

Gathering

CREDITS

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Adaptation of materials created by the Central and Southern Territories respectively

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Special thanks of support to Commissioner G. Lorraine Bamford.



Gathering

INTRODUCTION

The Salvation Army Eastern Territory Women's Department offers this small group program originally modeled after Embrace (*created by the Central Territory and later adapted by the Southern Territory*).

Gathering is a focus group option to bring individuals together to encourage purposeful conversations about life and Jesus and to build friendship within the Body of Christ.

Gathering groups are designed to meet once a month. **The intended format of Gathering is to share a meal, refreshments or coffee together and then engage in guided discussions with provided questions to help open the door of sharing with each other.**

As you consider beginning Gathering groups, please keep the following in mind:

We **GATHER** to build community – to share experiences, sorrow, joys, strength and weakness. We do this with the understanding that Christ is with us in all and we can encourage one another as we grow in Him.

We **GATHER** to share conversation. Nobody is here to teach or learn; everyone is here to share and receive.

We **GATHER** consistently – your group decides when and where but it should be at least once a month. Consistency keeps us going and growing.

We **GATHER** and pledge our commitment to the group. Commit to the value of community and be involved in the conversations!

STRUCTURE

Gathering will be reported in statistics as a Women's Ministries group. The Corps Officer or designated leader for your **Gathering** will organize the meeting material and organize the leaders of the **Gathering** groups.

Group leaders should commit to six months of leadership. They are in charge of organizing and leading the meetings, delegating hostess rotation and reporting monthly stats to the Corps Officer.

If needed, leaders can help to encourage quieter ones to speak and rambling ones to listen during the **Gathering**. Leaders remind about community confidentiality, listening, etc. at each **Gathering**. Leaders encourage participants to bless the meal or refreshments and to close in prayer when they meet.

MATERIALS

Leadership materials will be supplied by the Corps Officer. Monthly discussion cards and Going Deeper section can be provided by the Corps Officer or printed from our online site at SACONNECTS.ORG/GATHERING. Please note that there are now four years of programming available. The current year will appear first on SACONNECTS site.

The following materials are available for each year:

- Leadership Guide (*Gathering Introduction*)
- Gathering logos (*for promotional and group use*)
- Group participation form
- Group information sheet (*for Leaders*)
- Monthly leaders page for introducing the topic
- Monthly discussion and Scripture cards
- Monthly “Going Deeper” section (*may be used in group or sent home for further study*)

CONCLUSION

Simple is always best. We want to encourage groups to focus on the discussion and time together that they spend with the Lord and with each other over hostess and presentation details. Our goal is to have uncomplicated, friendly fellowship that sparks in-depth conversations that lead all to a deeper relationship with Christ.

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LAUNCH PARTY

A launch party is a great way to introduce a sampling to corps and community members of what a **Gathering** meeting entails. This will also serve as your process in dividing up individuals for groups based on the information sheets you collect. Please make sure to use the weeks ahead as an opportunity to announce the party and brief explanation in your corps bulletin, community fliers and even calling individuals personally. This will ensure individual's attending the party have a general idea of what **Gathering** is. Feel free to use the graphics from SACONNECTS.COM/GATHERING to personalize materials.

Officers, Invite potential leaders to your home for a meal and a **Gathering** experience. Suggest that they might like to lead a group and/or help with the launch party. Share the expectations of a leader. Try to set up a simple system (*group text/ email*) to ensure all of your leaders have access to updates and to each other for help and encouragement.

Determine a day and time to host the launch party with a team invested in the concept. This party could be a brunch, lunch, tea, coffee, or a very informal meal held at the corps.

Invite all people from your corps, people from your sphere of influence, etc. Have others do the same. Inviting involves more than announcing. Make phone calls, have face-to-face conversations, send texts, put an invitation card in the mail, etc.

***Gathering material was created to be gender-neutral for those interested in having a men's Gathering fellowship or mixed groups.**

Simplicity is key. Take the most straight-forward approach to food and décor that you can. Pick the month you are currently in and prepare materials from that month for this launch party. This will also serve (*statistically*) as the first month's group meeting. Place a pre-designated leader at each table.

When people arrive, give them a ticket with a number and have them sit at that numbered table. Have the packet of four discussion cards and sign-up cards on the table at each setting.

After the meal, signal it is time to begin the Gathering conversations. No PowerPoint is necessary, this is all lead at the table. Let a leader from each table pick any of the cards to start and the groups will move at their own pace through the four questions.

Let them know that the sign-up card on the table can be filled in and turned in immediately. Providing contact information on the card will allow those who wish to sign up later to do so.

Introduce leaders and let people know that they will hear from you or one of the leaders about when and where their first **Gathering** group meeting will take place.

***If your leaders would like to hold their first meeting in that same month, suggest they hold a small ‘getting to know you’ fellowship at their home or other agreed upon location.**

After the event, you will need to form your **Gathering** groups. The composition will depend on various factors that participants have shared: time, day, location, transportation, age-specific, gender open, how many people sign up, etc. Aim for diversity!

***We encourage splitting up families or close friends if possible. This will stretch individuals to broaden their fellowship circle.**

Share information with those who signed up. Send a nice note to those who expressed interest “at another time”. Send a thank you card to your volunteers.

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EXPECTATIONS

As a participant in **Gathering**, I understand and agree to community expectations:

- Keeping confidentiality within the group
- Hosting or co-hosting at least one **Gathering** meeting
- RSVP'ing in advance for each meeting to the leader, so the host will know how many people to prepare for.
- Committing to the same group for a period of time.
(Groups will be re-assigned after 6 months)
- Accepting that childcare is not provided by the group
(unless otherwise determined by the whole group)

Name _____

Date _____

Gathering GROUP INFO

Leader's Name	Leader's Contact information	Participant Name	Cell Phone	E-mail Address	Address	Month Hosting
		1				
		2				
		3				
		4				
		5				
		6				
		7				
		8				
		9				
		10				
		11				

Gathering MONTHLY STATS

Corps / ARC / Other		Month / Year
Gathering Coordinator and Officer's Names		
Name, First	Name, Last	
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		

Gathering GROUP RSVP CARD

CHECK AS APPLIES:

____ YES, I would like to join a Gathering group at this time.

____ NO, I would not like to join a Gathering group at this time, but contact me in the future.

____ NO, I am not interested

FULL NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ **Circle:** Cell Home Work

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

AGE: _____ **SEX:** (Male) (Female)

Preferred Day and Time to participate: Sunday Dinner Weekday Dinner (day: _____)

Saturday Brunch Saturday Dinner

Additional Information: (For example: do you have a pet and/or food allergy? Specify. Do you need to attend a group within your neighborhood? Can you drive at night? Do you have a reliable means of transportation? etc.) _____

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