Missionary Discipleship during Covid-19
Creating a parish facebook group.

If your parish has a facebook page and not a facebook group, you probably want to have both right now.
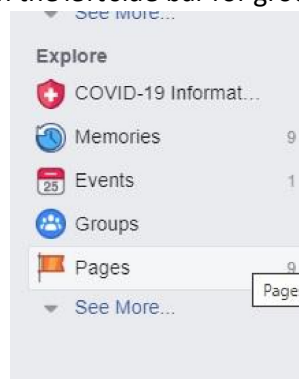
The differences? Facebook pages are public. Facebook groups are private. People can speak on those pages and the whole public does not see their words — although everyone in the group can.

Facebook groups can be ideal for matching who is able to give with who is in need, especially if parish staff are working remotely. Start posts about "Who needs grocery pickups? — and is there anyone able to go pick up groceries?" "Parents, how are you doing? Please share here. Let us pray for you and let's pray for each other!" "Who is ill and needs prayers for healing?" "Who is willing to call our homebound parishioners regularly?" "Is there a way to support our medical workers and first responders in this time? Let's brainstorm this."

This could be interspersed with other posts about available resources, prayer of the day, a pastor's reflection, more.

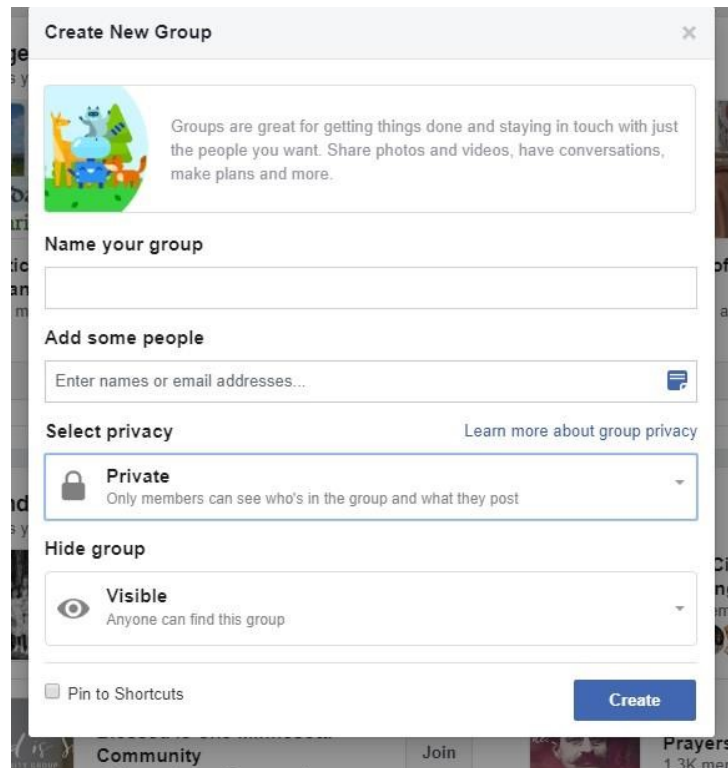How do you do this? Facebook is pretty straightforward on this, but here is how you do it.

1. You need a personal facebook account. The person who will be the administrator will create it. Additional administrators can be added later.
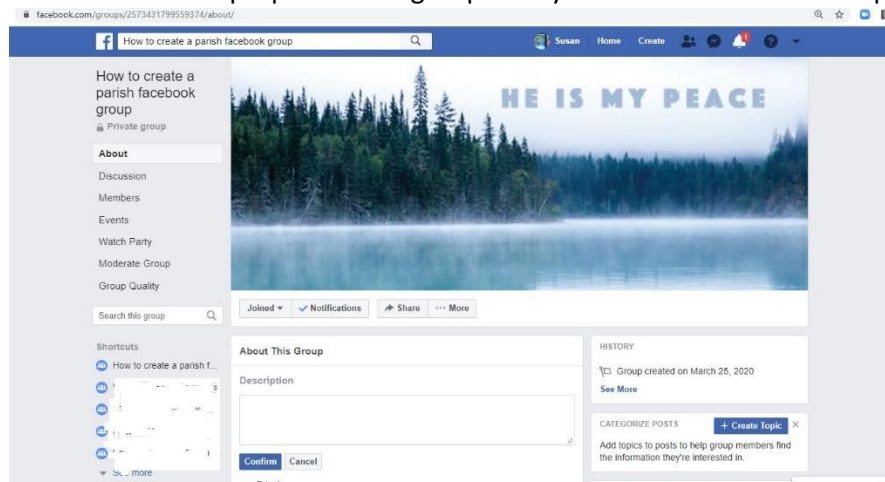2. Once you are on facebook, look on the left side bar for groups, and click on that:

3. That will take you to a page with a dark blue "create group" button (see below). Click on that.
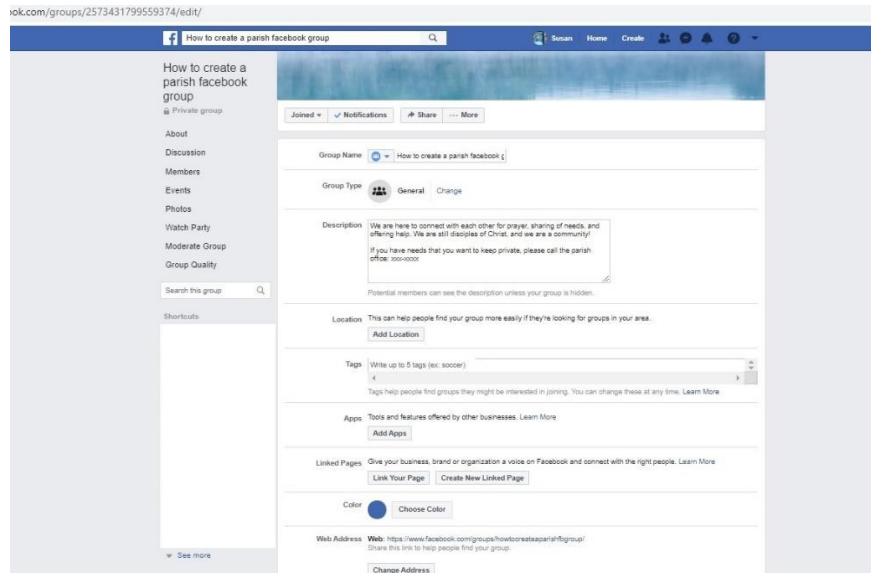
4. Now you have a few decisions to make. That pop up below will come up, and you should name your group ("Parish Name Support and Prayer Group" works). Add at least one person from your parish or staff who is on facebook. You could make the group public, but I would suggest making it private—so that only people inside the group can see the posts, and comments have some privacy. However, I would make the group visible, so people in your parish could find it. Finally, click "pin to shortcuts" to make life easier for you, and click "create."

5. Now that it is created, do a basic set-up. I named this group "How to create a parish facebook group"—and you see that now in the upper left. I added a facebook cover picture (which you can find online, I did; or use a picture from your parish) by going to that big picture and clicking upload photo. You can always change this later. Finally, I clicked on the left sidebar, the word "About"—and described the purpose of the group briefly in the box marked "description."

6. Next: See below and click on the "more" box, just under the facebook cover. The dropdown box will have "edit group settings." That will take you to the image below. The most important thing is create a web address (see bottom). It will be www.facebook.com/groups/ADDYOURNAMEHERE . Obviously, where I have ADDYOURNAMEHERE, type in something simple that you can tell people (parishnametownsupportgroup works). Then click "change address." It will take a few minutes for facebook to make the change visible. You can keep working.

7. **You now have all the basics in place**. Tell everyone in your parish by putting the facebook group address in an email, inviting them to join to support each other in spirit and in physical needs. Put it on the website. Put it on the parish facebook page and note that the group is private and for internal conversation and support. The administrator may need to allow requests to join in (which is easy, you'll get a note on your notifications and a button to click). Start with a post asking "how are we doing?" and go from there. You can also do photos and facebook live in your group.

A few tips going forward:

Be encouraging.

Be real.

If someone is upset or acting out, consider deleting the post/comment and calling that person. They need to talk.

If you need to do stronger moderation (that is, you're blocking lots of people, etc.), feel free to call me to ask how to do that. (507 858 5098 during this remote working time.) It is also in your best interest to get someone active in your parish who loves facebook as an editor or co-administrator on this—he/she may be willing to do most of the work.