

The Coordinator's Role In Small Group Ministry

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A strong Small Group Ministry Program has a person, usually with the title of "coordinator," designated as responsible for the overall Program. This person oversees the Program and the components of the program's support structure: group formation, session topic development, publicity, evaluation, and facilitator support. The extent of the coordinator's responsibilities is determined by the size of the congregation, and the number of facilitators and groups. In the rest of this article, I'll explore how the coordinator's role varies by program size.

In a **small program** which starts with two to four groups, the coordinator might manage membership while the minister develops session plans. Together they recruit and train facilitators and lead the monthly facilitator support meetings. The coordinator writes a column for the newsletter and displays sign-up sheets on the Welcome Table. The minister issues an invitation to join small group ministry during Sunday announcements.

When the program reaches **medium size** with five to ten groups, the management responsibilities also expand. For example, the coordinator and minister may be joined by several facilitators to form a Steering Committee. The functions are spread out among the team members, with the coordinator still in the major leadership position. The coordinator continues to manage the database, receive sign-up forms, and place new people into groups. He/she plans the agenda for and leads meetings, usually on a quarterly basis. The Steering Committee members take turns staffing the sign-up table. With a larger pool of applicants, especially during the fall blitz, the Steering Committee works as a team to assign new members to groups and form new groups as needed.

Continuing the description of a medium size program, the coordinator may continue to write the newsletter column or delegate this task to another Steering Committee member. The coordinator and minister lead the monthly

facilitator meetings and may have assistance from former facilitators, known as coaches. When the Steering Committee produces publicity literature (i.e. a brochure), usually the coordinator's and minister's names are listed as contact people. The Steering Committee plans and staffs the facilitator training sessions and each does a part of the presentation.

The coordinator submits an annual budget request to the Board for consideration. Budget monies cover the costs of resource materials as well as appreciation events such as an annual Small Group Ministry dinner and seasonal refreshments. The coordinator and Steering Committee make long-range plans for Small Group Ministry, evaluate the program at the end of the year, and refine the program as needed.

Managing a **large SGM Program** of ten to twenty groups or more can become a daunting task, particularly if each group has co-facilitators and there are more facilitators waiting in the wings for new groups to form. For this size program, more people may be needed to share the additional coordinating work. For example, co-coordinators may share the leadership role and the Steering Committee may expand to include two or more ministers, and five or more coaches.

At this level, adding a staff person to the team is critical for efficient management of group membership and growth. The staff person takes over responsibility for the database of group members and manages the paperwork involved. The co-coordinators still take responsibility for the formation of new groups, the assimilation of new members into groups, and the overall status and health of groups. Therefore, the coordinators and the staff person communicate on a regular basis to stay on top of the situation.

The facilitators and co-facilitators now divide into two or three different monthly meeting groups so that each group can stay at about ten people. Each meeting is led by either a coordinator and minister or a team of coaches

and one of the ministers involved in the program. To mesh with everyone's schedules, one group of facilitators may meet in the daytime and the other two in the evening. Each group has its own covenant.

With a large number of groups comes a large volume of service activities. As in the small and medium programs, a part of the facilitator support meetings is devoted to a discussion of recent and upcoming service activities. The coordinators then report the activities in a newsletter article or on an Small Group Ministry bulletin board, or both.

The co-coordinators call regular meetings of the Steering Committee and plan the meeting agenda. As in the medium-sized program, the co-coordinators of a large program engage in visioning and long-range planning. Evaluation of the program is a team project, and improvements are made on an annual basis.

In the large Program, the coordinators meet with the minister(s) and coaches to plan the monthly facilitator support meetings. They or the coaches send out meeting reminders to the facilitators. They also help organize the education section of the meeting. A coach, a fellow facilitator, the minister, or a member of the congregation can do this training. Individuals with expertise in a particular area, such as listening skills or group development, may take charge of that section of the training.

In **every size congregation**, small, medium and large, it is important to promote the SGM program and acknowledge the work and dedication of the facilitators. The Coordinator(s) and Steering Committee, along with the ministers, plan events such as Small Group Ministry Sunday, Facilitator Recognition Sunday, and a Facilitator Installation Ceremony. They also can host an end-of-the-year dinner for all SGM participants, which is a time for fellowship and a chance to meet and talk with members of other groups.