Group Leader Handbook

Thank you, leader.

The step you decided to take to lead a group is one of the most important decisions you'll make for both yourself and those in your group. Here's why.

As a leader, you:

Grow spiritually. *We grow spiritually by connecting relationally. A growing leader chooses discipline in his or her own faith and course corrects when things feel stagnant. This will in turn allow the leader to disciple others.*

Cultivate community. *A relational leader leads to a close-knit group. True, biblical community happens when the leader encourages intentional conversation, serving together, and having tons of fun!*

Promote participation. *Vulnerable participation is key to a successful group. A group that shares equally grows exponentially. A listening leader helps the quietest of participants share openly while guiding others to be attentive.*

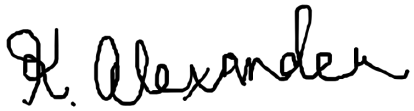
Serve others. *A servant leader shows up to group always thinking of ways to serve. They challenge their group to serve both their families and within the church in the various ways they are called. They also lead and participate in Life Group Serves regularly to both love the community and grow relationally with each other.*

Provide care. *We all go through difficult seasons in life. A shepherding leader cares deeply and shares truth in love. He or she knows which situations to face as a group and when to help the participant choose a Care Group or other situation-specific environment to receive greater care.*

Apprentice others. *Part of leadership is seeing it in other people. Each leader will have an apprentice to mentor, disciple, and guide into their full leadership potential with the goal of sending them off to lead the following year. This is not simply to multiply groups it is to help the apprentice become more like Jesus. A leader who develops leaders.*

*In Acts 20:28 we read, "***Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.***" While this letter was written to elders of the early church, it applies to us today. As a group leader you have a flock, your group. You must guard both yourself and your group by staying in tune with the Holy Spirit and relying on our Good Shepherd. When you're healthy spiritually, the group will be too.*

My challenge to you as we enter into this semester of groups is to remain in Jesus, model vulnerability, and be honest when you don't know the answer. That's why you have your amazing Coach or Lead! I'm proud of you for taking this step. You were called for such a time as this. Now let's go make disciples.



Kate Alexander
Groups Strategist

Life Group Flywheel

The Life Group Flywheel represents the continuous cycle of spiritual growth and community development. Each stage builds upon the previous one, creating momentum for transformation and multiplication.

The Five Stages

Stage	Description
Connection	*Building authentic relationships and welcoming new members into community*
Growth	*Deepening faith through Bible study, prayer, and spiritual disciplines*
Accountability	*Supporting one another in living out faith commitments and goals*
Serving	*Using gifts and talents to serve the church and community together*
Multiplication	*Launching new groups and developing new leaders to expand impact*

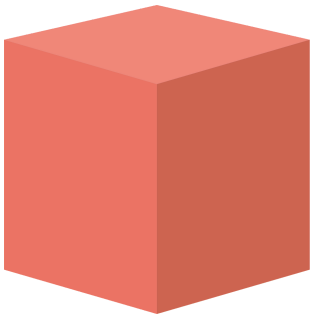
This continuous cycle ensures that every member experiences transformation while creating space for new people to join the journey.

What Is An Apprentice?

Definition of a Group Apprentice | *Someone who has said "yes" to becoming a group leader through a process of receiving training and discipleship from their own leader.*

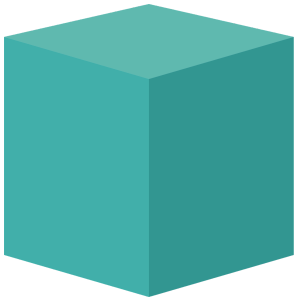
A Group Apprentice must be intentionally seeking Christ, actively involved in groups, and have a heart for leading others to do the same.

Building Blocks of Group Leadership



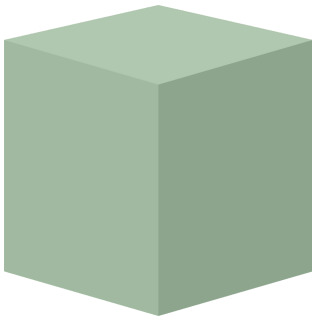
Block 1 | Group Participant

The leader notices the participant is showing up each week, engaging in the discussion, and building relationships with fellow members of the group. The leader has a conversation to see if the participant would be interested in training as their apprentice. This entails going through the leader trainings and taking on more responsibility in group, such as leading the discussion some weeks. It may even look like being in hard conversations with others and seeing how the leader handles those talks.



Block 2 | Group Apprentice

Once the participant says yes to becoming an apprentice, the leader training begins. They are not a co-leader, but rather are there to be mentored by the leader, both personally and as a leader. Although the leader's job is to disciple all of the group participants, they are especially interested in the discipleship and development of the apprentice, going above and beyond for them. In turn, the apprentice helps disciple the other participants. The intention is clear: as an apprentice, their goal is to complete training and launch their own group the following semester or year. They can also take on shorter-term leadership roles like Community Groups or 40 Days Groups.



Block 3 | Group Leader

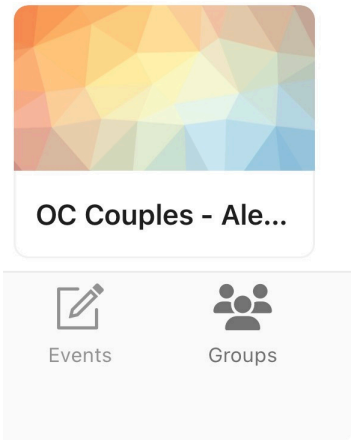
Once the apprentice and leader feel ready, whether that be the following semester or following year, it's time for that apprentice to step into the role of a leader! This is how multiplication happens. This is how we make room for new group participants to be discipled.

How to use the Church Center App for Groups

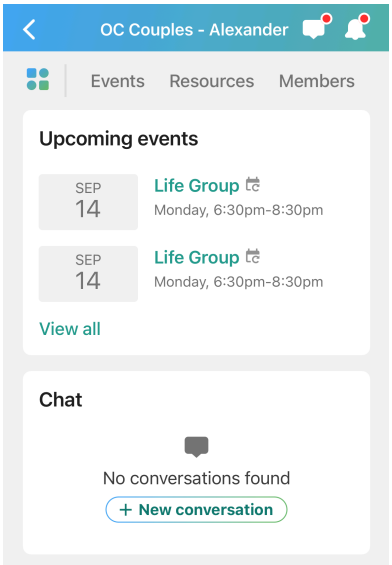
Step 1: Download the Church Center App

church center

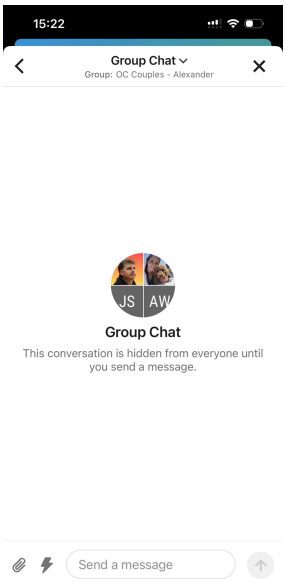
Step 2: Open the app and click the "Groups" tab. You should see your own group listed on this tab. Click to open your group.



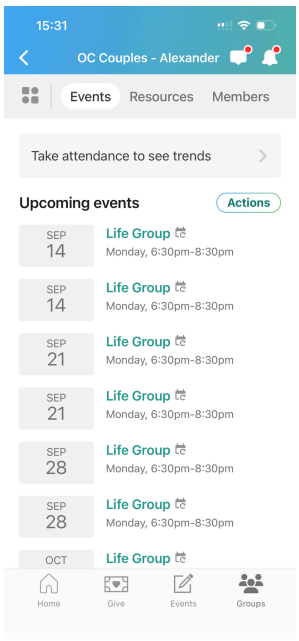
Step 3a: The group will open to this screen. If you have never started a chat before, click the "New conversation" button. (Note: only leaders can start conversations)



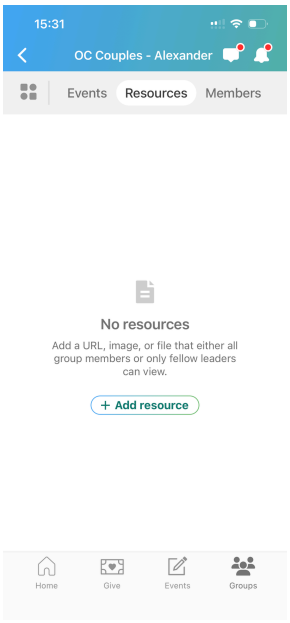
Step 3b: If you have already started a chat, click on the conversation button at the top right of the screen. to find your chat.



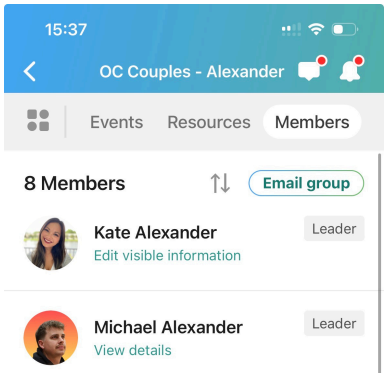
Step 4: Click the "Events" tab. On this tab you'll see a list of all upcoming Life Group days. This is also where you'll be able to take attendance. A prompt will open to take attendance at the top of the page.



Step 5: Open the "Resources" tab. This is where you can add any study materials or other resources for your group as needed.



Step 6: Open the "Members" tab. This is where you'll be able to see who is in your group. Once GroupLink begins, this is where you'll be able to review and approve requests to join your group.



If you have any issues using the Church Center app, please contact your Coach or Lead.

Leader Scenarios

In this section, we'll practice some scenarios you may run into as a Groups Leader. Although it can be awkward to play the role you're given at first, it's important to practice so when the time comes you already have some tools and feedback in your leader toolbelt.

To Start: Get in groups of 3 or 4. You'll each take turns practicing each role and giving feedback to the other leaders in your group.

Scenario 1: *A member of your group has been questioning their faith. The member used to believe, or is maybe even a new believer, but is unsure if they really buy in to this whole Jesus thing. The leader is approached with the question of why should they believe and what should they do.*

Leader Tip | This is a great time to pray together and break out your Bible before jumping into the conversation. Remember, only the Spirit can stir up affection and belief.

Scenario 2: *A member of your group has had a moral failure. They share with the leader in confidence, knowing it could have a major impact on their life.*

Leader Tip | In situations where any form of abuse or other illegal and harmful situation is presented, it's important to get with your coach to discuss next steps immediately following the conversation. For more on this topic, ask your coach for Best Practices: Handling Difficult Conversations; Confronting A Sin Issue

Scenario 3: *Two members of your group are not getting along. The leader has recognized that the temperature of the group has changed, but is not sure why.*

Leader Tip | Don't let conflict simmer in your group. If you see something, say something. This honors the parties involved as well as the group as a whole.

Scenario 4: *A member of your group consistently takes up most of the discussion time talking. The leader notices there is not much time for others to talk, and sometimes the discussion gets far off topic.*

Leader Tip | Setting expectations for everyone to participate from the beginning of group can usually mitigate this issue. If not, have a private conversation to help the member understand without embarrassing them. For more on this topic, ask your coach for Best Practices: Someone Who Talks Too Much In Group.

Note: If you are unsure of how to handle a situation in your group, please contact your Coach or Lead.

Life Group FAQ's

Let's cover the basics.

How often should Life Groups meet? *Life Groups should meet weekly as scheduled. Additional hang-outs are highly encouraged. Once per quarter, each should participate in a Life Group Serve. This can either replace that week's group time, be a part of the group time, or be an additional gathering.*

Where should Life Groups meet? *We believe the best place for Life Groups to meet is in their leader's home. This allows the participants to feel most at ease while talking about vulnerable topics and allows the leaders to practice hospitality. However, we understand this is not always possible. Here are some options for locations if your home is off the table.*

- **Another participant's home**. *Is there someone in your group who loves to host? Want to share the load by alternating host homes? Great!*
- **A coffee shop/restaurant**. *Do you have a favorite coffee shop? Know of a restaurant with a back room? Sounds like you found your group location! Just be sure to ask permission before committing to meeting there.*
- **Your favorite hang out spot.** *Is there a place you love to go that would accommodate your group? Maybe your group has a bunch of kids and wants to meet at the park. Maybe you have access to a community pool and want to swim during hang out time. Feel free to get creative!*
- **Clubhouse or venue.** *Many leaders have access to clubhouses or other venues through their communities or workplaces. If it's approved by the appropriate parties, that's your group location!*
- **A Journey Church location.** *By request and with limited availability, we are able to accommodate Life Groups to meet at one of our Journey Church locations.*
- **Online.** *Our Online groups meet through Zoom or RightNow Media weekly! Community just got global!*

What should we discuss in group? *Each week sermon discussion questions are available for your group. If you choose not to discuss the sermon from the weekend you may choose any of the studies in the Life Group Curriculum LIbrary. Both of these resources can be found at journeyconnect.org/groupleader.*

What should a typical night look like? *Though the length of the group may vary, here's an example group night schedule:*

6:30pm | Group hangs (snack, mingle, catch up)

7:00pm | Study/discussion

7:30pm (Couples groups only) | Split genders for accountability time

8:00pm | Pray out

If you have any additional questions, please reach out to your Groups Lead.

Group Leader Page

Did you know we have a page just for you on the Journey Church website? You can get to it directly by going to journeyconnect.org/groupleader. Here's what you'll find on it:

Sermon Discussion Questions

Each week the sermon discussion questions are uploaded here so your group can discuss.

Handbook

This handbook is easily accessible digitally on the Group Leader page.

Life Group Serves

The Life Group Serves page has everything you need to love your community as a group! The Life Group Serve curriculum is there as well as the forms to submit and celebrate your serves and even serve ideas and our Partner Organizations document to help you plan. Keep an eye on the current needs tab of the Partner Organizations document for easily collectable items to meet real needs in our community through Family Care and the CarePortal. That same document has a tab that lists upcoming community events our partners have invited us to that are all great Life Group Serves! Just be sure to submit your serve so your Lead can approve and help get you any resources you may need.

Calendar

The current Groups calendar is available for you here.

Curriculum Library

If your group decides to do a Bible study instead of sermon discussion questions, the approved curriculums can be found at this link. They're laid out by type. If you're interested in a curriculum that is not listed, please email the Groups Strategist at Kate.Alexander@journeyconnect.org to start the approval process.

RightNow Media

RightNow Media is a fantastic resource for your group. In fact, most of the curriculums in the curriculum library are on RightNow Media. At the bottom of the Group Leader page is a link to sign up for a free account through Journey Church. This is available to anyone who is interested, so feel free to share!

JOURNEY CHURCH

Journey Church Volunteer Leader Agreement

Thank you for choosing to serve at Journey Church as a Volunteer Leader. By taking a step into a leadership role, you are accepting a position of responsibility. Those you lead will watch you closely and take what you say seriously. Leaders should be role models and are called to a higher standard. (And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Titus 2:7)

As a leader, your lifestyle matters. Who you are when you serve should be consistent with who you are the remainder of the week. That is why we ask everyone serving in a leadership role to commit to live by the Volunteer Leadership Agreement.

Those we serve must see a consistency in our faith and how we express it in our daily lives and in our service together. In other words, “how” we live and serve together is as important as “what” we do in our individual ministries.

Consistent Quite Time and Bible Engagement
We realize the greatest way we can serve our church is to grow in our personal relationship with Jesus through daily prayer, Bible engagement, and staying in active community with our church family.

Social Media
While social media can be a great connection tool, it also serves as a window into your life beyond when you are serving. With this in mind, we ask that you practice wisdom in the following areas as you use social media:

- I commit to be wise in what I post to any form of social media. I will err on the side of caution and avoid posting anything that is hurtful or could be considered inappropriate.
- I commit to avoid posting anything that can be seen as negative or demeaning toward others.

Substance Abuse
If you have a history of alcohol or drug abuse, this can be something God uses in a positive way to influence others in a different direction. While we believe that God wants to redeem and use every part of our story, we ask you to set some boundaries in place to help protect you as well as those you are leading by committing to the following:

- I commit to avoid using illegal drugs or any other substances that can damage my physical health and/or my testimony.
- I commit to avoid the use of illegal drugs or the use of alcohol if it could result in a DUI, criminal activity, or damage the reputation of the Church.

Sexual Behavior

We believe God's Word teaches that sex was created by God as an expression of intimacy between a man and woman within the context of marriage. Volunteer Leaders who embrace lifestyles or behaviors that conflict with this teaching will eventually find themselves having to pretend to be something they are not or believe something they don't. To protect you from a potentially awkward situation, we ask that you commit to the following:

- I commit to live a lifestyle that models sexual integrity in all areas of my life.
- I commit to set healthy boundaries in any relationship that I pursue, and not be in a sexually active relationship outside of marriage.
- I commit to not live with a member of the opposite sex until marriage.
- I commit to avoid intentionally watching pornography or television shows/movies with graphic sexual content.

We care about your spiritual growth. If you find yourself struggling in one of these areas, or in a place where you cannot make these commitments, please connect with your Ministry Leader.