

WORSHIP

RELATIONSHIP

CONTENT

MISSION

East Cooper Baptist:

# COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERSHIP GUIDE



*"Taking the next step towards Jesus together."*



# The Purpose of Community Groups

The purpose of community groups at East Cooper is to help one another take the next step towards Jesus. The purpose of the Christian life is to experience more of Jesus and to become more like Jesus in our character and the habits and mission of our lives. The unique value of community groups is to provide a context which can help foster this growth: a context of loving, accepting, safe, but also honest, truth-speaking, and challenging relationships; where group members in these kinds of relationship together explore, discuss, and apply biblical content for the purpose of life transformation.

## The Value of Community Groups

1. They give us a place for the “one anothers”:
  - a. To love one another (1 John 4:7)
  - b. To pray for one another (Ephesians 6:18)
  - c. To welcome one another (Romans 15:7)
  - d. To bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)
  - e. To speak the truth to one another (Ephesians 4:15)
  - f. To confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)
  - g. To build one another up in the faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
2. They give us a place a place to genuinely know other Christians and to be known by other Christians in our local congregation.
3. They provide a place to be held accountable for living out our Christian lives (Hebrews 10:25).
4. They give us a place to develop multigenerational and/or mentoring relationships.
5. They give us people to partner with in the mission of our lives.



# The Four Elements of a Healthy Community Group

## 1. Worship: the fuel for our group's life and growth

- a. Worship is "focusing on and responding to God" (Donald Whitney)
- b. In small group life, though this could certainly include singing, this most likely looks like praying through and in response to the Scriptures together. (Note: this is different than either Bible study/discussion or praying for one another--things that many small groups do separately. Worship is the unique blend of responding to God's word together in prayer, praise, etc.)

## 2. Relationships: the means of our group's life and growth

- a. The relationships in our group, though they will certainly include social aspects and we will seek to enjoy one another and have fun together, are intended by the Lord to be means towards our spiritual growth.
- b. We aim for our groups to have these qualities in their relationships:
  - i. Affection: "love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor"
  - ii. Authenticity: "confess your sins to one another, that you may be healed"
  - iii. Accountability: "admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all"

## 3. Content: the focus of our group's life and growth

- a. No group can cover all of the Bible and every part of the Christian life, but each group should pursue content focusing on an aspect of our lives in Christ. This content should be intentionally chosen and should focus on life transformation.

## 4. Mission: the fruit our group's life and growth

- a. One of the goals of community groups is that our lives in Christ together would be so enriching, challenging, and transformative that we long and labor for others to know Christ.
- b. Practically, this means:
  - i. Groups regularly talk about and pray for non-Christians in their circles of influence
  - ii. Groups periodically take a break from regular meetings to serve and love non-Christians together



# The Four Roles of a Community Group Leader

## 1. Shepherd/Disciple-maker:

- a. The community group leader's *primary* role
- b. A community group leader is charged with knowing, caring for, and spiritually guiding the members of his or her community group. This means taking personal responsibility for the spiritual growth of your group members.
- c. Practically, this involves:
  - i. Giving priority to the members of your group in your prayers and free time
  - ii. Following up with any member who misses group without notifying you
  - iii. Being willing to press into difficult conversations and issues with group members
  - iv. Partnering with ECBC pastors and staff to meet spiritual needs in your group

## 2. Example:

- a. The community group leader's *essential* role
- b. A group will never rise above its leader: a community group leader must be the example of the kinds of relationships we practice in our small groups and the kind of lives we seek for group members to lead.
- c. Practically, this involves:
  - i. Being willing to "go first" in confessing sin, being vulnerable, inviting accountability, and asking for prayer
  - ii. Seeking to live a faithful life outside of group
  - iii. Leading by example in loving and welcoming difficult or different people into your group

## 3. Facilitator:

- a. The CG leader's *weekly* role
- b. A community group leader will be the primary discussion facilitator for his or her group
- c. Practically, this involves:
  - i. Planning and initiating group worship, discussion, and accountability
  - ii. Guiding the group through each week's content in a way that promotes mutual discovery and transformation
  - iii. Helping members with various levels of talkativeness/assertiveness participate effectively

## 4. Visionary:

- a. The CG leader's *long term* role
- b. A community group leader must ask questions like: "Where is my group spiritually? Where do we want to go? How are we going to get there?" They must not only work in their group (facilitating, shepherding, caring), but also work on their group (intentionally thinking and planning on how to help their group take the next step toward Jesus)
- c. Practically, this involves:
  - i. Choosing content that is most relevant to your group's spiritual maturity and availability
  - ii. Establishing structures and rhythms that will most help your group grow in particular areas of spiritual need



# Structures and Rhythm

It is very important to realize that as community group leaders, we can't create spiritual growth in our group. God must give the growth, He must work and enable us and our groups to have genuine worship, affectionate, authentic and accountable relationships, content that helps us grow, and a shared mission our group embraces.

But as the leaders of our groups we can plan and establish structures and rhythms for our groups that give opportunities for the Spirit to work in our groups in these ways. One of the main roles of a community group leader is to think intentionally about what structures and rhythms would most help our particular group take the next step towards Jesus together.

A small group structure is an intentional plan for what a regular group meeting looks like for the sake of growth. It includes things like: what we do first, how much time do we informally hang out, when do we pray, how will we pray, how long will we plan on discussing our content, will we set aside time for accountability, etc.

## Examples of Intentionally Structured Groups:

### 1. A Group Focusing on Content:

- a. Brief life updates, or a "fellowship question" (see page \_\_\_) (10-15 minutes)
- b. Group worship through reading and praying through a Psalm or other passage. (10-15 minutes)
- c. Content (45 minutes)
  - i. 10 minutes: Review and accountability of last week's material. (did you apply what we talked about? How? Wins/defeats?)
  - ii. 20 minutes: New Material, discussion, etc.
  - iii. 15 minutes: Application and accountability. (what are you going to do with this material this week? How can we hold each other to this?)
- d. Closing prayers (5 minutes)

### 2. A Group Focusing on (Affectionate, Authentic, and Accountable) Relationships:

- a. Group Worship through reading and praying through a psalm or other passage (10-15 minutes)
- b. Content (30 minutes)
  - i. Review/accountability/celebration of last week's material (5-10 minutes)
  - ii. This week's content and plans for application (15-20 minutes)
- c. Accountability Groups or "Fire Teams" (30-45 minutes)

- i. Large group will break up into several gender specific smaller groups made up of 3-4 people with the expressed purpose of accountability, confession of sin, and prayer for each other
- ii. These groups could do several fellowship and accountability questions or ask intentional questions based on the content of this week's group

## Group Rhythms

A small group *rhythm* is an intentional plan for how we will strategically arrange the months and semesters of our group for our groups growth. It specifically includes planning some intentional breaks from regular group meetings to pursue activities together that foster group growth.

### A couple of suggestions for group rhythms:

1. For a new group, or a group focusing on growing relationships: Once a month, replace a regular group meeting with dinner together focusing on getting deeper with each other: could be the whole group, guys/girls split, double dates if your group has couples, etc.
2. For a group working on praying/worshipping together: Have 3 regular meetings a month, and replace the first meeting each month with attending East Cooper's first Tuesday prayer.
3. For a group focusing on service and mission: once every two months, replace group with a hospitality event for a group members' neighbors, a service event. etc.





# Growing as a Leader

No matter how long or how well we have been leading, we all need and are called to make progress and grow as leaders of our groups and as followers of Jesus. If we're going to be examples to our group of a worshipping, relational, and missional life, we've got to grow ourselves in those areas. If we're going to have a vision for our group and facilitate our weekly discussions well, we will probably need some practical help and ongoing training.

**One of the best ways you can serve your group well is to seek to equip and grow yourself as a leader and as a follower of Jesus. Here are some options that are solid, time-effective, and focused on helping you grow as a leader:**

## 1. Watermark's Leadership Podcast and Equipping Podcast:

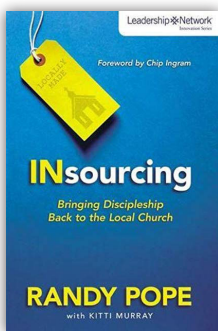


- a. Highlighted episodes: "How We Grow", and "Leading with a Limp"

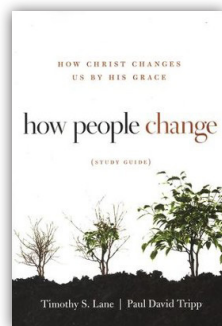
## 2. Rightnow Media Small Group Leader Training

## 3. Books:

- a. *Insourcing*



- b. *How People Change*



## 4. Lunches with Leland



# Things Every Community Group Leader Should Know

1. We offer on-campus groups (Wednesday night, childcare provided), and off campus groups (hosted in homes, groups must provide childcare themselves). Those who choose to participate in on-campus groups agree to periodically help with childcare.
2. Most groups meet on a weekly basis, usually for an hour and a half or longer.
3. Some groups may include a weekly meal but no group is required to provide a meal. Meals can be a great opportunity for fellowship, but we don't recommend having a meal every week unless your group is willing to meet for 2-3 hours. A better option might be to have one group meal a month.
4. Community group content can come from three sources:
  - a. Community Group Resources Page
  - b. Right Now Media
  - c. ECBC Sermons
5. Size is an important element to community groups. When your group reaches 12-15 people or more, we ask that you prayerfully consider multiplying.
6. Groups meet most of the year, taking a three-week break during Christmas and a 2-3 month break over the summer. Groups are encouraged to be intentional in pursuing relationship with each other in informal ways during these breaks.
7. Group leaders should intentionally delegate. They should seek to find and train people who can help facilitate discussion, people to coordinate fellowship and service outside of group time, at least one member who can facilitate in the leader's absence, and group members to meet whatever other needs may arise in group life.
8. The Community Group Pastor and Elders will build relationships with community group leaders, seek to encourage them spiritually, offer training, and partner with them with any spiritual issues that arise within the group.
9. People seeking a Community Group have the following options:
  - a. Viewing an online group finder
  - b. Signing up at the Community Group Table September 1st or 8th
10. The enlistment process for new group leaders includes an application and an interview process. This process helps establish a relationship between the church and the community group staff.
11. All Community group leaders and prospective leaders must be members of ECBC and agree to: church doctrinal statements, a deacon expectation document, and our statement on not serving or offering alcohol at church events.
12. Community Group Leader E-News will be regularly sent to your inbox containing training tips, surveys, highlights and additional information.

# Resources for Group Content

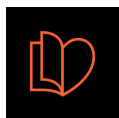
## Community Group Articles:

If you want to spend the first month of your community group this year talking about and working on your small group, we'll provide 4 articles that will help your group discuss and get on the same page about the purpose of community groups and you're hoping they look like as a leader.

## Praying the Bible:

Churchwide study, will be very helpful for your groups to learn to pray and worship together. One thing I want to mention here: this is a book that is extremely important to apply as you go. Maybe start by just praying for your discussion, discuss the chapter, and then *do what it says together*.

## New City Catechism:



Available in mobile app or as a book, comes with devotional material, Scripture, and prayer material that is short enough to be covered in 15-20 minutes. Perfect for a group that needs lighter, no-prep content, but still wants to explore major doctrines in the Scriptures. Also has a kids version--families with children could commit to exploring the NCC as a group and talking about/teaching the kids version to their children. Groups seeking a challenge could also memorize the questions each week.

## The Hoopla App:



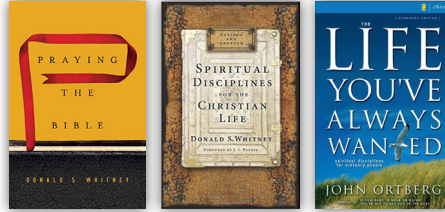
Almost all of the recommended books are available for free on the Hoopla app in audiobook or ebook format. All you need to use this incredible resource is a library card. Audiobooks in particular can be a very helpful solution if you have a group that doesn't ever seem to have time to read a book. You could have everyone have a hard copy of the book, but commit to, at the very least, listening to a chapter a week, and spending 5 minutes highlighting and circling things in the hard copy of the book, or spending 10-15 minutes journaling in response to what they've read.

**(Note:** the hoopla app is a library app with all sorts of genres and Christian books, and there are many books on this app we do not recommend for your small group's content. If you use Hoopla for your group, please limit the books you choose to what we've recommended or a book you have cleared with the community group leadership team).

## Books:

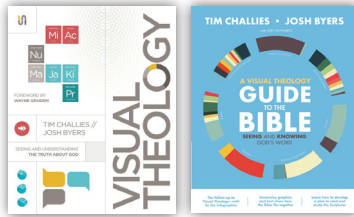
### On Worship and the Disciplines:

1. *Praying the Bible*, Don Whitney
2. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney
3. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, John Ortberg



### On Foundations for the Christian Life:

1. *Visual Theology*, Tim Challies
2. *A Visual Guide to the Bible*, Tim Challies



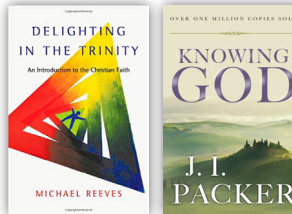
### On the Gospel and Evangelism:

1. *What is the Gospel?* Greg Gilbert
2. *Godspace*, Doug Polluck



### On the Character, Nature, and Doctrine of God:

1. *Delighting in the Trinity*, Michael Reeves
2. *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer



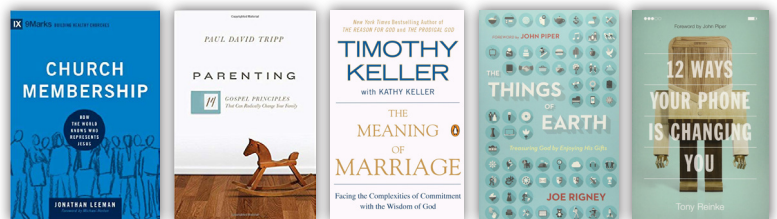
### On Growth and Getting Unstuck:

1. *How People Change*, Paul David Tripp
2. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, John Ortberg
3. *The Common Rule*, Justin Whitmel Early



### Other Relevant Topics:

- Church Membership*, Jonathan Leeman  
*Parenting*, Paul David Tripp  
*The Meaning of Marriage*, Tim Keller  
*The Things of Earth*, Joe Rigney  
*12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You*, Tony Reinke



### Christian Classics:

- Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan  
*Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis  
*Desiring God*, John Piper



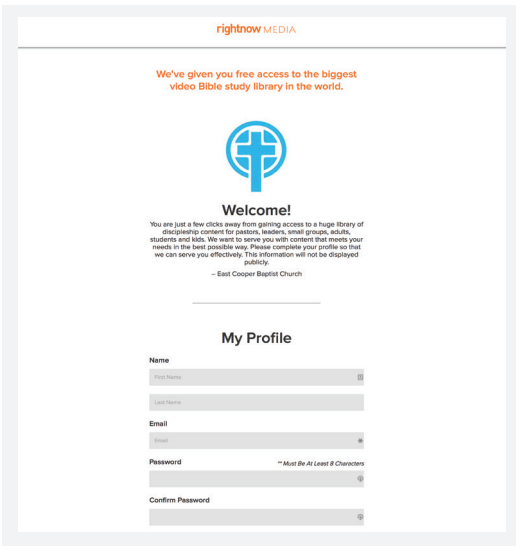


## rightnow MEDIA

If you would like to utilize rightnow MEDIA as your Community Group's study resource, here's a Quick Start guide to get going.

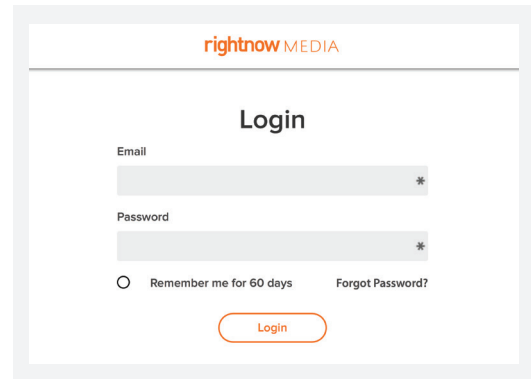
① Simply go to the RightNow Media page on our website under Resources.  
[eastcooperbaptist.com/rightnowmedia](http://eastcooperbaptist.com/rightnowmedia)

② Click the **GET STARTED** button and you will be taken to the registration page.



③ Create your profile, enter a password and you are ready to go. It's that simple!

④ Next time you log in, enter the email and password you used to register-then explore!



Once enrolled and logged-in to your rightnow MEDIA account, follow these steps to find the ECBC Community Group Bible Studies:

1. Visit [RightNowMedia.org](http://RightNowMedia.org) and Log-in
2. Under LIBRARIES on the left side of the page, click on EAST COOPER BAPTIST CHURCH
3. Scroll down to and click on COMMUNITY GROUP BIBLE STUDIES.

Here is the direct link: [www.rightnow.org/Content/CustomChannel/18357](http://www.rightnow.org/Content/CustomChannel/18357)

## ECBC Sunday Sermons

You have the option to take the Sunday sermon and go deeper. Helpful suggestions for studying the sermon are found on the ECBC website.

# Shepherding Resources

## Financial Needs:

ECBC's benevolence committee offers support to church members and non-members if sponsored by a member. Financial coaches are also available to help individuals or families get their finances in order. Contact Dave at [daveb@eastcooperbaptistchurch.com](mailto:daveb@eastcooperbaptistchurch.com).

## Grief:

Our 'GriefShare' class helps hurting individuals deal with the pain of loss. The 13-week course is offered each Sunday Morning during the Spring and Fall. Contact Carl Schooling for details about the next scheduled class at [carls@eastcooperbaptist.com](mailto:carls@eastcooperbaptist.com).

## Pregnancy Needs:

The Lowcountry Pregnancy Center provides counseling, supplies, programs, and medical care to those in unplanned pregnancy situations. Call the Lowcountry Pregnancy Center at 843-553-3505 or email [info@lowcountrypregnancycenter.com](mailto:info@lowcountrypregnancycenter.com).

## Re|engage, Marriage, and Family Counseling:

1. Re|engage is a marriage enrichment program that any couple can join at any time, no matter what condition their marriage is in. For more information contact Michelle Ravan at [micheller@eastcooperbaptist.com](mailto:micheller@eastcooperbaptist.com).
2. For counseling appointments, contact Carl Schooling, or Rose Anderson for counseling specifically for women. [carls@eastcooperbaptist.com](mailto:carls@eastcooperbaptist.com) or [rosea@eastcooperbaptist.com](mailto:rosea@eastcooperbaptist.com)
3. Additionally, Lowcountry Biblical Counseling Center is a ministry of licensed Biblical counselors offering support and counseling to those in need. Contact them at 843-278-0072 or [info@lcbcc.org](mailto:info@lcbcc.org)

## Extreme Emotional Needs/Suicide:

Lowcountry Biblical Counseling Center has an intensive Biblical counseling program for those facing extreme emotional needs. Call 843-278-0072 or [info@lcbcc.org](mailto:info@lcbcc.org).

In an Emergency dial 2-1-1, to reach the Trident United Way Hotline. Other phone numbers are:

North Charleston Hotline: 843-744-4357

Teen Help Line: 843-747-TEEN(8336)

SC Toll Free: 1-800-922-2283

SC Teen Toll Free: 1-800-273-8255

## Infertility:

Hannah's Heart is a ministry of prayer for those facing infertility. For more information contact Rebecca Dorrity at [rthomas224@yahoo.com](mailto:rthomas224@yahoo.com).

## Furniture:

If someone is in significant need or a crisis situation and needs furniture, contact Bob Tennyson at 843-697-0996, or [bob11954@comcast.net](mailto:bob11954@comcast.net).

## Unemployment:

ReStart is a ministry for the unemployed, under-employed & people in career transition, providing powerful tools to enhance their search for job. Contact Brad Reed at 843-697-1297 or [bwreed58@bellsouth.net](mailto:bwreed58@bellsouth.net).

# Fellowship and Accountability Questions

## Fellowship Questions:

1. What are the best and worst things that have happened to you since our last meeting? How did you respond to them?
2. What are you most excited about in the next month? Anything you are dreading?
3. Do you have any unusual burdens or troubles this week?
4. What is the last thing that stood out to you in the Scriptures, either in personal worship or corporate worship?
5. Where have you seen the Lord at work lately?
6. Give a 2-minute update on either your vocation or relational life. What is the Lord teaching you right now in that area of your life?
7. Any obvious answers to prayer recently?
8. What is the growth point in your life right now?
9. How is your inner/outer self from 1 to 10? What would move you one number up?

## Accountability Questions:

(With all of these questions, we need to do two things: first, allow for group members to genuinely feel and say--yes, this area of my life is ok at the moment. Second, when trouble and sin is confessed, to follow up our question with--what does change look like in the coming week, and how can we help you this week with that change?)

1. Have you spent adequate time in Bible reading and prayer this week?
2. Have you been meditating on and memorizing, and not just reading, Scripture?
3. Have you exposed yourself to any sexually explicit material, been inappropriate with someone of the opposite sex, or lived in lustful thoughts and attitudes this week?
4. Have you had unrepentant anger, fear, or lust this week?
5. How are you "taming the tongue"? Is there any unrepentant gossip, criticism, or grumbling in your life? Have you been using your tongue to praise and thank God?
6. Is there anything you aren't telling us? Any hidden or unconfessed sins in your life?
7. Have you been faithfully attending church? Are you serving in some capacity in the church?
8. Are you using your free time appropriately and "devoting yourself to good works" (Titus 3:15)?
9. Are you over indulging in entertainment, food, sleep, etc.?
10. Are you loving, serving and honoring your family (spouse, children, parents, etc.)? Are you neglecting any of them, withholding forgiveness, or failing to sacrificially love them?
11. Are you being faithful financially? Tithing? Staying on budget? Giving Generously?
12. When was the last time you engaged an unbeliever in a conversation about the Gospel? Any missed opportunities? Are you praying for unbelievers and opportunities to share?
13. Are there any significant relational sins in your life? Are you "striving for peace with everyone"? Any unreconciled conflict, unrepentant gossip, or withholding of forgiveness towards others?



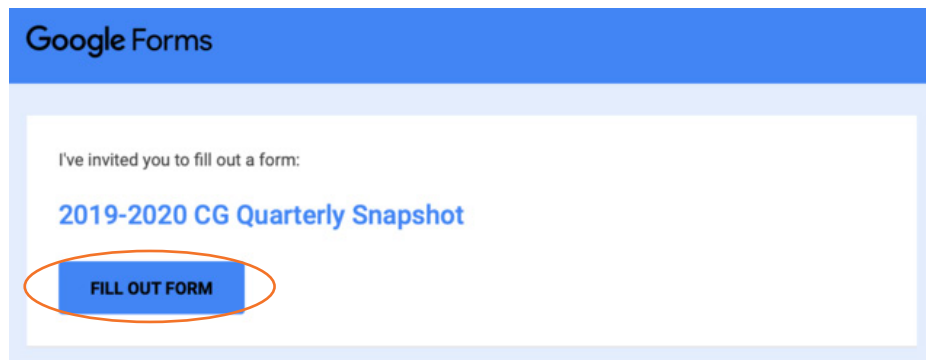
# The Community Group Snapshot

In the past, we have had community group leaders take weekly attendance in order to help us keep updated community group rosters and know of any members that weren't in regular fellowship so that we could shepherd and love well.

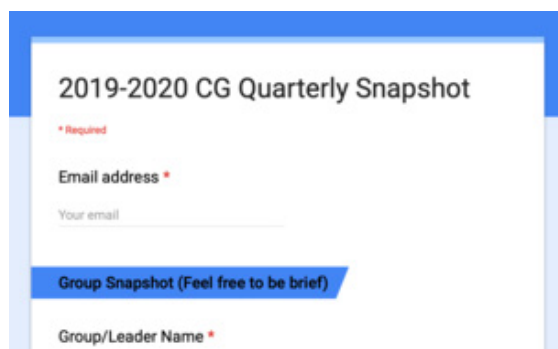
This year, we are going to continue to capture community group roster information and shepherd people, but we are going from weekly attendance to "snapshots"--short surveys that will be sent once every two months to leaders for roster updates, basic questions about the group's health, and basic questions about how you are doing as a leader.

These snapshots will be sent via Google Forms.

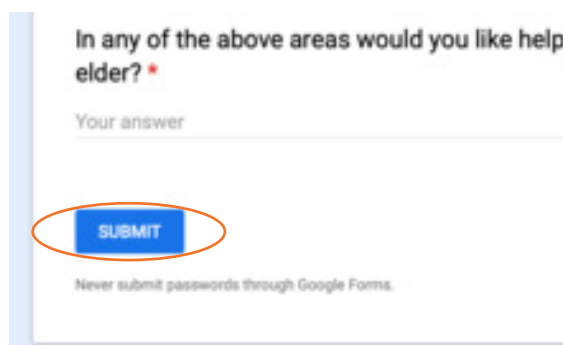
1. First, you will get an email inviting you to fill out a form.



2. The form will look similar to the image below and should open in your browser.



3. After you have filled out the form, click "SUBMIT" to send your Snapshot.



# CONTACT

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