

with
the Lord

{sōma} church

ALTAR MINISTRY

Training Guide

INTRODUCTION

Why is Altar Ministry important to SomaChurch?

- » Altar Ministry can easily function as a **“first touch”** ministry for both visitors and regular attendees of SomaChurch. Some people are more inclined to receive ministry at the altar before attending a PHYSIOLOGY Class or Group. To these individuals, Altar Ministry sets the standard for the type of ministry they will receive at SomaChurch.
- » SomaChurch greatly values **evangelism**. Altar Ministry is a great way to lead someone to Christ during our services and then connect people within the church for ongoing discipleship. Please use every opportunity to lead people to the Lord during Altar Ministry.
- » **Free People, Free People**. As God sets us free into healing and fullness of life, He works through us to minister to others. In Altar Ministry, we become conduits of God's love for His people.

What is required of an Altar Minister?

- » Altar Minister: Facilitates Prayer and Referral
 1. Prays with people at the altar according to their request.
 2. Refers people to follow-up care using the appropriate ministry tools.
 3. Adheres to Altar Ministry protocol and procedure.

ALTAR MINISTRY PRINCIPLES

- » Pray the Father's Heart.
- » Respect and Protect the Person Receiving Ministry.

What is the most important thing to know about SomaChurch Altar Ministry?

- » Altar Ministry must focus on God!

EXERCISE

“God is always” (List several attributes of God's unchanging nature)

How do we focus on God?

» Pray the Father's Heart!

Altar Ministers who focus on praying the Father's heart will avoid ministering out of their own strength, opinion or experience. When we pray the Father's heart for people, we keep the focus on God.

EXAMPLE

Person requests prayer: "I need a financial breakthrough."

- Focus is not on God: "Lord, please help this man to work harder so he can make more money."
- Focus is on God: "Thank You, Lord, that You are the source of this man's provision. You are faithful and good."

Why do we focus on God?

» This is how we care for people and glorify God!

1. Hurting people need to connect with God.

Many people coming for prayer feel scared, desperate and lost. Life's problems often keep people distracted or blind from God's presence, His love and His blessing. Our goal is to help people connect with God so they can freely receive His restoration and hope.

2. God is the source of healing.

The biggest obstacle to ministry is ME! We are often tempted to think people need to receive from our personal experience, spiritual knowledge or ministry ability. When we submit to God in true humility, He can more fully minister to His people.

How do we relate to people at SomaChurch Altar Ministry?

» Respect and protect the person receiving ministry!

In a loving environment, we create a safe place for vulnerability by offering the utmost respect to the person receiving care.

Respect and Protect Principle #1

Maintain Healthy Boundaries

EXERCISE

» See the person you are ministering to as a house.

When people come to you for prayer, they're inviting you into their personal space: family, finances, fears, failures. Leave your shoes at the door and humbly walk into the house when invited. The ministry is on their terms. This image will help you maintain healthy boundaries.

EXAMPLE

A respectful perspective:

"The person receiving ministry is inviting me (the Altar Minister) into their hurt, wound or trauma. God, give me the grace to be compassionate and sensitive as I intercede for this person."

When we stand in front of the altar at church, it feels like a spotlight. We're visible to all. We must turn our attention away from self and honor the person who is coming to us for prayer.

Always Pray, Never Counsel

People have different levels of comfort. They will address you at their particular comfort level. God will work through you to meet a person's need — it is not necessary to know intimate details.

1. Ask questions when you need clarity to understand the person's request.
2. Do not ask questions about a story's details. It's not necessary.
3. Do not transition into counseling or giving an opinion.

» Bottom Line: Pray the Father's Heart!

When we give our opinions or counsel people, let it serve as a warning sign that we have moved away from praying the Father's Heart! How can I guard myself against the temptation to move into giving counsel or advice?

» Always assume the best in others!

It's human nature to make assumptions about other people's problems based on our own experiences, theological persuasion, etc. These assumptions are typically motivated to address the "why" question. We instinctively ask ourselves, "Why is this person in this predicament?" The root cause of a problem is an exploration reserved for a setting more intimate than Altar Ministry.

EXERCISE

Woman requests prayer: "I need a physical healing."

- List three reasons people might assume she's ill.
-
-
-

EXERCISE

Man requests prayer: "My marriage is on the rocks."

- List three reasons people might assume his marriage is in trouble.
-
-
-

EXERCISE

Draw a giant "X" through the reasons you listed above. Learn to cancel out your assumptions about people's problems! Life is too complex for generalities.

» When we minister from our assumptions, we'll begin to counsel.

Counseling based on our assumptions hurts people! Challenge yourself to reject your assumptions about people and their problems.

» Resist the urge to “Preach/Pray”

*We must discipline ourselves to not bring our advice and opinions into our prayers. An Altar Minister should only ever **empathize** with the issue, **agree** with the person in prayer, **encourage** with The Word of God and **speak life and blessings** in the name of Jesus.*

Respect and Protect Principle #3

Help Others be Responsible for Their Relationship with God

» Hurting people gain hope when they believe that they, too, can hear God!

Altar Ministry is a wonderful time to encourage people to experience God's presence.

» Encourage people to hear God: Ask them, “What is God saying to you?”

Discerning Altar Ministers may easily identify areas of a person's life in need of ministry. Learn to be patient with each person's spiritual growth process. Rather than attempting to meet every perceived need, ask the person, “What is God saying to you?”

» Bottom Line: Pray the Father's Heart! People hear God.

Let them answer the question, “What is God's heart in this situation?” He might already be speaking to them.

» When people hear God, agree with them in prayer!

MINISTRY GUIDELINES

» Preparation

We minister to others out of the fullness of our relationship with God, and within the limits of our personal level of spiritual- emotional wellness:

1. Please maintain personal intimacy with the Father.
2. Please pursue spiritual-emotional health and wellness.
* When needed, please seek help from a pastor, mentor or friend.

» Delivery

1. The Basics

- Dress modestly and be well-groomed. Invest in breath mints! 😊
- Wear your Altar Ministry Name Tag.
- Respond immediately to the call to prayer.
- Disperse across the front of the auditorium where you can be easily identified.
- Avoid unnatural public behavior (spitting, screaming, blowing on people, etc.).
- Maintain an open and accepting posture.

2. Be Mindful of Surroundings

Be alert to signals that the Holy Spirit is moving upon a person. While concentrating on the individual, also be aware of your surroundings. Are they engaged? Stay alert to the situation by periodically opening your eyes.

3. Remain Conservative with Touch

- Ensure that you are not distracting or intrusive.
- Use personal discretion when using physical touch – regardless of gender. If you aren't sure what is appropriate, err on the side of conservative. A closed fist or flat hand resting on the side of an arm or shoulder might be more appropriate. This is largely applicable when praying with someone of the opposite sex.
- Avoid skin-to-skin contact when praying with opposite sex (when not shaking hands or anointing with oil). For example, a guy shouldn't rest his hand on a woman's bare shoulder, a woman shouldn't hold a man's bare forearm.
- Hold hands or lay hands gently on the shoulder or head. Do not push!! Use discretion as directed above. You never know what experiences or struggles the person has faced or is currently facing.
- Keep your hand(s) still. Avoid rubbing or patting people.

4. Use a Comforting Tone

Those who receive prayer need nurture and comfort. Maintain a calm, steady voice. Be aware that an aggressive tone may make a person feel nervous and unreceptive. Allow God's Spirit to flow through you in a natural, calming way.

5. Maintain Strict Confidentiality

Confidentiality builds trust. Personal information shared during Altar Ministry must be handled with discretion. Please do not share this information with others, outside of the necessary informing of pastoral staff.

6. Prioritize Follow-up and Referral

Be aware of the potential need for ongoing pastoral nurturing and Christian community. *Familiarize yourself with the various ministries of SomaChurch* where people can receive help. Give the individual the appropriate resources. Remember the person must contact the ministry themselves for follow-up and further help.

» Emergency and Crisis Situations

An emergency/crisis situation is one in which there is a threat of harm to self or another, such as:

- Threat of Suicide
- Spousal Abuse
- Child Abuse
- Elderly Abuse
- Sexual Assault
- Physical Assault
- Criminal Activity

If you encounter any of these areas, or another area indicating a threat of harm to self or others, immediately contact a Pastor. While acting immediately, please use a calm demeanor and maintain discretion. Pastors are trained to handle these situations.

Say something like: “Would you mind if I ask _____ to pray with us as well?”

» Referral and Follow-up Procedures:

1. Altar Ministry Card

Always have the individual complete a card for:

- Salvation
- Recommitment
- Baptism

2. Write your name and date on the Altar Ministry Card.

Stay with the individual until the card is completed. Leave the card on the Altar (supply basket) or hand deliver the card to a Pastor.

** Never use this card for counseling, benevolence or other personal requests.*

3. Safety

For your safety and well-being, please adhere to the following:

- Never take a person's personal information home with you.
- Use discretion - Email is the preferred way to share your personal information.

*** Exceptions apply to Soma Group Leaders who invite individuals to attend their group.**

TYPES OF PRAYER

» Anointing with Oil

Anointing oil is most commonly used for healing ministry and praying for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but you may anoint with oil as led by the Holy Spirit.

1. Ask permission before using anointing oil. Explain why and how you will use the oil.
2. Put a small drop of oil on your finger. Touch the person's forehead or hands.
3. Do not touch a person's clothes after you have placed oil on your hands.

» Salvation

When Jesus commands, "You must be born again," He is referring to our response to God's redemptive plan to give us a new nature in Christ. We receive this new birth by believing in Jesus Christ and surrendering our will Him.

1. Ask people if they have believed and received Jesus as Lord in their life. (Born Again)
2. If not, ask them if they would like to and if yes, have them pray a prayer of repentance for sin and acceptance of Christ, etc.
3. Have the individual complete an Altar Ministry Card.

» Prayers of Confession and Repentance

The Holy Spirit may convict people to repent of a specific or general sin. When God convicts people, He does so lovingly and with great compassion. If people confess a sin, please show great compassion as you lead them in prayers of repentance and renewal.

» Prophetic Prayers

If you believe you have a prophetic prayer for someone, please remember prophecy is intended to exhort and encourage. In Altar Ministry, we don't use prophetic ministry as a means for counseling or giving directive advice for the future. The following guidelines will help.

1. **Avoid** the following phrases:

- Thus saith the Lord ...
- God says ...
- The Lord wants you to know ...
- I believe the Lord wants you to ...

2. **Practice** the following phrases:

- I feel impressed to tell you ...
- I sense that God is saying...
- It seems like ...
- I believe you are about to...

» Physical Healing

Prayer for healing is a prayer of faith and trust in God's good character and nature. Assume the following when praying for healing:

1. Assume the pain or sickness is not a result of sin. Never address the situation as such; never "investigate" further.
2. Assume healing will occur in God's perfect timing. If the results are not immediate, encourage the person to trust in God.
3. If the person desires extended ministry, refer them to a Pastor.

» Marriage and Family

Families carry many complex dimensions. In prayer, it's important to be sensitive to the various dimensions within a family structure. For instance, family members have differing expectations and desires for one another. Many of these desires are based on opinion rather than scripture.

Be sure to pray the will of the Father, rather than the will of a person.

His is most easily identified when one member of the family has a desire for another family member that involves decision-making, i.e., decisions about whom to marry, where to move or what job to take.

» Forgiveness

Forgiveness is God's provision for releasing us from the power and pain of sins committed against us.

EXAMPLE

Prayer: "Dear Lord, I choose to forgive [name of the person] for [name of the offense]. But Father, when they did these things it made me feel [describe the effects of the sins]. Please take these emotions and effects from me and place them on the cross. Thank You for healing the effects of these sins in my soul."

Other common emotional needs include: insecurity, grief, regret, fear, etc. For these emotional needs, pray a prayer of exchange. Release the ungodly emotion and in turn bless the person with God's heart. **Invite the person to watch RISE UP! In Forgiveness from our Series RISE UP!**

» Finances

People experience financial strain for various reasons. For some, the situation is a result of bad habits and lack of education. Others are well-educated, highly proficient individuals who are experiencing a financial struggle due to uncontrollable circumstances. Please consider the following when praying for financial healing:

1. Never ask people if they are tithing. This is a diagnostic question, and we're not equipped to offer financial advice. This question also presumes that those who tithe are automatically free from financial hardship—true life is much more complex.
2. Pray God's blessing and ask for a financial breakthrough.
3. Encourage the people with God's love and faithful provision for life.
4. Refer the person to our Financial Stewardship Ministry. Do this with great care — finances are a very personal part of a person's life. Say something like: *"The church has resources available to help people grow in the area of handling finances. Is this something that would interest you?"*

The following are less common types of prayer, but they are key to the heart and theology of SomaChurch and team members should be prepared to respond in ministry should the following come up.

» **Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit empowers people to receive the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit and the ability to witness the gospel. In Altar Ministry, we guard against any prayer that would coerce or manipulate an individual in their experience of the Holy Spirit's presence. We do freely welcome and encourage people to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Ensure that the person has received salvation. This is a requirement before receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. Clarify the person's expectations and assumptions regarding Spirit Baptism. Talk with the individual if there is need for further understanding.
3. **Luke 11:13** reads, *"How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"* Instruct the person to ask the Father for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Explain that you will agree with them while they pray.
4. Ask the person for feedback on what they experienced during the prayer.
5. Together, ask the Lord, *"Is there anything else You want to do for me?"* and *"Is there anything else You want to do for this person?"*
6. Respond to God's direction through prayer.
7. Encourage the person that they will now grow in the Spirit's fruit and gifts.
8. Invite the person to listen to Soma's "Holy Spirit Reign" series and fill out a Ministry Card.

*** Be sure to watch 'The Power of Pentecost' from Summer 2023 Series "Live the Life" to learn more about spirit baptism.*

» **Praying in Tongues**

Please refrain from speaking in tongues if you cannot identify whether praying in tongues would confuse, distract or offend the person who is receiving ministry. When praying in tongues is appropriate, maintain an inconspicuous tone.

» **Prayers for People to Receive Their Holy Spirit Prayer Language**

When praying with people to receive their prayer language, be sure to refrain from the appearance of manipulation or control. Simply pray for the person to receive their prayer language or agree with them while they pray. Do not instruct people with "repeat after me." You may, however, ask them to join you while you pray in your prayer language. Be sure to invite the person to listen to SomaChurch's "Holy Spirit Reign – Speaking in Tongues".

{sōma} church

Altar Ministry FAQ Sheet

When will I be scheduled – is this something managed through Planning Center like other Pulse Teams? How frequently should I plan to be involved?

Whatever service you normally attend is the service that we ask you to be prepared to minister at. This would be each week you're in attendance, without formal scheduling requests.

Take-away → Don't wait to be asked – always be prepared and ready to minister.

EX: Joe attends 11A regularly. When it is time for Altar Ministry, he would come forward at any 11A service he is at and able to minister in.

NOTE: If for some reason, any given week is not a week that you feel you should be ministering – it is alright to step back for that given week.

When should I go & where should I go at the weekend service?

Each weekend service, Pastor Tony of whoever is preaching will invite the Altar Ministry team forward. ("We're going to pray, and our Prayer Team is going to be up here at the front...") At that point, get up and move to the front of the room. Stand facing the crowd, on the sides of the stage (not across the front). The goal is that when the pastor is done praying and says "amen..." the team is ready to go.

What do I do when I get up there?

Do stand engaged – looking about the room. We encourage eye contact. Ask the Lord who might need prayer and begin interceding in those moments.

Ex: Testimony of eye-contact and words of knowledge.

When will I be ready to pray with someone?

We are all a work in progress – none of us are perfect or perfectly ready. Our perfect God is working His perfect will through us, and we get to play a role. It's our responsibility to be ready – personally – to minister to others. Our ministry is an outflow of our personal devotion and prayer time with the Lord.

But...don't I need to get my kids!?

Our SomaKids volunteers are positions to keep kids for up to 15 minutes after service – so, don't rush out or avoid prayer times because you're worried about picking up your kids late. We've got time...but still - stay aware of time if things are going long!

What do I need to wear?

What you would normally wear to church is appropriate. We ask that you always carry with you your PRAYER TEAM name badge.

How many of us should be up there praying?

The goal is an even number of men and women – ideally 6 total. 4 is sufficient as well. If you notice or count more than 6, you may be okay to hold off on approaching. Couples – you don't need to pray in couples. Split up and attend to men and women as they come forward.

Can I pray with the other gender?

Yes – you're likely to be approached by someone of the opposite sex. You are allowed to pray with them. Follow the 'respect and protect' principles from the training guide for best practices.

What if someone I pray with requests a meeting with a Pastor, requests benevolence or needs counselling, etc.?

You can direct any and all requests/inquiries to info@somatyler.org. This should be your primary path of action. There are appropriate next steps that the team members can direct people to – groups, Equip classes, teaching series, etc.

What if I prayed with someone and it is a lot to process – can I debrief with a Pastor?

Of course! Don't hesitate to reach out to us if there is something you've encountered as a part of this ministry team that you need to process.

What all is planned for this Altar Ministry Team?

SomaChurch would ultimately like to offer pre-service prayer times in a specific location before each service. This would be a place where people can come before/between services to receive prayer and encouragement from trusted leaders.

There will also be ministry opportunities at various services like Men's/Women's Encounter services.

What if someone asks me how to join the Altar Ministry (prayer) team?

This does not currently function like other Soma Pulse Teams where members can sign up at any time. These positions are reserved for trusted leaders than have undergone training and have held leadership positions within the church for some time.

You can always direct anyone with questions to Joe@somatyler.org

Connect Groups



18/28 Young Adults Open
Thursday Nights



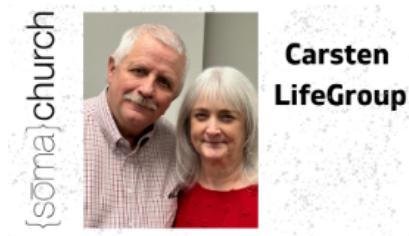
18/28 Young Marrieds Open
2nd & 4th Tuesdays 6:30-8:30P



Autry LifeGroup Open
2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30-8:30P



Beason LifeGroup Open
2nd & 4th Wednesdays 6:30-8P



Carsten LifeGroup Open
Every Other Tuesday 6-8pm



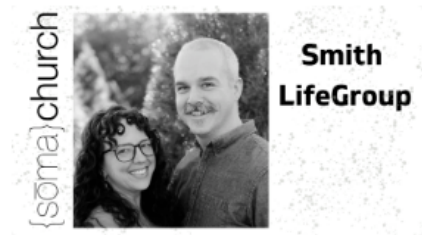
FSM (Fifth/Sixth Ministry) Open
Wednesdays 6:30-8P



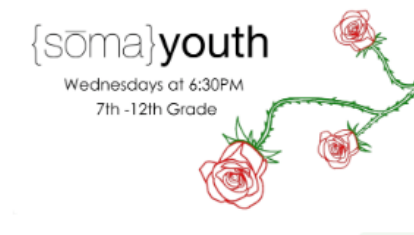
Men's Morning Coffee LifeGroup Open
Thursdays at 6A



Mom's Playdate Open
Meets every other week on Fridays from 9-10:30am



Smith LifeGroup (SATURDAY AFTER-SERVICE) Open
Saturday after-service; 1st & 3rd Weekends



Soma Youth Open
Wednesdays 6:30-8P



Tarver LifeGroup Open
Every Other Thursday from 6:30 - 8:30pm



Vintage Soma Open
4th Saturday of Every Month - AFTER SERVICE

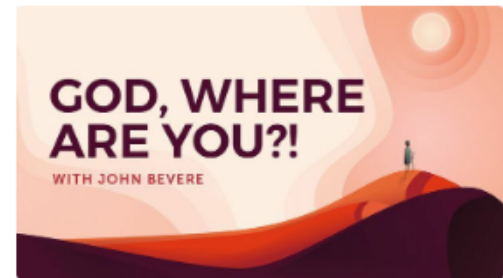
Grow Groups



Boot Camp: Tactics Open
2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30-8P



Faith Driven Entrepreneur Open
Monthly - 2nd Thursday @ 6:30A



God Where Are You? Open
2nd & 4th Mondays 6:30-8:30P

Grow Groups



Men's Morning Bible Study

Wednesdays 6:30A

Open



Women's Daytime Bible Study

Every Tuesday Morning 10am-12pm

Open

RESOURCES

- FREEDOM & DISCIPLESHIP 101 - www.somatyler.org/equip to access.
- Full EQUIP Library on ChurchCenter App - Teaching >> Equip Classes >> Recent Series >> View ALL.
 - The Good Fight - Spiritual Warfare
 - Tabernacle - Making Your Home A Dwelling Place for God
 - Freedom
 - Discipleship 101
 - The Fall Feasts (Israel)
 - Fight for the Family (Marriage & Family)
 - Sexual Purity
- APP has 2021 RISE UP sermons and 2022 Fortified.
- FREE RightNow Media - www.somatyler.org/rightnow

Calendar

FSM & SYM - Every Wednesday @ 6:3 - CHAPEL

18/28 - Every Thursday @ 6:30 - CHAPEL

Vintage - Every 4th SATURDAY after-service - CHAPEL

Requests

INFO@SOMATYLER.ORG

>> For any benevolence, counseling & pastoral meeting request.