

## **What is a Community Group?**

A Community Group can be summed up as a “family on mission.” They are the central opportunity and starting point for relationships, growth and service within Austin Mustard Seed. Groups consist of 8-12 adults, who are committed to meeting weekly throughout the school year for one year in order to express the Community Group functions and traits in their own unique ways.

## **Three Functions of a Community Group**

Functions are the basic tasks and activities which make up the “calendar” of the Community Group. They fall into three categories.

- **Up**—Moments for focusing on the group’s relationship to God. This includes time of singing, silent contemplation, scripture reflection and other creative methods of worship.
- **In**—Moments for building the group’s relationship to each other. These include regular meals, engaging in one another’s stories and supporting one another in tangible ways.
- **Out**—Moments for practicing how the group can better love their neighbors. This includes purposefully engaging with people outside the group, service projects and times of prayer for outsiders.

## **Traits all Community Groups Share**

Traits are values which are common to all groups, but express themselves in different ways based on the groups individuals and opportunities in different groups. They include:

1. **Growing in the Way of Jesus**—Groups are united by a desire to better understand who Jesus is, what he taught, and what it means to live those teachings out today
2. **Commitment to the Group**—Participating in a Community Group requires a willingness to dedicate time, energy and resources to meeting regularly, communicating consistently and investing in the lives of other group members.
3. **Space for Vulnerability**—Groups are hospitable places where individuals can feel seen, known and welcome, no matter where they are in their personal journey and in their faith.
4. **Joining God’s Mission**—Groups are driven by God’s Mission and seek ways to join God in making all things new.
5. **Dialogical**—Groups focus on honest conversation about each other’s lives, hopes, questions and opinions.
6. **Prayer**—Groups regularly pray for each other and for outsiders. They also help individuals grow in their own practice of prayer.
7. **Hospitality**—Groups are dedicated to welcoming passionate believers, hopeful skeptics, adults, children, families and the unmarried, no matter what their stage in life or faith.

## **What Should I Expect if I Join a Group**

- Official Weekly Meetings—Groups meet once a week throughout the school year for one year. Most meetings will include a meal, a time of discussion and a time of prayer.
- Participation—Groups require participation. Expect to help provide food, child care and to fully participate in discussions.
- A Starting Point—Groups are a starting point for developing deeper relationships, faith and mission. Expect to be challenged to go beyond the basic requirements.
- Open but Committed—Groups are open, meaning people can visit or join at any time. However, group members are asked to commit to participate for the full year cycle, to the best of their ability.
- Trimesters—Groups will last for three “Trimesters”, Fall, Spring and Summer. Groups are expected to meet regularly during the Fall and Spring, and as desired during Summer. This also creates clean and clear breaks for groups to multiply or for members to come and go.
- Growth and Multiplication—Groups are not static. They are expected to continually be recruiting new members and training new leaders with the goal of multiplying.