

How to Start a Dream Group in Your Church

DREAM GROUPS HAVE BEEN STARTED in all sorts of places and under all sorts of conditions. There have been dream groups born in coffeehouses and in prisons. We at Emmanuel Church in Athens, Georgia, feel that dream groups do quite well when their inceptions are connected to churches and when they meet in churches. This, in our experience, is their natural soil. Our first dream group was begun at Emmanuel in 1992, is still going strong, and in 2000 spawned a second group. One group meets after church every Sunday, and the other meets each Tuesday morning. Both go year around, breaking only for major holidays.

No doubt there are *ROSE* readers who wish that they, too, had a dream group in their church but see no prospect on the horizon. Well, the way to get a group is to start one. The primary prerequisite for this is long-term dedication. If you have that, you can do the rest in the four steps outlined below. Keep in mind that a good dream group leader is not an expert but a peer who has had a little more experience than the rest. As others in the group gain experience, leadership duties can, and should, be shared.

☐ Step 1: Prepare Yourself

- I. Read, read, read! Here are seven basic books. Read them all.
 - A. First, baseline books for dreamwork and Christianity:
 1. *Natural Spirituality* by Joyce Rockwood Hudson
 2. *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language* by John A. Sanford
 3. *The Kingdom Within* by John A. Sanford
 - B. Next, how-to books for dreamwork:
 1. *Dream Work* (or *Where People Fly and Water Runs Uphill*) by Jeremy Taylor
 2. *Inner Work* by Robert A. Johnson
 - C. Then, books for grounding yourself in Jung:
 1. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by Carl G. Jung
 2. *The Portable Jung*, by C.G. Jung, ed. Joseph Campbell
 - D. Finally, to consolidate what you have learned, reread *Natural Spirituality*.
- II. Become a known entity at church (if you are not already), so church leaders will trust you to offer something new.
 - A. Become a regular at Sunday worship.
 - B. Get involved in one or two further activities. This is all it takes to get known!
- III. If possible, start attending the annual dreamwork-and-Christianity conferences for resources, learning, and moral support. There are three possibilities at present, all announced regularly in *THE ROSE*:

- A. Natural Spirituality Regional Gathering—each February, Toccoa, GA
- B. Kanuga Summer Dream Conference—each June, Hendersonville, NC
- C. Conferences led by Susan Sims-Smith and Larry Maze in the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas

☐ Step 2: Offer a Class at Church

- I. Offer a six- to ten-week book study of *Natural Spirituality*. Any of these times work well: during the Church School hour; right after church; during the week, day or evening.
- II. There are helpful resources on the SeedWork website of the Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas: www.seedwork.org.

☐ Step 3: Start a Dream Group

- I. Begin your dream group immediately after the book study. Be prepared for a small turnout: usually, only one-third to one-half of people who take the book study stay on for a permanent dream group. For best results the dream group should meet once a week.
- II. We at Emmanuel recommend the image-and-association method of dreamwork described by Joyce Hudson in this issue of *THE ROSE* (pp. 29–31).
- III. Encourage dream group members to keep reading:
 - A. Institute a library or a book swap.
 - B. Use the reading lists in *Natural Spirituality*.
- IV. Encourage dream group members to attend the annual dreamwork-and-Christianity conferences (above). It will help to educate and inspire them.

☐ Step 4: Repeat the Class (Step 2) Annually

- I. Church dream groups should always be open to new members.
- II. New members should not enter a dream group without some preparation. (It is almost impossible for someone who has no knowledge of Jungian psychology and terminology to keep up with what is going on.)

☐ The Haden Institute Dream Leaders Training Program

While not necessary, it can be of great benefit for dream group leaders to take this program (www.hadeninstitute.com). There is a lot to learn in the program and confidence to be gained. In addition, this respected course of study helps to strengthen a leader's legitimacy in the eyes of the church community.

AT EMMANUEL our approach to our dreamwork program is constantly amended as we discover through trial and error what works well and what does not. Do not be afraid to frame your approach to meet your own group's special needs.

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