



When the church is faced with unprecedented challenges, we have to get creative if we're to connect and thrive together. As we strive to be socially responsible and value the health of our community, our options for gathering are extremely limited. However, this does not mean Christ-centered community is no longer our goal. Sharing life still means more. That's the foundational idea behind Canopy.

The name "Canopy" comes from a natural phenomenon in forests known as "canopy shyness." This occurs when trees, usually of the same species, grow in such a way that they reduce the need to compete for sunlight or space. They do this by leaving room between the crowns of their canopies. Viewed from above, a forest looks like veins in a limb or little islands separated by rivulets because of this phenomenon--almost touching, growing out of interconnected root systems, yet leaving space for everyone to thrive.



This is our goal with Canopy. A canopy is a group of 10 to 12 people (or 4 to 5 family units) with whom you can share space in a comfortable, responsible, and socially distanced way. You may already have a group like this. If not, we can help you find one that fits your comfort level and needs.

Your canopy can meet as often as the group determines is helpful. We'd love for it to be weekly, but we understand schedules are still hectic even in this strange time. We believe it's better to meet at least once a month, as this will likely be your main source of connection with our larger Grandview family over the coming months, but do what works best with your schedule!

“What will my Canopy do?” Good question! The answer is, just like branches in a tree, there will be branches of options! You can discuss Sunday’s sermons, do a service project, host a craft time, read/discuss a book together, or just catch up on life. The beauty of your Canopy is that we want it to fit what your group needs. There is flexibility here!

We do not want this to seem like another burden or to-do list item. We want Canopy to be a thing that allows you to reconnect with God’s people and your community around you. Many of us have felt isolated from people we love. Much of that is unavoidable during this crisis, but if you can find a Canopy and commit to branching out and rooting down for the long haul, we believe that God has some incredible things in store for our Church family.

### ***Meeting Locations and Guidelines***

We want to help your canopy meet regularly. If your home isn’t a great location for folks to gather, we have a few options at our campuses:

#### **Buffalo Campus**

##### **Grandview Room**

A socially distanced gathering space has been set up in the Grandview room. We want this space to feel like a comfy living room, complete with couches, coffee tables, and soft lighting. Because of the size of the room, this space is perfect for groups with children (they can play board games, color, or watch a show on a tablet off to the side) or groups with folks who would feel more comfortable spaced more than 6 feet apart.

##### **Grandview Patio (upper parking lot)**

We’ve turned the covered drive-through in the upper lot into a patio of sorts. Chairs and couches with cushions and an outdoor rug make a great place for folks to sit and fellowship. Although sharing food isn’t a great idea, this would be a perfect place to chat over coffee or a bring-your-own picnic lunch.

#### **Cityview Campus**

##### **The Gallery**

Regardless of whether services are meeting in person, Grandview has this space reserved on Sundays until 1:00. Bring your favorite camping chair, a cup of coffee or even a sack lunch! No food sharing, but bringing food from home to eat while you talk is encouraged.

## ***Guidelines for Canopy Space Use***

In order to ensure that these spaces are well maintained and kept clean, we ask for some help with the following:

- These spaces **MUST** be reserved in advance by contacting the church office at 423-928-7866 or [office@grandviewchristian.org](mailto:office@grandviewchristian.org).
- Any food or drink trash needs to be taken to the dumpster. Our custodial staff is part-time and the trash isn't taken out every day. We also ask that no food or drinks (aside from water) be brought into the Grandview room.
- A mild bleach solution in a spray bottle along with paper towels will be available at both Buffalo campus locations. Please wipe down all surfaces before and after you use them. The solution is safe enough for a light spray on all cushions and pillows.

## ***Questions for Canopies to Consider***

In many ways, this Canopy will be our main social outlet in addition to our church family during the coming weeks. It's important for each Canopy member to feel Canopy should consider before agreeing to meet together.

- Do we feel comfortable meeting in person, or would we prefer a digital platform like Zoom?
- How often would we like to meet? NOTE: We are hoping Canopies will meet at least once a month, but more frequently would be preferred.
- Do you feel comfortable meeting in someone's home? Would you prefer to meet inside or outside? Would you like to use one of Grandview's locations?
- Take some time to talk through some specific needs for the folks in your group.
  - Are there children in the group? Do you feel comfortable with the children interacting with each other and the adults present?
  - Do the jobs and professions of your group members affect how comfortable you are getting together? (e.g., if someone works in a hospital, does this change how you feel about participating in a group with them? Maybe this means you only meet outside?)
- How "closed" do you want your group to be? As Christians, we don't want to be cliquish or exclusionary. This moment in history might make it much easier to invite folks to participate in the life of the church! That being said, how comfortable is your group with inviting someone new into you Canopy? Should you all talk about it before the invitation is made?

*We want to emphasize that Canopy will be successful ONLY if every member has the freedom to speak about their concerns and needs. In the same spirit, some of us may have to defer our own comfort to meet the needs of the group. If a Canopy member needs more consideration (ie: masks or distancing) because of their situation, please consider adjusting to meet these needs.*

## **Canopy FAQs**

### **Isn't this just a small group?**

Yes, but we're hoping it will become something more. During this pandemic, it's been difficult to plan ahead and be consistent. That said, we've noticed that most folks have begun to form small circles of people that they trust. These are the people you've let your kids play with or the person you call when you just *have* to talk with someone. Fellowship is essential to the Body of Christ, and this Canopy can act as a safe place to worship alongside others, talk about what is challenging you, or to just hang out!

### **Is my small group already a Canopy?**

Almost! The primary differences between a canopy and an existing small group are the meeting guidelines outlined in this document and the intentional conversations among Canopy members defining their expectations for the group, interactions outside the group, etc. If you would like meet with your existing small group using this format, please fill out the online registration form or email the church office to let us know.

### **How can I get plugged into a Canopy?**

[Click here to let us know that you're interested in joining a Canopy.](#) We'll be in touch soon to help you get started.

### **Our Canopy has room to grow! How can we welcome others into it?**

You are more than welcome, encouraged even, to invite folks to you Canopy. Just talk it over with your other Canopy members. Or, you can contact Grandview and we can pair you with someone looking for a group.

### **I don't like being a part of a group. Why should I even consider this?**

As much as we all like our alone time, no one is able to go through this experience alone. Fellowship is an essential part of the Christian life! Even if you're not the biggest extrovert, having the discipline to gather with other believers on a regular basis motivates and challenges us in our faith journey.

### **How do I start a group?**

[Click here to fill out a brief form](#) letting us know what kind of Canopy you'd like to host, and we'll get in touch with you!

### **What about my kids?**

We are encouraging families to join a Canopy together. This will help us continue intergenerational fellowship that has become a staple at Grandview. While we are in the "Red Zone" Crew456 and Youth small groups will not be gathering ([see our re:gathering plan for more information](#)). Although not the same as an age-specific small group, Canopies can provide a social outlet for children as well as their parents.

**How do I contact/ connect with my group?**

At your first gathering, commit to a consistent time to gather together. It can be weekly, biweekly, but probably should be more frequent than once a month. You can also take this time to decide how you want to communicate. Email? Texting? Maybe an app like GroupMe or WhatsApp? If you need some ideas or suggestions, we're happy to help!

**How does my Canopy reserve a space at Grandview?**

We have two spaces for you to reserve at the Buffalo Campus (one indoor, one outdoor) and one that may be reserved on Sundays at the Cityview Campus. To reserve one of these spaces, [click here to fill out an online form](#), or call the church office at 423-928-7866.

**Are we just going to study the Bible together?**

That's entirely up to your group! Each month, we will provide a list of activities that might interest your Canopy. These might include watching Sunday's service together and discussing sermon questions. We also have ideas for service opportunities around our community and ideas for fellowship. You can also come up with your own plan. We just ask that you heed guidelines and safety practices set up by the CDC and our state and local officials.