth.

## Small Group Covenant

- be on time
- to give being in this group priority - in doing the homework and attendance (unless there is circumstances that are beyond control)
- to respect others opinions. "Dumb questions" are encouraged and respected! The giving of advice is to be kept to a minimum.
- to participate openly and honestly in group sessions, giving opportunity for all group members to share
- to not share outside the group meeting anything that has been shared within the group, unless permission is given
- to pray regularly for group members

## Guidelines for Group Prayer

- Be prepared to share how we can support you in prayer
- Keep sharing brief and personal. More sharing about your requests can go on before or after class.
- Feel free not to pray out loud, if you do not feel comfortable.
- Pray for one another during the week!

*Our prayer is that your small group is a safe place for you to be yourself, wrestle with questions regarding your faith and to be supported and encouraged in your walk with God.*

## **COMMUNITY GROUP COVENANT**

### **The logistics of our group:**

Our group will meet this often: \_\_\_\_\_

On this day(s): \_\_\_\_\_

At this location: \_\_\_\_\_

At this time (we will start and end on time): \_\_\_\_\_

For those with childcare needs we agree to: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerning refreshments, we agree to: \_\_\_\_\_

### **We agree to the following disciplines as a group:**

Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting (call when absent or late).

Safety: To help create a safe place where people can be heard (no quick answers or judgments).

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential.

Accountability: To give permission to group members to hold you accountable to goals *you* set for *yourself*.

Assimilation: To keep the doors open to others in our church (unconnected and unchurched people).

Rotation: To rotate meeting leadership over time.

Responsibility: To share in the roles and responsibilities that is agreed upon for the group.

### **We agree to pursue the 5 Purposes for our group:**

1. CONNECTING with God's family: creating an environment characterized by authenticity and transparency so that group members enter into relationships where they are known, loved, accepted, and challenged.

We will pursue CONNECTING in the following ways:

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2. GROWING to be like Christ: growing in mutual accountability, in mutual submission and in the application of scriptural truth, so that group members become more like Jesus in attitude and behavior.

We will pursue GROWING in the following ways:

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3. DEVELOPING our spiritual gifts: encouraging the mutual discovery and application of talents and gifts so that group members embrace and serve people in and beyond their small group.

We will pursue DEVELOPING in the following ways:

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4. SHARING our life mission: building a community with a kingdom perspective so that the group and each small group member actively pursue relationships with lost people.

We will pursue SHARING in the following ways:

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5. SURRENDERING our lives for God's pleasure: supporting one another in prayer and worshiping together so that group members glorify and honor God through their lives.

We will pursue SURRENDERING in the following ways:

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**The expectations of group members:**

To accomplish these 5 Purposes, there are attitudes and behaviors that we commit to as individuals:

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To the best of my ability, I personally commit to the logistics, goals, purposes, and expectations of the group.

**SIGNATURE**

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## GROUP COVENANT

Our group goals are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What we intend to study is: \_\_\_\_\_

We have covenanted together to meet for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks, at which time we will review and evaluate our group.

We will meet each week on \_\_\_\_\_ . We will begin at \_\_\_\_\_ and close at \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(time) (time) (day of week)

A typical schedule will look like: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Ground Rules:

Food: \_\_\_\_\_ Dress: \_\_\_\_\_

Children: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Absence: \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership  
Responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Preparation and  
Responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_ Visitors: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation  
Procedures: \_\_\_\_\_ Re-evaluation  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Open (e.g., new people can come  
any time) or Closed Group (e.g.,  
after 3rd meeting, no new members):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone  
Interruptions: \_\_\_\_\_

Decision Making: \_\_\_\_\_ Ministry (group or support  
individual): \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Disciplines: \_\_\_\_\_

I will try, with God's help, to be a regular, faithful, involved, caring member of this Covenant Group.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_