

So you're starting a group at Central. Now you're wondering, how do I fill my group with the people who need it most?

Here are ideas to consider as you pray for the people who would be a fit for what your group is all about.

1. Connect with Your Area Pastor

Hopefully by now you've already filled out your Group Dream Guide and met with your Area Pastor to think through the details and purpose of your group. Your pastor might already know of people in a certain area or demographic who are looking for a group like yours.

2. Website Group Search

If you have given group information, such as theme, demographic, area and/or start date to your area pastor, the Ministry Team Coordinator will add new groups to the groups listing at centralcc.ca/groups. This is a powerful tool especially during our launch months, September, January and April when people are searching for a group to join. Anyone who fills out a Connection Card or comes to Central Connect requesting a group will be directed to this search tool.

3. Participate in Open House events

Once in a while Central will host a Groups Open House event at the beginning of a groups semester. This interactive experience is a powerful way for individuals to find out what happens beyond Sundays and what kind of group would help them connect and grow spiritually for that season. As leaders, this is a great way to get to know people and hear what they would love to experience in a group. And you just might meet someone who would

be an ideal fit for yours.

4. Personal Invitation

In our experience the best group connections come through personal invitation with someone you know or have just met. Friends, coworkers, or someone you volunteer with are all great connections for your group. We encourage you and your group members to invite people you think would be a great fit. After all, groups are about relationships and connecting, and personal invitations express that value from the beginning.

5. Get to know someone new

One of the biggest challenges, especially for introverted leaders, is walking up to new people - or people you know - to start a conversation. However new guests at Central are often lonely or hungry to get to know people and they're not sure what to do. They would love it if you introduced yourself in the lobby or in the line of parents picking up their kids from their class and asked a few curious questions that show you genuinely care about them. When you do ask them if they're in a group yet, ask in an open way. Be ready to help them find out about a group that would fit their season of life, not just your group. They will remember you and appreciate you for it!

6. Ask for referrals

In a culture cluttered with information and events, one comment we hear often is "I never knew we had a group like that!" While we're not able to announce every new group from the platform or in an email blitz, letting people who know you about your group is important. Talk about your group and its purpose with your friends or volunteers with whom you serve. Ask if they know someone who would be appreciated of a group experience like that. Even if they can't think of someone in that moment, it puts it on their radar for someone who might cross their path later.

7. Create an invitational experience

Sometimes inviting friends or new acquaintances into a weekly group commitment is too big a leap if they've never been part of a group before. Why not start with a meet and greet or social party where guests can meet like-minded people? Events like these work well in cafes, large homes, restaurants and at the church. Guests enjoy meeting new people, especially when they find out they have something in common. It's also a way to find out more about the season of life, challenges and desires these people are facing. By the time you stir curiosity at the event, you can introduce your group opportunity and invitation. Your area pastor would be happy to explore this idea with you if you need ideas based on other meet-and-greets events we've hosted through Central.

We love innovation at Central, however some approaches just aren't cool. You probably already know this, but to make sure we're on the same page, please...

- Don't make your own invitations and pass them around the lobby or leave them on car windshields. This feels spammy and unsafe to many people.
- Don't expect that your group will be promoted by pastors from the platform or on social media. We really want your group to succeed, however there are many other factors we have to consider as a whole.
- Avoid filling up your group with only your closest friends and family. Someone else is waiting to make new friends - and often they help us grow in surprising ways.
- Start small. For visionaries, it's easy to get so excited about your group idea that you begin planning an entire church movement. Your group is a part of a much bigger picture. Find out what the vision of Central's leadership is, where God is already at work, and how your group can be a part of it. You encourage your participants well by lead them into experiencing God's power and spiritual growth in a steady, consistent way.

Small or big, your group is a meaningful way to lead people in a sense of belonging and becoming more like Christ. Through the process of inviting and leading, we grow as well.

