



LIFE GROUPS

LEADER MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

We believe life change happens best through authentic relationships because God created us to live in community with others. It is only then that we can experience the full life He intends for us.

VALUE: WE DO LIFE TOGETHER. LIFE CHANGE HAPPENS BEST THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS.



LIFE GROUPS PROVIDE THREE THINGS:

1. A place to _____ with others.

We were not made to do life alone. God created us for community, and Life Groups provide a place to connect with others, develop friendships, and grow in relationship with Jesus.

2. A place to _____ each other.

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words, or speech but with actions and truth."

1 JOHN 3:16-17

When we do life together, God uses relationships to bring support and encouragement into our lives. Life Groups become the place we are fully known, receiving support for our everyday life and spiritual growth.

3. A place to _____ together.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

PROVERBS 27:17

We believe every person was created by God to make a difference in this world. Life Groups create space to grow with others, become more like Jesus, and reach our God-given potential.

HOW LIFE GROUPS WORK

OUR GROUPS ARE “FREE MARKET”.

Life Groups are a great place to enjoy shared interests and activities with others. Playing sports, eating lunch, and discussing parenting challenges are just a few of the ways people connect. Our groups are as diverse as the individuals that belong to our church family.



OUR GROUPS RUN WITHIN THREE SEMESTERS.

Existing and new groups start and end three times a year to accommodate the changing seasons for individuals and families. We want to make it easy for everyone to find the right group for the right season in their life.

Spring Semester

February - May

Summer Semester

Mid June - July

Fall Semester

September - December

Being a Life Group leader provides an avenue to make disciples. As a church, we want to grow larger and smaller at the same time. The smaller the group setting, the greater the opportunity for spiritual growth (discipleship).

...go and make disciples of all nations...

MATHEW 28:19

OUR GROUPS ARE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS WE DO AT CREEKWOOD. AS A CHURCH, WE DO FOUR MAIN THINGS:

1. **Weekend Services**
2. **Discover Creekwood**
3. **Volunteering**
4. **Life Groups**

**YOUR LIFE GROUP IS ESSENTIAL IN FULFILLING
WHAT WE DO AT CREEKWOOD CHURCH.**

CREATE A PLACE TO CONNECT

Your Goal: To create an environment where people can find connection through authentic relationships.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the day approaching.

HEBREWS 10:24-25

MEETING TOGETHER = PROVIDING CONNECTION

You can't have a relationship with someone without spending time with that person - casual, unstructured time.

Jesus designed Christian community to be the place we find wholeness, a congruency between who we are in public and who we are in private. He wants us to live together honestly and transparently. Not so we can be resigned to our brokenness, but so that we can begin to grow out of it, becoming more and more like him.

COMMUNITY, STARTING WELL IN YOUR SMALL GROUP BY ANDY STANLEY

In our best relationships, we share all of ourselves, holding nothing back. In spite of our dark corners and hidden skeletons, we want to be fully known and accepted - loved - as we truly are. Building authentic relationships starts with putting God first, providing an intimate foundation. Healthy relationships with others flow outward from there.

KEYS TO PROVIDING CONNECTION

Just like our relationship with God, our relationships with one another must be built on trust.

1. The ingredients for that trust are _____ and _____.
2. Make _____ with people you do not know and invite them to your Life Group.
3. Have open _____ in your Life Group.
4. _____ with and for each other.
5. Have _____ together.
6. Text or call each other throughout the _____.
7. _____ together in a ministry or a Creekwood Outreach Group.

Questions to ask yourself about creating connection:

- Are people getting to know at least one more person?
- Are group members connecting outside of group time?
- Are people opening up with others more?



CREATE A PLACE TO CARE FOR EACH OTHER

Your Goal: To provide love and support for each member of your group when they experience significant change in their life.

As a Life Group leader, you help pastor the people of Creekwood. Providing support for those facing crisis, or a new life event such as the birth of a baby, adoption, etc., is one of the most important ways to care for each other.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

MATTHEW 25:37-40

Steps For Providing Care:

1. Call

- Make a personal phone call to let the individual know you are thinking about them, gather information, and pray with them. Ask questions to gather information with the goal of completing the Pastoral Care form below.

2. Meal Train (if needed)

- In some situations, providing short-term meals can be a great way of showing love. Specifically with births, medical procedures, and the death of an immediate family member.

Tip: Provide meals every other day for a short time period (1-2 weeks) to start. Time period can be extended at a later date if needed.

- Involve other group members to fill up the meal train.

3. Complete Pastoral Care Form

- Please keep our Pastors informed by completing a Pastoral Care form for all hospital visits, meal trains, births, funerals, severe illnesses, etc., which can be found on creekwoodchurch.com/ leaders.

CREATE A PLACE TO GROW

Your Goal: To help each person become a fully devoted follower of Jesus by taking their Next Step.

Your group members will be at different places in their spiritual walk, and each person will have a different Next Step to take. This may include attending Sunday service, reading the Bible daily, salvation, volunteering, beginning to tithe, attending Discover Creekwood, leading/hosting a Life Group, or inviting others to church.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

PROVERBS 27:17

**ONE PERSON SHARPENS
ANOTHER = GROW TOGETHER**

Essential habits for promoting personal and group member growth:

1. Bible Reading and Prayer

- Encourage people in your group to establish a regular time of connecting with God through Bible reading and prayer.

2. Godly Relationships

- A large part of us growing closer to God has to do with the encouragement and experiences we get from the Godly relationships in our lives.
- Encourage those in your group to take their Next Steps at Creekwood Church by going through our Discover Creekwood class, becoming a volunteer, and regularly attending weekend services.

3. Sharing Your Faith

- Inviting a friend to church or sharing your faith with them is what God uses to bring people to Jesus.



4. Living a Spirit-Led Life

- Having close relationships with others is only one part of God's plan for our lives. He desires to be our most intimate friend as we are led by Him daily.

5. Volunteer Together

- God will often use our skills and gifts to impact those around us. Serving together on a volunteer or outreach team is a great way to grow together.

Questions to ask yourself about growing together:

- Are people reading their Bible more and processing life through God's Word?
- Are people learning to pray and seek God more on a daily basis?
- Are people changing habits and lifestyles to be more like Jesus?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Your Goal: To help people grow in their leadership by serving in the church and our community.

Leadership development is Jesus' strategy for reaching our community, our nation, and our world. The more people that we can equip to lead Life Groups, the more people we can reach with the message of Jesus Christ.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

MATTHEW 9:36-37

WORKERS = LIFE GROUP LEADERS

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

RELIABLE PEOPLE = FUTURE LIFE GROUP LEADERS

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...

MATTHEW 28:19-20

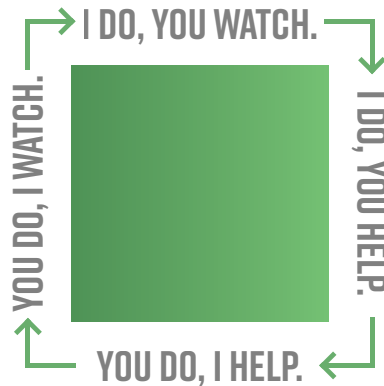
MAKE DISCIPLES = DEVELOP LEADERS

- Pray for God to speak to individuals in your group.
- Challenge your members to take their next step.
- Encourage spiritual growth.

Developing Leaders Myth: Our group has become so close and we don't want to lose that by having someone leave our group to start another Life Group.

Developing Leaders Truth: Your group was created for Kingdom Purposes. For the Kingdom to grow, groups must multiply.





Tips For Developing Leaders:

1. Teach & Delegate

- Teach potential leaders within your group to be responsible for different tasks and responsibilities. Have them lead the discussion for a week, oversee taking attendance, manage snack schedule, etc.

2. Let Them Lead

- After delegating responsibility, fight the urge to take it back. Just because something is done differently, doesn't mean it's wrong.

3. Release Them

- Once someone has proven they can lead, encourage them to take a step of faith into what God is calling them to do next. This may be hosting or leading their own Life Group, leading a volunteer team, or stepping into a leadership position outside of the church.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT DEVELOPING LEADERS

- Are people understanding that their mission is to make disciples?
- Are people engaged in serving others in our church and community?
- Are people more excited about using their time, talents, and gifts for God?



LIFE GROUP LEADER EXPECTATIONS

As a Life Group Leader, you help pastor the people of Creekwood Church.

Set _____ .

- Maintain appropriate boundaries with the opposite sex. One-on-one conversations that deal with emotional issues need to be facilitated by a leader or member of the same gender. This is very important for leaders who will lead a co-ed group.
- **Business conversations should take place outside the group. Fundraisers and business promotion should not be present in a Life Group setting.**

**PROTECT YOURSELF AND THE
PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE GROUP.**



your Life Group.

- We will promote Life Groups as a whole through the church and have your group on our website.
- Prayerfully consider who might be interested in joining your group. Extend an invite and make it easy for them to attend by providing times, location, and a warm welcome.
- It is not a requirement to attend Creekwood Church to join a Life Group. Include neighbors, friends, acquaintances in your own personal circles.
- Encourage attendees to also extend invites to others who would be interested in joining such as friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, etc.

Determine if _____ will be provided.

Childcare solutions:

- Have parents find a childcare solution (babysitter, relative, etc.) before attending the group. Most parents have a few childcare options.
- Have group members with children pitch in financially to hire a babysitter or two to watch kids during the group. If you choose to have a baby sitter, please fill out the childcare form found at the link here: creekwoodchurch.com/leaders
- **All babysitters, 18+ years old must have a background check (Cost of background check will be covered by Creekwood Church).**
- Set up a rotation among the couples in your group, making sure no couple has to babysit more than once or twice during the semester.

Have a child-friendly group where parents are encouraged to bring their children. This works best with mom groups that meet during the day and plan the group around activities for their kids.

Take _____ of your Life Group.

- Appendix 1 in the back of this manual will show you how to take attendance.
- Taking attendance helps us measure where we are as a church and helps us to know where we need to make adjustments.

_____ **with us and Life Group members.**

- Creekwood Staff and Life Group coaches will send important communication throughout the semester. Stay informed and reach out for support when needed.
- People will sign up for your group throughout the semester. Strive to respond and approve group membership within 24 hours.

TIPS FOR LEADING AN EFFECTIVE LIFE GROUP

1. Pray Together

- › Start or end each group meeting with prayer time. Ask for prayer requests and then pray over them as a group.
- › Involve group members by asking them to lead prayer time.

2. Eat Together

- › Encourage group members to bring snacks or drinks to the Life Group meeting by using a sign up sheet for the semester.
- › Involving others helps them take ownership in the group.

3. Have Fun Together

- › Christmas parties, attending community events, game nights, cookouts, pool parties, etc. are all great ways to help your group connect and have fun together.

4. Talk Together

- › Groups promote intimate environments where feelings and experiences are shared. Embrace the hard conversations and celebrate life victories with your group members.

5. Don't be afraid of silence

- › Twenty seconds might seem like an eternity when no one is answering a question, be willing to wait for the quieter person to speak up.
- › You may need to directly call on someone to involve everyone.

6. Serve Together

- › Serving together is one of the greatest ways to bond as a group.
- › As a group, join a weekend volunteer team, serve at a local non-profit or get involved in one of the Creekwood Outreach teams.

7. Meet Regularly

- › Set a day, time, and location. Please meet on that day, time, and location specified.
- › Nothing kills a Life Group quicker than meeting inconsistently.
- › Creating a consistent meeting time and location will help people build the group into their routine. You will see better attendance when you are consistent.
- › Have a co-leader that can step in to lead when you are unavailable. This is a great way for your group to still meet and build consistency when you are gone.
- › We understand that adjustments may need to be made every now and then. Let those instances be the exception, not the norm.
- › This is the main reason to have a co-leader. It allows the group to continue meeting if you cannot be there.

8. Start and _____ on time.

- › Be consistent on start and end times. This greatly helps those who have other commitments or have hired childcare.
- › It is normal for some people to stay and hang out after the group end. However, some may need to leave at the exact end time.



YOU'VE GOT THIS!

The Creekwood Community is amazing because of people like you who boldly take the next step on their faith journey. Thank you for opening up your heart, your home, and your schedule to make a way for God to speak into the lives of others.

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.
PROVERBS 3:5-6

ANSWER KEY

PAGE 6

1. Connect
2. Protect
3. Grow

PAGE 10

1. Time and Transparency
2. Conversation
3. Discussions
4. Pray
5. Fun
6. Week
7. Volunteer

PAGE 17

- Boundaries

PAGE 18

- Promote

PAGE 19

- Childcare
- Attendance
- Communicate

PAGE 21

- End

CREEKWOOD CHURCH VALUES

We Keep Jesus at the Center

We will keep the main thing the main thing.

We Saved a Seat For You

If people matter to God, they better matter to us.

We Do Life Together

Life change happens best through relationships.

We are Generous

We believe it is more blessed to give than to receive.

We Serve Always

We're never more like Christ than when we're serving the needs of others. We are contributors, not consumers.



CREEKWOOD LEADERSHIP VALUES

We Would Rather Be In Right Relationship Over Being Right

We will commit to put THE dream before MY dream. We will unapologetically weed out hidden agendas.

We Always Bring Our Best

How we do things says as much about God as what is said. Excellence honors God and inspires people.

We Develop and Empower Others

We are always working ourselves out of a job and looking for potential leaders to empower and equip.

We Feed Our Friendships

Community is just as important and valuable to our staff/volunteer culture as it is in our church culture.

We Close the Loop

Our team will only function as well as our communication is clear. We are intentional about bringing clarity, so we are all on the same page.

We Choose a Positive Attitude

Have the right attitude and stay positive at all times.

We Believe Healthy You = Healthy Us

We will commit ourselves to be physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthy. We can only bring our best to God and others when we are best leading ourselves.

APPENDIX I: INTRO TO CHURCH CENTER

Church Center will help you manage your group members, plan events, take attendance, message your group, and share resources. You can access church center through either an app on your phone or through a website.

LOGGING IN TO THE CHURCH CENTER APP

DOWNLOAD THE APP



- You can download the app by searching for it in your app store or by scanning this QR Code

SELECT YOUR CHURCH

- Click Get Started
- Select Search Manually
- Enter Creekwood Church and 76063 for the zip code
- Select Creekwood Church
- Click This Is My Church

LOG IN

- Enter your phone number
- Enter your verification code (The verification code will expire after two hours and can only be used to log in once.)
- Select your Profile

ACCESS YOUR GROUP

- Click "Groups" tab on the bottom right corner of the Church Center App home screen
- Select your group (If you lead or are a member of multiple groups, they will all be listed here. Make sure you choose the appropriate group.)

LOGGING IN TO THE CHURCH CENTER WEBSITE

VISIT WEBSITE



- You can visit our Church Center Website by visiting creekwoodchurch.churchcenter.com or by scanning this QR Code

LOGIN

- Enter your email or phone number
- Enter your password
- Select the login button



MANAGE GROUP MEMBERS

Group members are managed in Church Center. Anyone can request to join a group by viewing the directory at creekwoodchurch.com/lifegroups, or you can invite them directly to your group through Church Center.

INVITING A GROUP MEMBER

- Login to the Church Center app or the Church Center website
- Select the Members tab in the sidebar
- Select the Add a member button
- Scan to Join or Add by email or text
 - › Scan to Join - have the person you're inviting scan the QR code
 - › You will be able to send the person you're inviting a direct link to join your group

RECEIVING A REQUEST TO JOIN

- You will receive a notification when someone requests to join your group
- Click the notification to go directly to review the request

APPROVING A GROUP MEMBER

- In the Members tab, click Review Request
- The profile of the person requesting to join your group will appear
- Click Manage
- Click Add to group

(You may have to refresh the Members tab when receiving requests to join.)

MESSAGE GROUP MEMBERS

These messages can be used as group messages, to start discussions, or to post announcements.

SENDING A GROUP-WIDE MESSAGE

- Click Messages
- Click + New
- Enter a Title (Subject) and a Message (Body of Email)
- Select Allow Replies as applicable
- You can disallow replies to post announcements
- Click Send



MESSAGE EVENTS

These messages can be used as group messages, to start discussions, or to post announcements.

CREATING EVENTS

- Click Events
- Click + New or Actions
- Enter Event details
- To set up recurring events, click the drop down under Repeating and select the appropriate frequency
- To add a physical location, click the drop down under Address and choose from the list provided
- If your event is being held at a location not listed, please list the location in the Event description
- To add a virtual location, select Virtual and enter the website in the Link field
- Set a reminder when appropriate by clicking the drop down
- Click Save

EDITING AN EXISTING EVENT

- Click Events
- Select Event to be Edited
- Click the Ellipsis Menu
- Select Edit Event
- Make Change(s)
- Click Save



CANCELLING AN EVENT

- Click Events
- Select Event to be Cancelled
- Click the Ellipsis Menu
- Select Cancel Event
- Select Notify Members (if applicable)
- You can include a message with the cancellation notification
- Click Cancel Event or Cancel & Send

ADDING EVENTS TO YOUR CALENDAR

- You can link your group's event calendar to your personal calendar
- Click Events
- Click Actions
- Subscribe to Group Calendar
- Follow Instructions for Subscribing to Calendar
- This will vary based on your device, calendar app, and software

ATTENDANCE

TAKING ATTENDANCE

You can take attendance two minutes before an event starts.

- Click Events
- Click Take Attendance for the Event
- Select the person/people in attendance
- Click Submit



ADDING A VISITOR TO YOUR ATTENDANCE

To add a new guest to your group, you must have them join your group.

- Invite them to join your group
 - › Click Members
 - › Click Add
 - › Scan to Join or Add by email or text
 - Scan to Join - have the person you're inviting scan the QR code
 - You will be able to send the person you're inviting a direct link them to join your group
- Approve their request to join
 - › You will receive a notification when someone requests to join your group
 - › Click the notification to go directly to review the request
 - › OR In the Members tab, click Review Request
 - You can also review directly from a notification
 - › The profile of the person requesting to join your group will appear
 - › Click Manage
 - › Click Add to group

** You may have to refresh or move out of the Members tab and back in for the Member list to update when receiving requests to join. **
- Mark them in attendance
 - › Select the person/people in attendance
 - › Click Submit

SHARING RESOURCES

You can add files including pdfs, Word documents, text files, small image files, small video files, or websites to share with your group. Resources must be added from the Planning Center Website.

SHARING A DOCUMENT OR FILE

- Log in to Planning Center
- Make sure groups is selected in the top left corner
- Select your Group
- Click Resources on the left side of the screen
- Click Add a Group Resource
- Click Choose File
- Navigate to File to Upload and Open
- Enter Resource Name, Description, and Visibility
- Resources can be shared with Leaders only or with all Members
- Click Save

SHARING A WEBSITE

- Log in to Planning Center
- Make sure groups is selected in the top left corner
- Select your Group
- Click Resources on the left side of the screen
- Click Add a Group Resource
- Click URL Link
- Add the Website in the Link field
- Enter Resource Name, Description, and Visibility
 - › Resources can be shared with Leaders only or with all Members
- Click Save

APPENDIX 2: HOW TO GROW YOUR LIFE GROUP

ABUSE POLICY

I understand that Creekwood Church is a safe place for children and vulnerable adults. Creekwood complies with all Federal and State laws regarding reporting suspected child abuse. As a member of the Volunteer Team, I understand that suspected abuse is to be reported to the staff member who oversees the area in which I serve within 24-48 hours. I also understand the four types of abuse defined below:

- **Physical:** a physical act directed at a child or vulnerable adult that causes injury.
- **Sexual:** contact or interactions between a child and an adult, or another child, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This includes exploitation through photographs, videos, or other communication methods.
- **Emotional:** acts or omissions by the parent or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders.
- **Neglect:** failure to provide for the child or vulnerable adult's basic needs. This includes adequate adult supervision, medical attention, housing, food, and clothing. Most cases of physical neglect involve inadequate adult supervision that has caused harm to the child or vulnerable adult or places them in danger of such harm.

I understand it is not my responsibility to investigate and in no instance will I confront a parent or caregiver if abuse is suspected. As a member of the Volunteer Team, I agree to comply with this policy and will report any suspected abuse to the staff ministry leader/Pastor who oversees the area in which I serve.

Staff Ministry Leader Name

Phone #

HONOR CODE

Mission: To lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

As a volunteer and an essential part of our team, you become a representative of God and our church family.

All volunteers are required to:

- Agree with the mission and values of Creekwood.
- Complete and be consistently involved in the Next Steps of Creekwood (Weekend Services, Growth Track, Life Groups and Volunteering).

As Christ-followers, the way we present ourselves to others is of vital importance to the way others perceive Jesus. Our conduct should never be an embarrassment to Christ. We should exemplify the qualities of a mature believer.

As a mature believer you should:

- Have a consistent discipline of Bible reading, prayer, worship, and fasting.
- Lead by example and demonstrate biblical standards in all situations.
- Be humble, have a teachable heart and a positive attitude.
- Be a team player by effectively communicating with your team and leaders at all times.
- Approach relational conflict in a biblical manner with the goal of always maintaining unity.
- Show optimism in difficult and challenging situations by not focusing on problems but solutions.
- Abstain from anything immoral, illegal, or prohibited by scripture.
- Not post comments or images that are contrary to the cause of Christ.
- Not solicit other members for the purpose of personal financial gain or investment opportunities.
- Be dependable and punctual by arriving before your scheduled time.
- Regularly attend weekend services.
- Not have or consume alcoholic beverages, drugs or tobacco products at any life group gatherings.

#CREEKWOODLG