



THE CHURCH of THE
RESURRECTION
SEEKING the CITY to COME

RezGroups Guide

Often Christians are misled into thinking of themselves as individual consumers of the Gospel. But the truth is that salvation in Christ involves our rescue from personal autonomy, and integration into community. God created us to live in right relationships with himself and one another, and redemption involves the restoration of both. RezGroups are intended to put these truths into practice within the context of the Church of the Resurrection.

WHY REZGROUPS?

The purpose of RezGroups is to experience God and the transforming power of his Gospel in and through the community of the church.

Gospel In Community RezGroup members seek Christian formation in one another through regular gatherings together.

Gospel Through Community

As RezGroups mature in Christ and spiritual friendship, they begin to use their community as a means of mission, impacting those in the larger community with the Gospel.

The early Christians worshipped together as a whole, but they also had regular spiritual fellowship with one another in their homes (Acts 2:42, 20:20; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom. 16:5). These intimate gatherings were not merely for social interaction, but were the context in which believers helped one another believe and practice the Gospel. Likewise, RezGroups are a means for seeing God's Kingdom come in our lives and in the community around us.

REZGROUP ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

RezGroups are quite diverse, meeting on different days and times with a variety of formats. They nevertheless share the following five elements in common:

People

RezGroups consist of around 3-15 people, who may or may not attend the Church of the Resurrection, and who determine to be friends in Christ with one another.

Leader(s)

RezGroups have a recognized leader or leaders. RezGroup leaders must be members of Resurrection.

Commitment

Participants commit to meeting together weekly for an agreed specified period (e.g. 6 months).

Purpose

Participants meet regularly for the purpose of experiencing God and the transforming power of his Gospel together as a RezGroup.

Intentionality

Participants agree on group objectives, evaluate their progress from time to time, and make adjustments as needed in order to best meet their objectives.

REZGROUP DIVERSITY

For most people, the ideal RezGroup is comprised of people exactly their own age, gender and stage in life, while also being very heterogenous and diverse. It is both a rigorous Bible study, and also requires no commitment. The ideal RezGroup is open and welcoming to newcomers, while also consisting of intimate friends. In other words, it is a kind of spiritual Swiss Army Knife that does everything.

But it is impossible for a group to be and do everything at once. The RezGroups that are most welcoming to outsiders naturally struggle in the areas of confession, intimate prayer, accountability, etc. Conversely, groups that go deep are generally unwilling to open their doors to strangers because of how it will adversely affect group dynamics. This same kind of tradeoff is evident with many other factors, e.g. coed or same gender, single or married, affinity or location, etc.

It is important to keep in mind that RezGroups are not little churches. If they were the church in miniature, then we would have no need of the Church of the Resurrection. But because we have the larger body, our RezGroups don't have to be and do everything.

Consequently, no two RezGroups are alike. There are RezGroups consisting of couples, men, women, and others that are mixed. Some groups are very small, some are bigger. Some groups have been together for years, and others are brand new. Some groups consist of persons living only in one neighborhood. The list goes on and on.

REZGROUP TYPICAL ELEMENTS

The fundamental building blocks for RezGroups include worship, confession, accountability, prayer, study, fellowship, hospitality, service & mission. It is impossible to include all of these elements in every meeting. Most groups do several of these weekly, and incorporate other elements from time to time.

Worship

Worship within the context of a RezGroup can include singing songs of praise or hymns, reading the psalms aloud together, or making use of the rich liturgical traditions of the church. The RezGroup is an ideal format for people to explore using their gifts to serve the church in worship.

Confession

Confession involves specific disclosure of one's sins to the group, professed repentance for those sins, affirmation by the group of the transforming power of the Gospel, and prayer (often with the laying on of hands) for the full restoration and healing of the confessor. It usually takes place only after RezGroup participants know one another quite well. It is one of the most powerful things that RezGroups can do together.

Accountability

Being accountable to one another is a means for helping everyone grow in grace, by standing firm together against sin, the flesh and the devil. It is best practiced within small, single-gender groups, and is rarely helpful in larger, mixed settings. It can involve routine check-ins with one another in areas of temptation and sin. Or, if the group wishes to do so, members can take turns from week to week providing a self-assessment of spiritual strengths & weaknesses, followed by feedback from other members of the group. Grace, maturity, humility and confidentiality are essential for such conversations.

Prayer

All of the elements are important, but none is more so than prayer. RezGroups are encouraged to pray with and for one another during RezGroup, and also to continue praying during the week. Most groups keep a record of prayer needs during their meetings and share requests via email after each meeting. RezGroups must work to maintain the three emphases of biblical prayer: circumstantial prayers, wisdom prayers, and kingdom prayers. (See Powlinson, “Praying Beyond the Sick List,” in Appendix III.)

Study

usually involves in-depth study of the Bible together. (For help leading a Bible study, see Appendix I: Leading a Bible Study.) The early Christians devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles (Acts 2:42), and the apostles taught the centrality of Jesus in God’s revelation to humanity as both Lord and Christ. As followers of Christ, we are called to let his word dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). From time to time, study can also involve branching out to cover other topics that foster mature Christian discipleship. Guided by the RezGroup leader, members agree together on a study topic and plan ahead of time, in conjunction with the pastoral staff.

Fellowship

RezGroups are about spiritual friendship, and this cannot be accomplished only through a checklist of spiritual tasks. RezGroups should work hard to foster an environment in which Gospel-centered relationships flourish. Sharing meals together, taking retreats & trips together, playing sports together, and so on are all great ways of cultivating spiritual friendships.

Hospitality

Hospitality is a Christian virtue, and one of the hallmarks of the early church. In a city where many people struggle to find friends and make ends meet, the power of Christian hospitality should not be underestimated; it is transformative. For RezGroup members, hospitality to one another can be a source of enormous shalom during the week. Likewise, groups may decide on occasion to open their doors to visitors who do not know Christ. Many people who would never set foot in a church might be willing to attend a RezGroup gathering. A meeting in a home over dinner is an ideal setting to invite friends, neighbors and co-workers.

Service

In the Bible, the words *ministry* and *service* are synonyms, and they have one purpose: the building up of the body of Christ. RezGroups are ideal contexts in which members can discern how God has gifted them for service. Within the RezGroup, members are encouraged, with the support of the leader(s), to find ways to actively serve the group. Some individuals may serve their groups through hospitality, others through leading worship, others by leading in Bible study, etc. Beyond the RezGroup, the larger congregation depends upon the service of different groups to

aid in various aspects of church life. RezGroups are encouraged to find additional ways to serve the church and larger community.

Mission

Often, groups approach this element by discussing organizations to become involved in or project-type outreach strategies. This can lead to fruitful ministry, but should be secondary to a focus on those people in the immediate context of the group members. Who are the people in your life right now? Who lives and works around you? Who do you pass on your way to work? These are the people God has placed in your life right now. These are your neighbors. (See Appendix II: The CHRIST Standard, which is intended to be used as a group discussion tool to shape seed ideas into visions that are consistent with the Resurrection ministry vision.)

What About Evangelism?

RezGroups are for people who determine to be friends in Christ with one another. Consequently, there are no “evangelistic RezGroups.” However, an existing RezGroup may determine to engage in outreach together in some way, including hosting an open meeting from time to time, or offering an evangelistic program over a period of weeks (e.g. Christianity Explored, Alpha, etc.)

REZGROUP LEADERS

RezGroup leaders are mature Christians appointed by the clergy to serve as lay shepherds for the RezGroups they lead. Their primary responsibilities are:

1. To lead the group in establishing and articulating its objectives, determining its format, and staying on purpose.
2. To encourage and pray for the Christian formation of the group members.
3. To identify and raise up new leaders from within the group.
4. To keep in touch regularly (e.g. monthly) with their overseeing pastor regarding the life and needs of the group, and benefit from coaching and other assistance.
5. To keep in touch regularly with other RezGroup Leaders through an online group, in order to share ideas, best practices, needs, and ask questions.
6. To meet twice annually with their overseeing pastor and RezGroup Leaders for encouragement and leadership training.

All of these responsibilities are further explained in semi-annual leadership training meetings, and in regular meetings with the pastoral staff

HOW ARE REZGROUPS INITIATED?

RezGroups commonly originate in several different ways:

7. Some RezGroups are already in existence and continue to welcome in newcomers from time to time.
8. An existing RezGroup grows to capacity and multiplies into two (or more) groups, through internally raising up new leaders.



9. A group of friends comes together with a vision for a new group, discusses the idea with one of the pastors and is encouraged to proceed, and launches a new RezGroup.
10. A person or group of people in the church with interest in a particular topic talks with a pastor about starting a RezGroup focused on that topic and is encouraged to proceed. Parish communications alert the rest of the congregation to the formation of this group, and a new group is launched.
11. The pastoral staff leads in establishing a new RezGroup out of newcomers to the church, particularly those who have attended the Essentials Class.

HOW DO REZGROUPS ADD NEW PEOPLE?

Church leaders do not assign people to RezGroups. Rather, RezGroups grow through invitation during “open meetings,” i.e. a meeting that is open for newcomers by consent of the group leader and members. Here are some examples of how a newcomer could become involved in a group. (Julie is in a RezGroup, and Kate is not.)

1. Kate does not attend Resurrection, but knows Julie, who invites her to join her RezGroup during an open meeting (ideally a meal that the RezGroup is sharing).
2. Kate visits Resurrection and meets Julie, who invites her to join her RezGroup during an open meeting (ideally a meal that the RezGroup is sharing).
3. Kate has been coming to Resurrection, knows Julie, and asks if she can join her group. The group responds with an invitation.
4. Kate visits Resurrection and fills out a “newcomer” card request for more info/get involved. The Parish Administrator relays this request to the RezGroup leaders, and Julie’s RezGroup invites her to come for dinner.
5. Kate contacts the Rector directly, who connects her with Julie’s group. The group responds with an invitation.

INCLUDING OUTSIDERS

Instead of having a central office assigning all participants to various RezGroups, this approach encourages groups to form on their own. One major disadvantage of this approach is that close friends will inevitably draw together into groups, and others will be excluded. There is nothing wrong with a season of rich spiritual growth among good friends, but it should be followed by a season of ministry and service with others beyond one’s closest confidants. RezGroup Leaders are encouraged to keep this cycle in mind so that groups don’t remain perpetually inward-focused.

REZGROUP NUMERICAL GROWTH

Some RezGroups add new people very slowly or not at all. Others may add people more quickly. As groups increase in numbers, it is important that they consider an appropriate time to divide and commission new leaders from within to begin a new group, usually with a portion of the members of the existing group. For example, a group that has grown from 5 regular members to 12 or 13 should consider sending a leader or leader(s) with an additional 2-3 individuals out to begin again. The existing leader and clergy work together to coordinate this process.

REZGROUP DEVELOPMENT

Group dynamics change over time, and it is expected that a group of 6 that has been meeting for 3 weeks will have different needs than a group of 10 that has met for a year. RezGroup leaders are trained in the basics of group development and are encouraged to work with group members to modify the format of the group so that it best fits these changing needs. For example, a new group may decide to focus on building relationships, allowing more time weekly for people to share their life stories. This might mean that the dinner conversation would be used for this specific purpose, or that the study would be a simpler, inductive study rather than an involved curriculum. However, it would not be healthy for the group to maintain this focus at the ongoing expense of other essential group elements. After a couple of months, once everyone has learned more about each other and become comfortable with the group dynamics, it would be appropriate to transition into a more in-depth study to challenge and stimulate the group toward growth. RezGroup Leaders have flexibility to make decisions that best suit their groups while incorporating all of the elements in some way.

REZGROUP RENEWAL DATES

It is helpful to everyone if all the RezGroups operate according to a common schedule. Shared starting and ending dates allow old groups to dissolve gracefully, new groups to form from multiple former groups, and leaders to have seasons for rest instead of ending up in burnout. For these reasons, RezGroups are organized around three Renewal Dates each year:

- * **EPIPHANY** (*January 6*)
- * **PENTECOST** (*late May or early June*)
- * **LABOR DAY** (*first Monday in September*)

RezGroup leaders and participants should think of these three Renewal Dates as ideal opportunities to start or end groups, evaluate objectives and establish new ones, welcome new participants, etc. Groups may want to divide the year into thirds, e.g. focusing on study in the fall, prayer and worship in the spring, and fellowship/mission in the summer. Parish communications will promote RezGroups around these three times each year.

