

LIFE Group Plan

We believe that becoming a church of small groups is a very effective way to be the 1st Century Church in the 21st Century.

Purpose

The purpose of the LIFE Group ministry is to promote the spiritual formation of members and friends through small group Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. That means we are constantly forming groups who are:

- *Loving* ... praying for, supporting, and loving one another.
- *Involved* ... in one another's lives and in the congregation.
- *Faith-focused* ... richer prayer, stronger devotion to God, following the Scriptures.
- *Expanding* ... adding new members, cultivating new leaders, and birthing new groups.

Monthly Schedule

1st Sunday - LIFE Groups at various homes and times

2nd Sunday - LIFE Groups at various homes and times

3rd Sunday - LIFE Groups at various homes and times

4th Sunday - Celebrate! Whole Congregation Fellowship Meal followed by a 12:30 Devo

5th Sunday - Family and Friends Night

The Plan

- Our Sunday morning schedule remains typical of many churches: Bible classes followed by a worship assembly.
- We do not have an assembly at the building on Sunday evenings. All of our members are encouraged to be in LIFE Groups on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sundays, and to attend a congregational fellowship meal and devotional and be involved in some form of ministry on the 4th Sunday. We don't want to be a church that "does small groups." We want to be a church "of small groups." That means that much of our ministry will be done through our LIFE Groups. It also means that Sunday evening LIFE Group meetings must have scheduling priority over all other Church activities.
- Wednesday evening remains the same.

Pulpit-Based

Our LIFE Groups will be pulpit-based. Simply put, that means the LIFE Groups study in depth the same material as presented in the Sunday morning sermon. Study guides will be prepared and distributed to the group leaders and members before each LIFE Group meeting.

This approach has several advantages:

- It eliminates the struggle of group leaders to come up with something to study.
- It helps make the Sunday sermon come alive in the lives of members. Application in LIFE Group meetings of verses studied on Sunday morning will contribute to true life-transformation.
- It eliminates the worry of not knowing what is going on in the various groups.

What a Typical Group Meeting Looks Like:

A Life Group meeting will last 60-75 minutes (plus fellowship time) and will typically include the following elements:

1. Singing (Approximately 10 minutes)
2. Discussion of text/sermon points (15 minutes)
3. Sharing/Application of lesson (25-30 minutes)
4. Collection of prayer requests and prayer (15 minutes)—prayer time could be together (led by the men), or sometimes it could be with men and women separated.
5. Together time—Depending on the group, there could be no food served, a light snack served or a light supper (sandwiches, soup or other easy to prepare food). Other groups might choose to eat lunch together after the morning service and then meet in the afternoon for their group meeting.

Formation and Duration of the Groups:

- In May, September, and January, sign up sheets are posted for members to select their group. Group members will not be assigned. Everyone is free to choose where they participate.
- Group size will initially be limited to about 12-15 adults.
- Groups will meet on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sundays of each month.
- Groups will have a leader, and an assistant leader. Assistant leaders are expected to eventually lead a group of their own. Assistants substitute for the leader when he is not available.
- At the end of each 3 month session, the congregation will gather to celebrate and evaluate LIFE Groups. New groups may need to be formed, and others transformed.

Leader Selection and Training:

- No one will be allowed to lead or co-lead a group without going through our LIFE Group leadership training class. *No Exceptions.*
- All leaders must be approved by the elders and/or the LIFE Group coordinator.
- At least one group leader from each group is expected to attend a LIFE Group leaders meeting. These meetings will be held twice a session. This is a part of the commitment each group leader will need to make. This meeting will be crucial to the success of LIFE Groups.

- These training sessions will include:
 - Celebrating victories and discussing problems.
 - Reviewing a list of new members to be sure they are in a group and making sure a couple of group leaders are inviting new members who are not in groups to join theirs.
 - Additional training for group leaders.
 - Prayer for groups.
 - Keeping the vision of what groups can do for our congregation in front of the leaders.

Questions and Answers:

1. Q: Is this scriptural?

A: Absolutely! The early church met “in the temple courts and from house to house.” (Acts 5:42; see also Acts 2:46; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2; Colossians 4:15). Meeting together and in homes is closer to what the First Century Church actually did than what we currently do. Instead of the latest fad, our desire is to bring back the New Testament model for the church.

2. Q: What about control? How will the elders know what’s going on in each group?

A: By carefully selecting and training leaders, we will have group leaders in which we can have confidence. Additionally, every LIFE Group will be studying the same material based on that Sunday morning’s sermon. Leaders will be using the same study guides and leading the discussion of the same Bible passages and topics. Third, elders will visit different LIFE Groups to provide guidance and oversight. Finally, group leaders are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to their team leader, to the LIFE Groups coordinator, or directly to the elders.

3. Q: What about the Lord’s Supper on Sunday night?

A: We will make sure the elements of the Lord’s Supper are available at the Church building each Sunday night along with the group that meets there. Also, every group will be provided elements of the Lord’s Supper for the members who could not attend morning service.

4. Q: What will we do with the kids?

A. Groups with kids will have a children’s coordinator. The children’s coordinator does not do all the teaching of the children. He or she simply ensures that one of the group members is assigned for each week and has sufficient resources to teach. The church will be providing a curriculum for all groups with children to follow. All groups will follow the same schedule for children’s teaching, so that if a family with children moves from one group to another, the child’s learning within the group will not be interrupted.

5. Q: Will these groups meet in the same homes each week?

A: Maybe. Each group may want to rotate among two or three homes. For consistency (so everyone knows where you are meeting each week), we suggest that you meet in the same home for one month before moving to another home the next month. However, as long as the church office is kept informed (so we can publish meeting sites each week), meeting places can rotate as desired by the group.

6. Q: You mentioned fellowship. Does that mean we’ll eat at every meeting?

A: That is up to each individual group. We anticipate that for some groups eating together will

become an integral part of their meeting. Others will probably choose not to share a meal. In groups that choose to eat together each meeting, a food coordinator would be designated to coordinate the food (not provide it, just coordinate it).