Small Groups

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Connect Leader Guide

Our Heart, Vision + Purpose for Connect Groups

A place where people gather, connect and build life-giving friendships whilst being refreshed, encouraged, loved and discipled.

What are Connect Groups?

We believe that Connect groups are an expression of the local church, where during the week we gather together in small groups to outwork this very scripture.

> “ All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. **Acts 2:42 NLT**

Roles & Descriptions

Group Leaders

Takes the lead in facilitating and creating a space for people to come together to build life-giving relationships and friendships with one another in a safe, warm and inviting environment.

Read the Group Leader role description

Assistant Group Leaders

Assists and helps the Group Leader to create a space for people to come together to build life-giving relationships and friendships with one another in a safe, warm and inviting environment.

Read the Assistant Group Leader role description

What does a Small Group look like?

Start + finish times

Groups meet at least monthly across different locations, days and times. We value people’s time and commitment to being a part of a group and should ensure that we start and finish at the advertised and agreed times.

What can a night look like?

- Have tea, coffee and water available.
- People love to come around food.
  - For some people, this can make them feel settled and at ease.
  - There is no expectation to provide food, however you can encourage your group to bring something to share.
- Keep conversations flowing and uplifting.
  - At times, this may look like full group discussions or having a few conversations going at once.

- Take the opportunity to share about what God has been doing in your life or a personal revelation you've had from Sunday's message.

Example of a Small Group event

- 7:00pm - People arrive and are welcomed
- 7:10pm - Tea and coffee with casual conversation
- 7:45pm - Conversations around food in dining or lounge area
  - Based on a conversation starter from a Sunday sermon.
- 8:15pm - Take a moment to pray for the group.
- 8:30pm - Finish within the time stated

Some groups may have a moment of worship using a lyric video, or musicians from the group.

Creating Safe Environments

It's important that we steward the responsibility of leading a group by being deliberate in creating a safe environment for people to come into. Below are a few examples of what the space should and shouldn't look like.

A small group;

- is a place to connect and have fun over supper
- is a warm, welcoming and safe space.
- is a place to be encouraged & refreshed
- is a place to build relationships and friendships
- Mutually care for one another.
- is a community.
- prays for immediate prayer needs.
- is a space for reflecting on a scripture or a point from Sunday's message.
- is not a place for deep bible teaching
- is not a place for gossip/sharing other people's information.
- is not a place for giving advice or opinions to people's situations or circumstances.
- is not a place for me to guide and mentor my group.
- Is not for control or coercive practice

Prayer

We believe in a powerful God, and believe in the power of prayer. As something that we value, we should take time at our small groups to pray for any immediate prayer needs for our group members.

Group Dynamics

The people that make up your group have different backgrounds, nationalities and spiritual maturities. As Group Leaders and Assistants it's important for us to be aware of this, as it helps us to understand how people engage and connect with one another in group settings. Having an understanding of the group dynamics can help us to create a space that is safe, comfortable and welcoming for everyone to have the opportunity to build friendships.

Below are a few flags to look for if people are finding the space difficult due to their personality or background:

- Withdrawn
- Quiet & subdued
- Shy & hesitant
- Dominating conversations
- Unable to read the social cues / room.

Our role as Group Leaders and Assistants is to come alongside these people to help and guide in the space. This may look like purposefully connecting with them, bringing them into group conversations, steering the conversations, checking in with them outside of the group.

If you are wanting to catch up regarding coming alongside someone to help them navigate the connect space well. Feel free to make contact with the Department Pastor.

Ways to Build Relationships and Connect with People

- Share personal stories / testimonies
  - Great way to highlight important moments in people's walk with God and to celebrate together what God is doing.
- Complete a Bible reading plan together.
- Ask questions + Ice breaker questions
- Engage with them on Sundays - have coffee together, sit together in church.
- Grow your friendship by connecting during the week via sms/phone

Know Your Resources + Referral Process

If someone within your group is needing any of the following:

- Pastoral Support
- Practical support
- Any extra care and support

Please fill in a Pastoral Care Request Form. This can be found via the forms tab in the Team Portal.

Care within Small Groups

What level of care is expected of me?

A Group Leader and Assistant are not required or expected to provide any formal/pastoral care to the members of the group. It is our heart that we would see friendships and relationships form within the groups so organically you may be in touch with your group throughout the week (text messages, phone calls etc.)

How are people within groups being pastorally cared for?

We have a group of people dedicated to providing care and pastoral support to those within our church. You may at times be in contact with the care team to offer clarity/insight for the people within your group.

Outcomes

What can I expect to see as a result of Small Groups?

It is our heart that we would see friendships and relationships continue to form and grow outside of the night. That people would be active within their community of people and that their friendships would extend to during their week. (Catching up during the week, Sundays). That they would be mutually refreshed and encouraged by one another in the day to day of life.

Group Leader Role Description

Takes the lead in facilitating and creating a space for people to come together to build life-giving relationships and friendships with one another in a safe, warm and inviting environment.

A group leader;

- Is purposeful in creating conversations with all who attend the group
- Makes space for other members to talk
- Is welcoming, warm and friendly at all times.
- Finds common ground to connect with individuals (faith, interest, sports)
- Asks questions to engage and create conversations
  - How has your week been? What's your plans for the rest of the week? What did you get out of Sunday's message?
- Puts in effort to learn about the members of their group

Attributes of a group leader;

- Kind & caring
- Gentle & approachable
- Loves people
- Hospitable
- Brings people together
- Is on a journey of personal discipleship
- Able to make connection and find ways to connect with everyone
- Committed attender
- Points people to Jesus, not draws to themselves

What does a group leader do?

Before the event:

- Contacting the people within the group about the details of the connect.
  - Time, date, location
  - Sets the culture & atmosphere as people begin to arrive

During the event:

- Creating a warm & welcoming space for everyone
- Facilitates a space for people to build relationships and connect
- Connecting and caring with individuals at connect through conversations and topics of interest.
- Sets a culture of health in the way that communication and ensures appropriate conversations happen (uplifting and course correcting)
- Refers any deep/personal conversations for people to seek a pastoral appointment

After the event:

- Submit attendance report
- Debrief with the assistant group leader(s) about the night (wins & opportunities)
- Clean up and pack up
- A Group Leader isn't required to provide any formal care to the individuals outside of the connect group; however conversations and friendships that flow out of the connect are encouraged. (mutual refreshing)

Assistant Group Leader Role Description

Assists and helps the Group Leader to create a space for people to come together to build life-giving relationships and friendships with one another in a safe, warm and inviting environment.

Read the Assistant Group Leader role description

An Assistant Group Leader;

- Aids in creating conversations with all who attend the group.
- Makes space for other members to talk.
- Welcoming, warm and friendly at all times.
- Engages in conversation to help with keeping conversations flowing and uplifting.
- Assists in hosting people.
- Asks questions to engage and create conversations
  - How has your week been? What's your plans for the rest of the week? What did you get out of Sunday's message?

Attributes of an Assistant Group Leader;

- Kind & caring
- Gentle & approachable
- Loves and connects with people
- On a discipleship journey
- Able to connect with people within group
- Committed attender
- Points people to Jesus, not draws them to themselves

What does an Assistant Group Leader do?

Before the event & throughout the week

- Through conversations, encourages people to attend connect
  - eg. Asking, will I be seeing you at connect this week?

During the event

- Creates and engages in conversations with people.
- Assists the Group Leader during the night to help create a safe and inviting space for people to come into.
- Adds value and input into conversations
- Arrives early to help with set up and clean up after the event
- Builds relationships with members and helps people to connect

After the event

- Helps to pack and clean up after the event
- Debrief with the Group Leader about the night (wins & opportunities)