
Spiritual Formation Team

Brookdale Presbyterian Church



Brookdale Church is called to bring the beauty of the gospel to the brokenness of life.

A Picture of Spiritual Formation

We see Brookdale as a place where people can struggle honestly, experience grace, and discover how the beauty of the gospel can transform every area of their lives.

We see Brookdale as a place where people can struggle honestly. We envision the church as a place where people can struggle intellectually - where they can wrestle openly with doubts and engage the difficult questions of life and faith. We envision the church as a place where people can struggle emotionally - where they can bring their pain, their baggage, their disappointments, and their hurts and find a soft place to land as they heal and grow. We envision the church as a place where people can struggle morally - where they can bring their moral and ethical weaknesses, addictions, and failures and find a community that will help them grow, change, and be transformed by the beauty of the gospel.

We see Brookdale as a place where people can experience grace. We envision the church as a place where people can be transparent and vulnerable because they know they will be received with wisdom, understanding, and grace. We envision the church as a place where people can be accepted completely and unconditionally, regardless of race, class, or background, and be a part of a community that will welcome them and value them. We envision the church as a place where people can, without shame, bring the brokenness of their lives and experience the grace of God within a community that is humble, loving, and gracious.

We see Brookdale as a place where people can discover how the beauty of the gospel can transform every area of their lives. We envision the church as a place where people can experience change, not merely on the level of behavior modification but deep down in their heart, character, and affections through repentance and faith. We envision the church as a place where people can experience a completely different way to know and relate to God, not by trying harder to be religious but by living in union with the crucified and risen Christ. We envision the church as a place where people can experience renewal in every area of their lives, not by living in their own strength but by applying the gospel to their hearts on a daily basis.

A Plan for Spiritual Formation

Brookdale will need to cultivate a deeper gospel understanding - where the whole church understands theologically and practically how the gospel is the dynamic of change in the Christian life.

Brookdale will need to cultivate a palpable gospel culture - where the church is known for its humility, love, grace, repentance, and faith.

Brookdale will need to cultivate the right forums and contexts for people to be able to struggle honestly, experience grace, and discover the transforming power of the gospel. This will likely involve:

- Some kind of forum where people, Christians and non-Christians, can have a safe space to ask questions, wrestle with doubts, and engage difficult questions openly and honestly.
 - A small group ministry that primarily focuses on living out the gospel within the group itself as well as out in real life. This would mean that small groups intentionally focus on how the dynamic of the gospel can transform their character, their relationships, their families, and their work.
 - A growing number of 1-on-1 relationships throughout the church where members are able to counsel and minister to one another in biblically-equipped and gospel-centered ways.
 - A more robust curriculum and process for helping new believers become gospel-centered disciples
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Spiritual Formation Team

Purpose

The purpose of the Spiritual Formation Team is to develop concrete ministry efforts that will move the congregation towards the vision for spiritual formation. This will include:

- Development of specific ideas on how to accomplish the three objectives listed in “A Plan for Spiritual Formation”
- Evaluation and possible implementation of “Possible Steps” suggested by the Vision Team
- Development of new ideas that will help the church live out “The Vision for Spiritual Formation”

Composition

The Spiritual Formation Team shall be composed of 5 – 7 active representative church members, including at least one elder. The team will have one leader who will plan and lead the team meetings. The team leader is expected to serve a minimum of one year, but no more than three consecutive years. The pastor for spiritual formation will act as an advisor for the team. Meetings will be open to interested parties associated with Brookdale’s spiritual formation communities in any capacity, and to members of Brookdale Presbyterian Church.

Annual Goals

Members of the congregation should be

- Learning about how the gospel extends to every aspect of their lives
- Growing in their knowledge of the Scripture
- Learning to apply their knowledge to become closer to Jesus Christ
- Learning to use Scripture to support belief statements
- Enjoying the fellowship of other believers
- Becoming increasingly more active in praying
- Invited to participate in missions
- Enjoying a greater life of personal worship

To make progress toward the following benchmarks

- In 5 years:
 - Participation – 25% of active church members are engaged in some form of small group
 - Growth – 7 – 8 active small groups (assumes 300 active church members)
 - Progress – for each point, an average of >2
 - In 10 years:
 - Participation – 50% of active church members are engaged in some form of small group
 - Growth – 15 active small groups (assumes 300 active church members)
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Progress – for each point, an average of >2.5

Assessment

- Each year, the Spiritual Formation Team will meet for an extended period with leaders of spiritual formation communities (Sunday School Teachers, gender & age specific ministry leaders and Small Group Leaders) to do the following
 - to evaluate how well they accomplished their goals during the past year
 - to assess the church's progress toward the vision. They should not try to assess members individually. Instead, they will be asked to assess the group (small group, Sunday School class, etc.) as a whole.
 - 1: Not progressing 2: Some progress 3: Significant progress
 - Do small group members seem to be showing greater appreciation of the gospel?
 - Are small group members increasing their knowledge of Scripture?
 - Are they learning to apply Scriptural knowledge to increase their trust in Jesus Christ?
 - Are they learning to use scripture to support their belief statements?
 - Are small group members becoming closer and more supportive of each other? Are mentoring relationships arising?
 - Is there evidence of greater comfort at public prayer or more private prayer activity?
 - Has the small group as a whole or individual members participating in missions activities?
 - Do members seem to be enjoying a greater life of personal worship?
 - Are students learning the first 8 questions and answers of the Westminster Confession (Youth and Children)?
 - Are our spiritual formation communities increasingly becoming places where people can struggle honestly?
 - Are our spiritual formation communities increasingly becoming places where people are experiencing grace?
 - Are our spiritual formation communities increasingly becoming places where the gospel is changing people deeper than just their behavior, but in their heart, character, affections?
 - to revisit the vision and develop new goals and strategies for the upcoming year

Team Leader

- This position should rotate on an annual basis among the non-staff members of the spiritual leadership team
 - The leader organizes meetings no less than once a year, and preferably once a semester, plus an annual retreat with spiritual formation community leaders for assessing the previous year and planning for the upcoming year.
 - The leader is an active participant in the Ministry Leadership Team
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- The leader updates the congregation on small group openings, changes in curricula in open small groups, Sunday school, and gender and age specific ministries

Spiritual Formation Communities - Guiding Principles and Expectations

Small Groups

Purpose

2 Peter 3:18 “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever! Amen.”

All church members are encouraged to be an active member of a small group so that they may better grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ in a friendly, intimate atmosphere with other believers

We see small groups as a primary vehicle for spiritual formation in the church

Leaders

- Small group leaders are expected to cultivate an atmosphere of friendliness, mutual respect, interest of the scriptures, and worshipfulness of God
- Small group leaders are expected to host small groups or arrange for a host location on a weekly basis, with periodic breaks as needed.
- Small group leaders are expected to regularly attend training sessions as they are able
- Small group leaders are expected to incorporate Bible study and prayer into their small group activities on a regular basis. DVD lessons, topical studies, or fellowship times are valuable, but should not overshadow time in the scriptures or time with the Lord in prayer
- Small group leaders are expected to inform the Spiritual Formation Team of upcoming small group curricula in a timely fashion.
- Small group leaders are expected to be open to new members as needed and able
- Small group leaders are expected to cultivate new small group leaders within their groups. These new leaders can then form a new small group.
- Small group leaders do not necessarily lead the group every week, but should insure that gospel-based learning and fellowship do happen on a regular basis
- Small group leaders are encouraged to coordinate with the Missions Team once a year to engage in a small group service project
- Small group leaders are encouraged to coordinate with the Worship Team for the small group to engage in an on-going Worship Service Project such as communion preparation or ushering
- Small group leaders are expected to spend time in prayer for their small group members each week

Members

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- Upon joining a small group, members are committing themselves to regular attendance and participation in a respectful & friendly manner.

Men's, Women's, and Senior Adult Ministries

These ministries represent a special case of the small group system, wherein each acts as a large, permanently open small group.

Age & Gender Specific Ministry Leaders

- Ministry leaders are expected to cultivate an atmosphere of friendliness, mutual respect, interest of the scriptures, and worshipfulness of God
- Ministry leaders are expected to host events or arrange for a host location on a regular basis, with periodic breaks as needed.
- Ministry leaders are expected to regularly attend training sessions as they are able
- Ministry leaders are expected to provide Christian-themed activities on a regular basis.
- Ministry leaders are expected to be open to new members as needed and able
- Ministry leaders are expected to cultivate new leaders within their groups.
- Ministry leaders do not necessarily lead the group every week, but should insure that gospel-based learning and fellowship do happen on a regular basis
- Ministry leaders are expected to spend time in prayer for their ministry and ministry members each week

Sunday School

Sunday School Teachers

- Sunday School teachers are expected to prepare for and provide a weekly lesson during the Sunday School Period in keeping with the basic Sunday School Schedule
 - They are expected to teach for a 1 – 2 semester term, and then take a break from teaching. This gives them time to prepare for another semester and allows them to rest and grow spiritually under another teacher's efforts
 - Sunday School Teachers are expected to cultivate an atmosphere of friendliness, mutual respect, interest of the scriptures, and worshipfulness of God
 - Sunday School Teachers are expected to regularly attend training sessions as they are able
 - Sunday School Teachers are expected to work primarily from the Bible in the Fall and Spring. DVD lessons, topical studies, or fellowship times are valuable, but should not overshadow the necessary growth in the Word of God needed by every believe
 - Sunday School Teachers are expected to pray for their Sunday School Class Lesson and members each week.
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Vision Team Suggestions: Some Possible Steps to Get There

In order to begin developing these forums and contexts, Brookdale should consider taking these steps:

- Begin praying that God will give us a sense of brokenness, grace, and faith so that we can become a community that reflects the gospel in deeper and deeper ways.
- Have an extended sermon series on how the gospel is the dynamic of change and how it transforms/renews broken lives, relationships, and communities.
- Develop some kind of new forum for people, inside and outside the church, to be able to struggle intellectually in a safe, open, honest, and fruitful way.
- Develop a process for helping new believers grow as gospel-centered disciples
- Provide training for key leaders within the church to equip them to bring the beauty of the gospel to the brokenness of people's lives (through CCEF or a similar kind of equipping ministry).
- Through a church-wide study, refocus small groups to be intentionally gospel-centered and train leaders to work through a series of gospel-centered studies that will help cultivate a gospel understanding and a gospel culture in those groups and throughout the church (perhaps in coordination with a sermon series).

Foundational Studies: Gospel Christianity I, II, and III (Redeemer Presbyterian Church)

The Gospel-Centered Life (Robert Thune and Will Walker)

The Gospel-Centered Community (Robert Thune and Will Walker)

Issue-Specific Studies: The Gospel-Centered Life at Work (Robert Alexander) [Vocation]

Gospel Love (World Harvest Mission) [Relationships]

Gospel-Centered Family (Tim Chester) [Family]

Gospel-Centered Parenting (Tim Chester) [Parenting]

