

The logo consists of a white circle with a small triangular notch at the top. Inside the circle, the text "IDMC" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, and the word "MOVEMENT" is written in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font directly below it.

IDMC
MOVEMENT

Life Group

LEADERS HANDBOOK

We are an

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING CHURCH

We believe in authentic discipleship to Jesus Christ and intentional discipling of all nations for God's glory. For God's glory, we want to multiply Intentional Disciple Making Churches and Campuses in Sydney and in the key cities around the world.

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WELCOME

to the exciting journey of training to be a Life Group Leader! We are committed to help you to become an effective leader. This training process is designed to inspire you with the heartbeat and purpose of Life Groups as well as equip you with the skills you need to lead a life-changing group.



The background of the image is a piece of marbled paper with a complex, organic pattern of swirling blue, teal, and white colors, resembling natural stone or water patterns.

Leading For
LIFE CHANGE

Session 1: The Heart Of Life Groups

At the beginning of your training journey, we want you to catch the heart and vision of our Life Groups. This session is all about the why behind what we do!

1. IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Read Jesus' last command in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:42-46, Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20. How did discipling occur in the early church?

2. OUR MISSION AND STRATEGY

Just as in the early church, regular small group gatherings in homes are central to the life of our church. Life Groups are one of the key strategies and key vehicles to fulfil our vision of discipling.

It is primarily through Life Groups that we connect and empower people to be discipled and become disciplers. Life Groups are central, and we want to see everyone in IDMC Church connect in a biblical community, equipped to be a discipler, and serve others in love.

Therefore, fortnightly Life Groups are a key priority, just as our Sunday services remain the priority of our church.

3. THE PURPOSE OF LIFE GROUPS

In our Life Groups, we want to create an environment where participants experience authentic community and spiritual growth, resulting in authentic discipleship to Jesus and intentional discipling (ADID) of a certain kind.

ENVIRONMENTS (MEETING FEB–NOV | FORTNIGHTLY)

We have 20 opportunities for life change (each meeting runs between 2 to 2.5 hours). We create intentional and strategic environments to help people take their next step towards ADID of a certain kind — environments that build community, deepen consecration, and activate calling.



*Our goal in Life Groups is **LIFE CHANGE!***

This happens as we pay attention to moving people along in these 3 key areas:

COMMUNITY — from Guests to Friends to Family

CONSECRATION — from Casual to Committed to Consecrated

CALLING — from Disciple to Disciplemaker to Disciple Mentor

“The irony is that we have actually grown numerically and spiritually by doing fewer programs and special events, choosing instead to focus our attention on moving people with various levels of commitment to deeper levels of commitment.”

– IMMANUEL CHURCH, USA

WINS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- ▶ People moving from just being a guest to becoming family and having a high sense of ownership of the group (high sense of community)
- ▶ People moving from a casual commitment to being committed, then consecrated (high sense of engagement)
- ▶ People moving from being a disciple to willing to serve as a disciplemaker then being trained as a disciple mentor (high sense of heart to disciple others)
- ▶ People coming regularly and on time, and serving in an area within the group
- ▶ People having an ADID lifestyle and applying the truth for LIFE CHANGE at each meeting

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica.

Describe Paul's relationship with the Thessalonian church.

Take a few moments to describe an environment where healthy spiritual and personal growth can occur. What should Life Groups be like?

In our church, healthy Life Groups aim to fulfil the purposes of:

- ▶ Community
- ▶ Consecration
- ▶ Calling

We help people to grow as a disciple by doing these 3 things:

- ▶ Connect
- ▶ Equip
- ▶ Serve

CONNECT

It is easy to feel alone in a crowd. Life Groups are an open door into the life of our church. As the church grows larger, we must also "grow smaller" in groups so that people can connect with one another. Life Groups are the heartbeat of our church. When you are in a Life Group, you can experience the love and strength of the biblical community. People grow and flourish best in true biblical community, where there is friendship, warmth and acceptance.

In what practical ways can you create this sense of community and family within your Life Group?

EQUIP

How do we help members to grow in spiritual maturity?

“We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.” – **COLOSSIANS 1:28**

As Christians, our goal is to know and become like Christ. First, we need to be growing in our own lives, and then equipping others to do the same. That is why in our Life Group studies there is a strong emphasis on application: "Truth alone does not change lives, but truth applied changes lives."

We aim to equip each person to grow in maturity. Sometimes it is as simple as praying for people, taking an interest in them, and asking the right questions. You do not need to know all the answers or be the source of all wisdom — just be a source of encouragement. The Holy Spirit will help and guide you.

List some helpful questions you could ask of someone you wish to encourage in their spiritual growth:

Life Groups are the place where you can be equipped to become a disciple of Jesus and to live a faith-filled life. We want to see you grow, flourish, and become all that God has called you to be.

SERVE

We believe that every person is created with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. Life Groups help you to realise your spiritual gifts and challenge you to use them in serving others. Life Groups are a place where there are like-minded people who believe in you. This is how leaders are developed.

Jesus came to earth to serve others (Mark 10:45). Service is the ultimate expression of love. In the Body of Christ, every part is called to contribute, no matter how small (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Look for the potential in people in your group. Speak life and vision into them. Ask them to volunteer in church, take a turn leading a prayer, or share their faith with the unsaved. Challenge them to step out of their comfort zone. Pray for them and encourage them to serve. People respond when they know others believe in them.

From your Life Group, you can raise up new leaders who can multiply to lead another Life Group. It is important that you identify and train an assistant leader early on, so that they are available to help you lead your group, and you can become the disciplemaker and multiply yourself in others.

A BALANCED LIFE GROUP

It is through a foundation of genuine connection that equipping and serving can occur. These priorities need to be kept in balance so there is opportunity to both give and receive. As a leader, you will need to be responsive to the different seasons and unique needs of your Life Group members.

Session 2: The Life Group Leader

Jesus is sitting on a beach eating fish over a BBQ and talking with his close friends. He discusses their futures: what they hope for and the things they fear (see John 21). It is a familiar scene for the band of disciples. Together, they had grown to understand the truths of the Kingdom, learnt to love one another, been equipped to serve, and grown closer to Jesus.

This lies at the core of Life Group leadership. As leaders, this is what we are called to do! Have you learnt some things about God you can share with others? Can you befriend and love people and connect them together in a circle of friendship? Can you encourage someone when they are down? Are you able to believe in someone's potential? Then you can lead a Life Group!

ROLE DESCRIPTION

“Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” – 1 PETER 5:2-4

Life Group leaders play a very important role and are the under-shepherds of our church, helping with pastoral care of the members and facilitating the running of Life Group meetings, leading to discipleship and life change. All of this is done with accountability. As the church grows larger, the Pastor delegates spiritual authority to Life Group leaders to pastorally care for the members.

“The larger your church grows, the more important small groups become for handling the pastoral care functions. They provide the personal touch that everyone needs, especially in a crisis. At our church we like to say that the whole church is like a large ship, and the small groups are the lifeboats.” – **PASTOR RICK WARREN, PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH**

Life Group leaders model leadership and servanthood, and have a heart to disciple and build up the House of God — not their own ministry or position.

As a Life Group leader, you are:

1. CONNECTing people in biblical community, by:

- ▶ Creating a warm "open door environment" where all people at any stage of the journey are welcomed
- ▶ Taking responsibility to ensure new people find connection in your group or within another part of the church family
- ▶ Referring serious needs to the pastoral care team

2. EQUIPping people so that they develop Christ-likeness, by:

- ▶ Facilitating spiritual growth through encouragement and loving accountability
- ▶ Praying for and with the people in your Life Group
- ▶ Helping people apply Bible teachings to daily living

3. Empowering people to SERVE, by:

- ▶ Helping them serve in the life of our church
- ▶ Helping them discover their gifting and call
- ▶ Helping them to impact and influence in every sphere of life

Identify ways that you could help lead others to connect, equip and serve.

5 BASIC COMMITMENTS WE ASK PEOPLE TO MAKE TO HELP THEM GROW:

WORSHIP in a Celebration Service

GROW in a Life Group, Discipleship Group or Mentoring Group

SERVE in a Ministry Team, Leadership Team or Operations Team

GIVE generously and consistently through tithes and offerings

BRING a friend to our services and be a BLESSing

People grow in discipleship by
INCREASED STEPS OF COMMITMENT.

Help people to grow in discipleship by connecting them to each next step:

1. Attending Sunday Service Regularly — growing in relationship with God
2. Growing in a Life Group — growing in community with others
3. Serving in a Ministry Team — growing by serving others

WHAT A LIFE GROUP LEADER LOOKS LIKE

With the privilege of leadership comes responsibility. In his pastoral letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul lists some standards for leadership. Read **1 Timothy 3:1-13**.

Leading a Life Group is a key role within IDMC Church. A Life Group leader is:

1. Passionate about God and people
2. A person of character and integrity
3. Committed to personal spiritual growth and leadership development
4. Supportive of the leadership and vision of the church by prioritising involvement in relevant church activities wherever possible. This includes:
 - ▶ Attending Sunday Services regularly
 - ▶ Attending / leading Life Group regularly
 - ▶ Leading towards multiplying the group, mentoring ALs and core members
 - ▶ Attending leadership training and prayer nights, and all key leadership meetings
 - ▶ Supporting our church financially through tithes and offerings

WHAT A LIFE GROUP LEADER DOES

Leading a Life Group requires time and effort. As Paul says, to this end we labour — not alone, but with "*the energy of the Holy Spirit who powerfully works in us*" Colossians 1:29-30!

The rewards of leading a Life Group are fulfilling and eternal. There is nothing to compare with seeing others grow closer to God. Paul asks us, "*What is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we glory when Jesus returns? Is it not you?*" (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). Above all else, people are our joy and glory!

Primary Objective:

Shepherding and leading towards multiplication of Life Groups / Disciplemakers

A Life Group Leader:

1. Cares and prays for the people of their group
2. Raises, cares for, mentors and disciples Assistant Leaders and core members
3. Reads ahead and prepares well for the lesson so that they can lead and contribute to the discussion meaningfully
4. Regularly reports on Elvanto attendance, pastoral care needs / praise points, and the progress of their group to their respective Zone Shepherd fortnightly
5. Runs an inspiring and encouraging Life Group meeting
6. Takes responsibility for helping people grow deeper in community, consecration and calling
7. Works with group members to assist in connection and follow-up
8. Works with Zone Shepherds towards multiplication of new groups
9. Works with Assistant Leaders to facilitate social activities that encourage their group to connect with each other (in-between-meetings – IBMs)
10. Encourages members to adopt the BLESS strategy
11. Meets regularly with their Zone Shepherds and Assistant Leaders / core members on alternate months for shepherding, development and overseeing purposes

Read through the list above. What are your strengths? Are there areas you can mark for improvement?

ROLE OF AN ASSISTANT LIFE GROUP LEADER

How we identify an Assistant Leader (guidelines only):

- ▶ Passionate about God and people, etc
- ▶ Committed and regular to the Life Group
- ▶ Able to make intentional conversation
- ▶ Good organisational skills to work with the core members to organise IBMs, rosters and assimilating newcomers into the Life Group

Primary Objective:

Assist Life Group Leaders with shepherding and leading towards multiplication of Life Groups / disciplemakers.

An Assistant Life Group leader:

1. Assists the Life Group Leader in all aspects of leading a Life Group and starts by taking on responsibilities
2. Helps the Life Group Leader oversee core members in organising IBMs and connecting
3. Helps with leading discussions, pastoral care for some members, organising

- rosters, and hosting Life Group in their home if needed
4. Can also assist the Life Group Leader in updating Elvanto for fortnightly attendance and detailed pastoral care reports
 5. Reads ahead and prepares well for the lesson so that they can contribute to the discussion meaningfully
 6. Intentionally follows up regularly with all assigned newcomers and irregulars to ensure they are well connected / assimilated into the Life Group
 7. Meets regularly with the Life Group Leader (bi-monthly)
 8. Works with Life Group Leaders and Zone Shepherds towards multiplication of new groups
 9. Walks with and disciples core members towards the Assistant Leader role

ROLE OF A CORE MEMBER

How we identify a Core Member (guidelines only):

- ▶ Organisational skills
- ▶ Interpersonal skills — people and communication
- ▶ Supportive of the leadership and shares the vision of the church
- ▶ Regular to Life Group and starting to take ownership of areas within Life Group

Primary Objective:

Shadowing and supporting the Life Group Leaders and Assistant Leaders.

A Core Member:

Assists leaders with any organisation and connections.

Role Of Zone Shepherds

How we identify Zone Shepherds:

- ▶ Carries the IDMC DNA
- ▶ Relational / diplomatic skills to influence for change
- ▶ Know how to steward people for life change
- ▶ Have the heart of a mentoring-leader to grow and develop leaders

Primary Objectives:

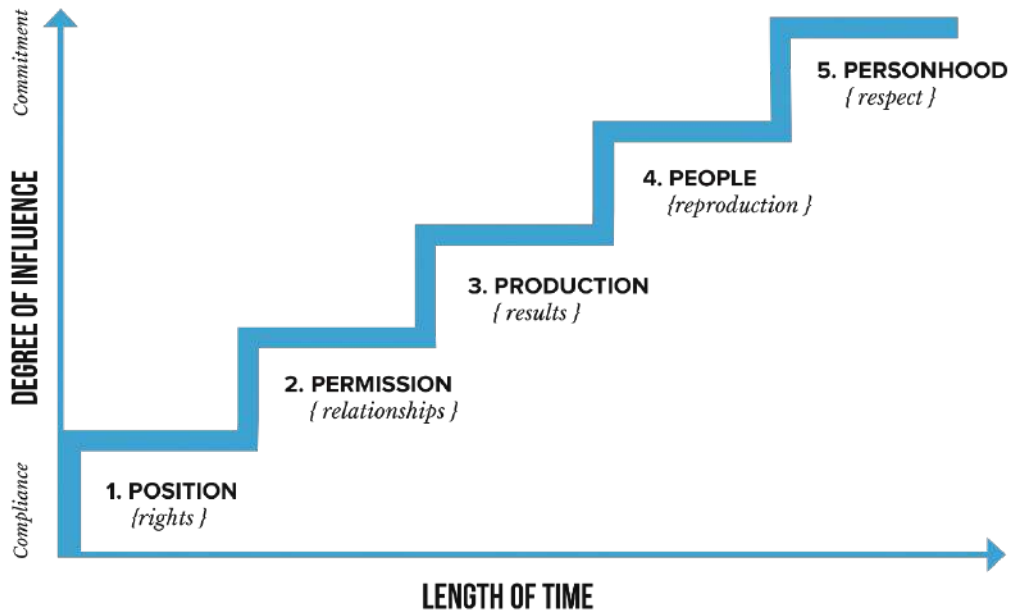
- ▶ Shepherding, overseeing and multiplying leaders
- ▶ Pastorally caring for and shepherding the Zone under their care

Responsibilities:

1. Pastor / shepherd the zone — knows their members well by name and face
2. Oversee the general wellbeing of each Life Group Leader and Life Group under their care, regularly review attendance and pastoral care reports (fortnightly)
3. Meet regularly with Life Group Leaders (bi-monthly)
4. Meet regularly with Zone Directors (bi-monthly, alternate month)
5. Visit Life Groups under their zone regularly
6. Submit monthly reports to Zone Directors, cc'ing the Campus Pastor
7. Ensure each Life Group Leader is healthy and growing in discipleship and as a disciplemaker
8. Assist with house / hospital visitation to pray for a newborn baby or any hospitalisation of a member, and conduct house blessing and house cleansing as needed
9. Assist leaders to intentionally move members from Community to Consecration to Calling

10. Help the Life Group Leader ensure the Assistant Leader is developing well (OPPAS)
11. Help Life Group Leaders identify potential leaders in their groups

5 Levels of Leadership



Leadership grows in depth of influence over time — from mere position, through permission and production, to people development and, ultimately, personhood. As commitment deepens, so does the degree of influence a leader carries.

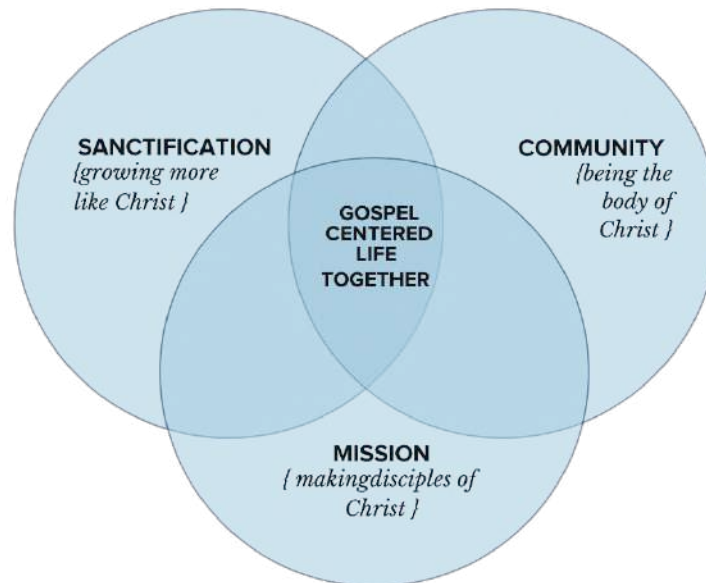
1. **Position** — Title alone is not going to get people to come. Many people see Sunday as compulsory, but Life Group as optional.
2. **Permission** — Build relationships with all your members.
3. **Production** — Be clear on the 3 movements of people and your aims so you can reach results (ABC and ADID).
4. **People** — Reproduction: shepherding and multiplying leaders (this is where a Zone Shepherd needs to operate).

5. **Personhood** — Leadership that flows from lasting character and respect built over a lifetime.

3 MOVEMENTS OF PEOPLE (UNDER PRODUCTION):

- ▶ Community — Guests to Friends to Family
- ▶ Consecration — Disciple, Maker, Mentor
- ▶ Calling — Servants, Stewards, Sons

Leadership Development



Our discipleship framework is built around four connected themes:

- ▶ Sanctification
- ▶ Gospel-Centred Life
- ▶ Together
- ▶ Mission / Community

How are we going to disciple / develop our people?

Problem: Life Group Leaders are currently running the night — we need to free them to develop people.

1. **Core Group** — executes the logistics
2. **Assistant Leaders** — manage the logistics
3. **Life Group Leaders** — move people along the 3 movements
4. **Zone Shepherds** — shepherd the leaders / zone and multiply the Life Group Leaders

Where does a Zone Shepherd need to be? At Level 4 — People (reproduction)

1. Shepherding, overseeing and developing leaders
2. Pastorally caring for and shepherding the Zone under their care
3. Working with Life Group Leaders and Assistant Leaders to multiply healthy groups

*How? **OPPAS** (I do, you do, I watch, you do alone but someone else watch)*

Roles & Responsibilities

CORE GROUP

- ▶ Assimilating and Organisation
- ▶ Rosters (snacks, worship, venue, child minding)
- ▶ Helping new members become regular members (invitations / setting up IBMs)
- ▶ Organising socials / IBMs
- ▶ Leading announcements

ASSISTANT LEADERS

- ▶ Integrating and Facilitating
- ▶ Shadow the Life Group Leaders
- ▶ Help oversee core members in organising IBMs and connecting
- ▶ Mentor and train members to become core members
- ▶ Can help disciple new believers

LIFE GROUP LEADERS

- ▶ Shepherding and Leading.
- ▶ Care for, mentor and develop Assistant Leaders
- ▶ Provide pastoral care oversight
- ▶ Grow members spiritually and multiply disciplers
- ▶ Report regularly
- ▶ Ensure the 3 movements are happening with members

LEADERS' HEALTH GUIDE

Leadership Assessment & Growth Tool

This tool is designed for Zone Leaders to use with the leaders under their care or as a self assessment tool for Life Group Leaders. It serves as a guide to assess, mentor, and help leaders grow in their role, as well as to identify areas where they may need to step up. It can also be a great way to facilitate meaningful mentoring conversations and strengthen leadership development.

Effective leadership involves three core roles:

- ▶ **Managing (Administrative Leadership)** — administering and organising well
- ▶ **Shepherding (Pastoral Leadership)** — caring and guiding with a pastoral heart
- ▶ **Leading (Multiplying Leadership)** — inspiring, multiplying, and raising future leaders

Use the following questions as a practical guideline to evaluate and encourage growth in each area.

1. Managing (Administrative Leadership)

Requires strong organisational and administrative skills.

- ▶ Does your leader submit reports regularly, with adequate detail?
- ▶ Do they review member dashboards consistently, update Elvanto / staff teams with necessary changes, and guide members towards their next steps?
- ▶ Are all Life Group communications sent out promptly and clearly to the Life Groups?

2. Shepherding (Pastoral Leadership)

Requires intentional time and investment in care, prayer, and personal connection.

- ▶ Is your leader regularly connecting with their leaders / members for prayer and care (calls, meet-ups, or visits)?
- ▶ Do they have a heart for the lost and maintain a BLESS focus?
- ▶ Are they intentional about welcoming and integrating newcomers into their group / zone?

3. Leading (Multiplying Leadership)

Requires investing time in mentoring and raising new leaders to multiply.

- ▶ Does your leader consistently mentor and develop leaders / members?
- ▶ Are they building a strong "deep leadership bench" by raising Zone Shepherds, Life Group Leaders, Assistant Leaders and Core Team members?
- ▶ Are they actively engaged in self-development (e.g. Bible College, other training)?
- ▶ Do they facilitate discussions that inspire spiritual growth and lead the group effectively?

LIFE GROUP HEALTH GUIDE

Purpose: This guide is for Leaders to use when assessing the overall health of the Life Group under their care. It serves as both a diagnostic tool and a conversation starter during mentoring sessions, helping leaders identify strengths, address areas for growth, and nurture thriving, disciple-making communities.

Healthy Life Groups grow in three key dimensions:

Community — moving from guests, to friends, to family

Consecration — moving from casual, to committed, to consecrated

Calling — moving from disciple, to disciple-maker, to disciple-mentor

1. COMMUNITY — GUEST → FRIEND → FAMILY

Focus: Building genuine relationships and a sense of belonging.

- ▶ Does the group foster a warm, welcoming atmosphere where relationships are strong and members enjoy gathering (including extra IBMs or socials)?
- ▶ Do members feel safe and comfortable to share authentically and vulnerably?
- ▶ Are newcomers intentionally welcomed, connected, and integrated into the group?

2. CONSECRATION — CASUAL → COMMITTED → CONSECRATED

Focus: spiritual growth, commitment, and personal devotion.

- ▶ How are they prioritising their daily time with God, and do they seem to be regularly examining the condition of their hearts?
- ▶ Are leaders and members growing in maturity?
- ▶ How many semesters of Bible College have they completed, and how are they applying them to their personal life change?
- ▶ Are they regular, committed, and consistent in attending Life Group and Sunday services?
- ▶ Are they actively serving and tithing?

3. CALLING — DISCIPLE → DISCIPLE-MAKER → DISCIPLE-MENTOR

Focus: Multiplying disciples and leaders, and living with a missional purpose.

- ▶ Are members actively discipling and mentoring others?
- ▶ Is the group embracing a missional lifestyle and participating in outreach opportunities?
- ▶ Are they prayerfully and practically reaching out to their BLESS friends?
- ▶ Is there a vision and desire to grow, release leaders, and multiply Life Groups?
- ▶ Are new believers being guided through key steps such as the Discovery Track, Alpha, and baptism?

Session 3: Life Group Environments

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” -

HEBREWS 10:25

In leading IDMC Church, the Pastors aim to build a church that they themselves would want to go to. Aim to lead a Life Group meeting that you want to go to!

Think of a recent Life Group meeting that you really enjoyed. What made it encouraging or helpful, so that you were looking forward to the following week?

1. Creating Atmosphere

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” -

MATTHEW 18:20

It is unseen, yet you know when it's there and when it's not. It's invisible, yet it is perhaps the most powerful element of a meeting. It is the atmosphere.

A positive atmosphere full of faith, hope and love inspires people to grow, facilitates healthy relationship-building, and importantly allows the Holy Spirit to work. Life Groups are an expression of church in your home. There should be a culture of encouragement, blessing and unity. Your meeting reflects the heart and vision of IDMC Church!

As a leader, it is your role to set the tone and culture of your group. The atmosphere does not just happen! How can you create an effective atmosphere that builds others up? Consider the location of your group, your preparation for the meeting, the example you can set as a leader, and the spirit that you carry.

2. The Meeting Plan

Life Group Leaders aim for life change by facilitating the 4 W's of a Life Group environment:

1. **Welcome (Community)** – icebreakers, BLESS praise reports, and announcements (15 mins)
2. **Worship (Consecration)** – video or live music if you have able musicians; 2 songs are usually sufficient (10-15 min)
3. **Word (Consecration and Calling)** – discussion around the teaching (1 hour)
4. **Works (Consecration and Calling)** – pray for each other and the friends on your BLESS lists, encourage practical application and get them to write it down (20 min), followed by supper / fellowship (Community)



Every part is a vital and contributing factor to
LIFE CHANGE.

To help with ownership and shared responsibility, it is advisable to set the expectation right from the first meeting that everyone will be rostered to serve in some area within the Life Group. This helps to engage each person, equip them, and also helps with increased attendance, as people are more likely to come when they are rostered to serve and are accountable.

There are many areas they can be involved in: hosting, icebreakers, announcements, children's program (if applicable), supper, clean-up, discussion leading, worship leading, organising socials, contacting and connecting newcomers, and more.

However, only the leaders, assistant leaders and mature core members who have been identified as potential future leaders will be responsible for leading the time in the Word.

*People grow the most when they are serving and taking responsibility.
Every task, no matter how small, is an **OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE.***

A TYPICAL LIFE GROUP MEETING INCLUDES:

Start And Finish

Life Group meetings are approximately 2 to 2.5 hours. Please respect people's time by starting and finishing the meeting promptly. If people continually come late, please gently remind them to come on time, and also feel free to start the icebreaker or worship on time without them, so that your meeting does not have to start later. If some want to linger longer, make sure you officially close the meeting so that remaining members are free to leave.

Welcome — Icebreakers And Announcements

Allow approximately 15 minutes for welcoming, sharing BLESS praise reports, and icebreakers. This time is essential. Food always helps socially, so empower people to contribute! Be a good host and try to connect with every member. You know you have a healthy Life Group when you have to curb conversations to begin the study! When doing announcements, our language and communication needs to be inspiring, not merely a passing on of information. Announcements are key for keeping people informed and helping them take the next step in their discipleship journey.

Study Together

Our Life Groups all follow the same materials, whether it is a book study or following Sunday sermons. This means that the whole church is moving forward in one direction. Leaders are not to introduce any other material for study or invite any outside speaker to share in their Life Group, as this could cause potential disunity or may not be aligned with the teachings of the church.

How To Pray For Your Group

- ▶ Pray for any requests group members share
- ▶ Ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your group
- ▶ Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear His truth
- ▶ Pray for authentic community to develop
- ▶ Pray for wisdom and strength to lead your group well

Prayer And Spiritual Gifts

In each Life Group meeting, pray for each other's needs, our church vision and leadership, as well as our related ministries, including missions. Whilst we encourage the operation of spiritual gifts within the Life Group, please ensure that any prophetic words given are not directive, but simply exhortational and edifying. Try different combinations in prayer to add variety and help new prayers — for example, pray in pairs, by gender, or in small groups, as well as corporately.

Church Events

Occasionally, Life Groups do not meet in homes but gather together for special church events. Aim to promote the event and create opportunity for fellowship in your group within the wider church setting. When we have multiple services, we encourage your Life Group to attend their assigned service to help with seating purposes and fellowship with their Life Group members.

3. Leading The Study

The study time provides an opportunity to discuss what we have learnt from the book or Sunday sermons, ask questions, and reflect on how we can apply biblical truth to our lives. The early church leader James wrote: *"Do not just read what the Word says; do it!"* - **James 1:23-25**.

- ▶ Carefully prepare! Look up the Scriptures. Answer the discussion questions yourself first. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. If you have any queries about the study itself, speak to your Zone Shepherd.
- ▶ Be selective in your use of the discussion questions. If people are sharing from their hearts and the discussion is fruitful, do not feel locked into completing every question. However, do remain focused on the topic and intent of the study.
- ▶ Encourage people to read from their Bibles. Model good use of your Bible.
- ▶ Conclude the study with a challenge or an emphasis on how we can apply what we have learnt in our lives.
- ▶ Do not use unapproved material or invite outside guest speakers to Life Group.

4. Group Dynamics

Your Life Group may be made up of people of all backgrounds, nationalities, and levels of spiritual maturity. You will be sure to meet 'Shy Sheila' and 'Talkative Tim'! You may have new Christians and seasoned theologians. Positioning members such as Talkative Tim next to you may give Shy Sheila the opportunity to speak.

Ask open-ended questions to encourage full participation. Avoid doing all the talking! A good guideline is the 70-30 rule: approximately 70% of the speaking should be from members and 30% from the leader. Keep the discussion positive and discourage any critical spirit amongst your group. Carefully lead the conversation back to the topic

when tangents occur. Where sensitive issues or complex questions arise in your group, follow up one-on-one after the meeting or over supper. Remember to ask your Zone Shepherd for advice if you encounter difficulty leading your group.

5. Attendance And Pastoral Care Reports

The shepherd knew when 1 sheep was missing from his fold of 100 (Luke 15:4). As one pastor said, "We count people, because people count!" It is important that we are fruitful with those who have been entrusted to us — every person matters to God.

When you report pastoral care concerns and attendance records, we are able to monitor the health of our Life Groups by tracking attendance, following up our members pastorally, and maintaining accurate contact details. Please remember to do so diligently within a few days after your Life Group meeting.

- ▶ Go after the irregulars and newcomers
- ▶ Update if they are absent — on Sundays / Fridays — and the reason why, if you know

After each Life Group meeting, consider the following:

- ▶ How did I go as a leader?
- ▶ How did I help my members to connect, equip and serve?
- ▶ What worked and what didn't work? Any areas of improvement?
- ▶ What effort have I, as a leader, sown into my Life Group members?

The background is an abstract, marbled texture in various shades of blue and white. The pattern is fluid and organic, with darker blue veins and swirls against a lighter blue and white base. The overall effect is reminiscent of marbled paper or a liquid ink wash.

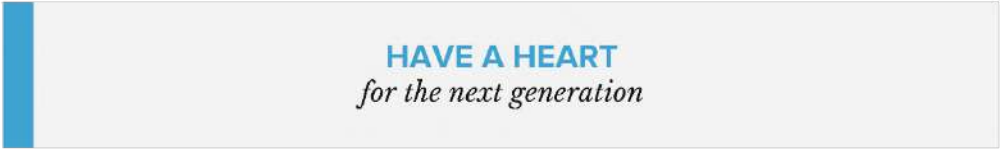
Leading For **MULTIPLICATION**

Session 4: Leading for Multiplication

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:2 (NIV)

When leading for multiplication, it is life-on-life. Share your life, your convictions, your experiences learnt, the truths of God's Word, the marvellous things He has done. Share the faith stories. We need to invest time and sow into others' lives. Many of us are here because someone took the time to journey with us.

Journey with someone over a period of at least a year. Disciplemaking happens! Multiplication happens! And the generations can be reached (including peers).



HAVE A HEART
for the next generation

“Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds. Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. – PSALM 71:17-18

Read Judges 2:6-12. What happened? Why was the faith not being passed on to the next generation?

Ask yourself: what am I doing to multiply myself in others and pass my faith on to the next generation?

“If you make discipleship your focus, you will always get the church. But if you try to build the church, you will rarely get disciples. If you're good at making disciples, you will get more leaders than you know what to do with.”

TRAINING YOUR ASSISTANT LEADER

When leading to multiply your group, start by investing your life into your Assistant Leaders. **Use the 5-step OPPAS method of training with your Assistant Leaders for skill development, e.g. discussion leading.**

O – OBSERVATION

The assistant is to observe the leader intentionally. *(You watch, I do)*

P – PARTNERSHIP

The leader is to involve the assistant leader in all aspects of leading a Life Group especially for discussion leading from preparation to leading a few questions for a few times. Encourage them. *(We do together)*

P – PERFORM

The assistant now takes responsibility to prepare the discussion and lead majority of the discussion whilst leader observes and gives support and feedback afterwards. Use SANDWICH principle of encouragement. Do a few times. *(You do, I watch)*

A – ALONE

The assistant now takes full responsibility for preparation and leading of discussion alone. Give them lots of encouragement and empower them to lead alone! *(You do alone)*

S – SOMEONE

Show someone else. *(Process of multiplication now starts with someone else)*

Remember **OPPAS!**

For spiritual development, use these 3 key questions when meeting with your assistant leader for mentoring:

1. **Personal** — What is happening in your life?
2. **Theocentric** — What is God saying about what is happening in your life?
3. **Accountability** — What are you doing, or going to do, about it?

Uphold your assistant leader in front of your Life Group members. Empower them and support them. Release them to take on more responsibility, a step at a time.

Practical suggestions:

- ▶ Take them with you when you plan to visit another member of your Life Group for fellowship and encouragement. Model how to turn social conversations into meaningful, theocentric conversations, and how to pray for and minister to your members before you leave their home.
- ▶ Share the Word of God with them constantly. Share what you have gleaned from your own personal quiet times, or a key verse that spoke to you. Pray with and for them.
- ▶ Pray together for your group members by name. Before each meeting, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way.

“But the word of God grew and continued to be multiplied.” - ACTS 12:24

Life Group Size



Remember, your job is to
BUILD PEOPLE, NOT JUST LEAD A MEETING.

People's lives are like icebergs — we only ever see the tip of it. How do we help them reveal more? By keeping the Life Group small.

A good size for a group is between 8 and 12 people (15 maximum), as you tend to get a deeper quality of interaction between group members. People are more willing to share their lives with fewer people, because it is less intimidating. Relationships finally get below the surface, and that is where spiritual transformation and consecration can most easily take place.

Our normal way of thinking is that bigger is better — that is not the case in our Life Groups. Important things happen best when we are with a smaller number of people. Typically, groups operate best when they are between 8 and 12 people. The most important aspects of our groups cannot take place as effectively once a group surpasses 15 to 20 people on a regular basis, because relationships at that level tend to stay on the surface.

Group Multiplication

The "**New Unity Principle**" states that expansion normally happens quickest with new things. If you build a new building, attendance normally goes up. Our tendency is to think that if our group is growing, we don't want to multiply into two groups because we will lose our momentum — the opposite is usually true.

Forming two groups usually grows faster than keeping one large group, because larger groups tend to stagnate and become more anonymous. Smaller, healthy

groups better accomplish our purposes of life change, community, calling, consecration and evangelism. It is also true that groups usually plateau around 18 months — if a group has not multiplied by that point, chances are it won't. When groups consistently maintain 20 or more people without multiplying, a consistent pattern tends to emerge: it feels like things are really clicking (after all, the group is growing), so we resist changing it. A group that does this ultimately becomes a fellowship group that loses track of our fundamental goals, and stagnation sets in.

Sub-Grouping Is Key To Developing Groups And Leaders

- ▶ Almost anyone could facilitate a group of 4.
- ▶ You could keep growing if you sub-grouped every week into groups of 4 to 6 for discussion and prayer.
- ▶ Whenever your group is larger than 10 people, try breaking into smaller groups of no more than 4 to 6. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply what they're learning more quickly, and ultimately get more out of it.
- ▶ A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate, and tends to minimise the effect of a more vocal or dominant member. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time — people unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. When you gather back as the whole group, one person from each circle can briefly share their circle's prayer requests.
- ▶ Help identify other potential assistant leaders.
- ▶ Try to avoid using the word "split" and use the word "multiply" instead, so members see it in a positive light. Language is important.

Example Letter / Email To Help Members Prepare For Life Group Multiplication

Dear Life Group members,

Here is a recap of a few points regarding the multiplication:

Being faithful to the vision of IDMC in this church, we as a Life Group are called to be fruitful and multiply our lives in others through discipleship (Matthew 13:1-23). In this, (name of) Life Group has been faithful to the vision, and God has again blessed us to have grown to a size which necessitates multiplication. For some who are new to the church and this group, this may be new, and you may be asking, "Why do we need to multiply?" When done correctly, a multiplication has many positive benefits: it facilitates more intimate discussions and sharing amongst a smaller group (ideal size for sharing is typically 4 to 5 couples), allows leaders to lead new Life Groups and steward the leadership and shepherding of God's people, allows for closer relationships to form and facilitates further growth for each individual group, and, as a smaller group, provides operational flexibility in where a Life Group can meet and conduct activities or IBMs.

We really praise God for (name of the new Life Group Leaders), who have been obedient to God's calling to step up and take on the privilege of leading a brand-new Life Group. I think you will all agree that (name of new Life Group leaders) have a heart to serve God, and time and again have inspired us with their obedience to living intentionally and being Christ-mastered. I know that they will provide the new Life Group with strong leadership as they make it their own. They will also be supported by (name of ALs / Cores), who have in faith agreed to support this new Life Group. It is a blessing that there are so many strong leaders and core members who will be anchoring the new group.

As the current Life Group leaders, both (name) and I reflect on how good God has

been to us, and we never forget that God has given us a great honour and privilege to serve all of you over these last few years. We appreciate each and every one of you and cherish the time the Lord has put us together for this season, where we could journey together and share our struggles and triumphs. If there is one thing I would remind us all, it is that a Life Group is what we make it — so whichever Life Group you prayerfully decide upon, I really encourage each of you to take ownership and invest yourself within that group, as it can be a powerful vehicle to affect life change and transformation in our own lives as well as the lives of others. We continue to believe it is only appropriate that members themselves decide which group they would like to journey with going forward.

The 2 groups will be led by:

1. Current (name) Life Group — (Leaders' name)
2. New Life Group — (Name of the Life Group Leaders and Assistant Leaders)

We ask that over the next few weeks, until the end of (dateline), you all prayerfully seek God's guidance on which group He is leading you to be part of going forward. What this means for you: please let any of the current leaders know which Life Group you decide to be part of, any time in the coming weeks, but by (dateline) at the latest. The Life Group will continue to meet together until (dateline). During this period, instead of splitting randomly, we will break up into the Life Groups people have chosen to be part of for the remainder of the study sessions. When the new study commences, the new Life Group can proceed to meet in a new location. If any of you have further questions about the multiplication, feel free to contact any of the leaders above to discuss.

Finally, we would like to thank you all for journeying with us as a family in God, and, regardless of where you decide to join, continue to believe God will bless and use each of us mightily for His glory and purposes.

Be blessed!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What if my group members do not want to multiply, but we are consistently averaging over 20 people each week?

Ideally, this should never occur, because the vision should consistently be cast to each group by the group leader: that we want our groups to grow, and we want our groups to remain a size that is conducive to personal sharing and spiritual transformation.

It should also be made clear to the group who the Assistant Leader is, and that their expected role will be to take on a group once the group gets too large. With these expectations in mind, hopefully you will never run into a situation where the group doesn't want to multiply, because the group should understand the purpose of our groups: disciplinemaking, leading to life change, and leading for multiplication.

If, after understanding all of the above, a group still does not wish to multiply, there are some steps the Life Group Leader can take:

- ▶ Remind group members that while fellowship is very important, it is only ONE aspect of our groups.
- ▶ Remind group members that the focus is never on what they can get out of the group, but what they can contribute to the needs of others. Multiplication will best meet the needs of the most people.
- ▶ Just because a group multiplies doesn't mean fellowship or relationships end. Remind them that the very reason they got to the size they are at is the very reason they don't want to separate from each other — they are a tight-knit group. It will happen again!

2. How long should I expect it to take before multiplication occurs?

Normally, a healthy Life Group can multiply within 18 to 24 months. If multiplication has not occurred by that point, it becomes harder to multiply later. Keeping things fresh is important.

4 ways new groups can form:

- ▶ The group divides and multiplies
- ▶ A few key people leave the group to start a new group
- ▶ Subgroups form within the same location and grow until enough people form new groups
- ▶ A new leader is raised up from within the group and goes on their own to plant a new group, or the old leaders go to plant a new group while the new leader stays to lead the old group

Guidelines For Choosing A Name For Your New Life Group:

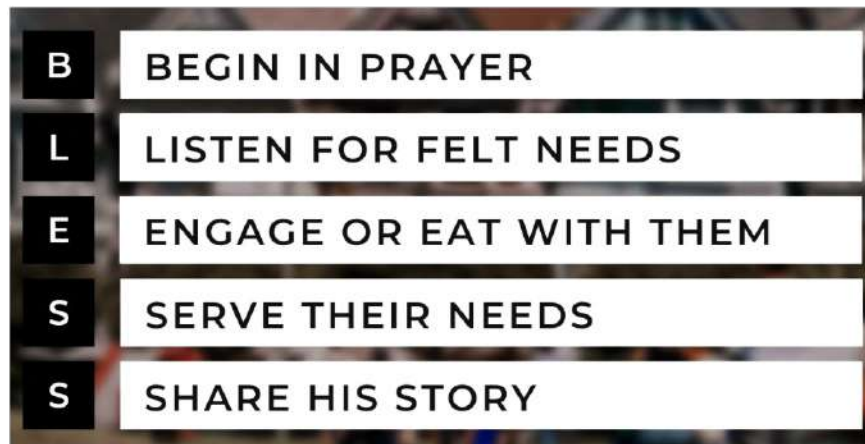
- ▶ Pick a name that is in line with Christian or biblical themes. Life Group names should not contradict our church vision or have negative or ungodly connotations.
- ▶ Leaders can propose the new Life Group name themselves, or discuss it with their members and propose names to their Zone Shepherd or Zone Director for approval. The Campus Pastor will give the final decision or approval if the Life Group name is questionable.

Evangelism in Your Life Groups

Evangelism is vitally important to all of our groups. The purpose of our groups is to be a BLESSing to the people God wants us to reach, and to carry out His mission on earth. Life Groups offer a non-threatening environment to invite others into. It is extremely important that we use our groups to bring others into contact with the

Word of God and other Christians.

We encourage our group members to continue to pray for and reach out to their non believing friends with the BLESS strategy:



To help them think through the people in their world - use the **FRANS** acronym to develop their BLESS list. Present to them a copy of these circles and write down at least 3 to 5 names in each circle:

FRIENDS
{ immediate or extended }

RELATIVES

ASSOCIATES
(work, professional arenas)

NEIGHBOURS

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Set an invitation goal. Your Life Group can choose from a number of ways to invite new people to your group. With the "each-one-reach-one" approach, each person in the group agrees to personally invite one person from any circle every month. Or the group can focus on one circle each month, e.g. inviting people from the Friends circle that month. However you do it, don't communicate disappointment if new people don't immediately appear. Remember: people invite new people, but God brings them.

An aerial photograph of a coastline, showing a mix of deep blue water, lighter blue sandy beaches, and some green vegetation. The coastline is irregular, with several bays and peninsulas. The word "Appendices" is written in a white, italicized serif font across the center of the image.

Appendices

Appendices

7 House Rules

These will help us maintain healthier relationships in our spiritual family.

1. We Do Not Practice Lobbying

Whenever we are unhappy about something, we are free to raise the issues with our Life Group leaders, who will refer upwards if they are not able to resolve the matter. But we do not go around lobbying for support for our point of view. This will polarize and cause divisions and create factions in the Church.

2. We Do Not Build A Demand Culture

We are free to discuss and even disagree on issues.

But we do not practice a demand culture. We do not negotiate on the basis of ultimatums – “If you do not do this or that, I will quit...” “If you do not give me this or that, I will tell the whole world...” If anyone draws a line in the sand, the leadership will have no option but to take the person on; failing which, the entire leadership will be undermined.

One principle we maintain is that we should be free to disagree and raise issues with the leadership, but when we do, we must make sure that we do so with the right heart posture. It is not so much to protect the leader’s ego but because it is good for our souls.

3. We Do Not Backbite And Gossip About Our Leaders

If we need to raise any issues, we will do so with the relevant parties, but we do not backbite or gossip. It is better to deal directly with the party involved than to talk

behind their backs.

4. We Do Not Presume On Our Christian Relationship

We will never presume on our Christian relationship.

For example, If you have a restaurant, I must never assume that you must give me a discount if I eat at your restaurant. You will give me a discount only because you want my business, but I must never presume that because we are from the same church, you must give me a discount. In the same way, you must not presume that because you have a restaurant, I must eat there. I eat there only because your food is good or your service is excellent, and not because I am from the same church as you.

The same thing applies to any other goods and services that we may have in the church. In this way, we do not presume on our Christian relationship.

5. We Do Not Solicit Business In Church

The Church is meant to be a house of prayer and worship. It is not a marketplace, so we do not solicit business in the Church. We do not come to Church with the purpose of soliciting business. This does not mean that we cannot provide goods and services for one another. But let's do this outside of the Church.

6. We Do Not Spread Vicarious Anger

What is vicarious anger? It is anger on behalf of others. How does it work?

Here is a model of how vicarious anger works:

A is upset with B. B tells C, his best friend. C now becomes angry with A on behalf of B. After some time, A reconciles with B. A now thinks that all is well. Little did he know that there was another line of anger against him – C!

Now multiply that many times over because B may have told D, E, and F as well! What about A? He could have told his friends G, H, and I as well! Before you know it, the devil has started a whole network of anger in the body.

No wonder we find no breakthroughs in the Church! There is no true unity! And without unity, there is no divine flow!

7. We Do Not Solve Problems Through Emails

Emails are wonderful for information, but terrible for resolving problems. How often it is that when we try to solve problems using emails, it gets worse. I recommend the practice that if we receive a nasty email, we can express our feelings in a reply email, but only send it to ourselves. Oftentimes, we find that after some cooling-off time, we often find new perspectives and tone down our responses.

Life Group Leader Checklist

Before The Life Group Meeting

- ▶ Read / watch the relevant chapter or session
- ▶ Prepare the discussion questions
- ▶ Send discussion questions to the Life Group / a reminder of the video teaching to watch and prepare
- ▶ Send reminder details of the Life Group meeting
- ▶ Try to ensure each person / family is rostered to serve in an area
- ▶ Ensure newcomers and irregulars receive a separate call to invite them
- ▶ Confirm everyone on the roster for serving
- ▶ Prepare in prayer for your members, assistant leaders and core members
- ▶ Plan your environment
- ▶ Ensure everyone has access to the material
- ▶ Print / send links to the discussion questions

For The Life Group Meeting

- ▶ Host ensures a welcoming environment (background music, chairs out, clean / tidy)
- ▶ Ensure the meeting starts on time
- ▶ Ensure announcements are conveyed clearly and enthusiastically
- ▶ Ensure all the W's of the night are covered and don't take too long (except Word and Works time)
- ▶ Ensure everyone feels included
- ▶ Convey the next meeting date / time

After The Life Group Meeting

- ▶ By Monday, update Elvanto for attendance and pastoral care
- ▶ Phone or visit all your members at least monthly
- ▶ Organise IBMs (in-between-meetings or socials) monthly
- ▶ Meet with your assistant leaders / core team to mentor and disciple them bi-monthly, for pastoral care and development

Elvanto & Other Matters

Elvanto

Pastoral care reports and attendance are submitted by clicking "Submit Report" from your Life Group page in Elvanto. The following guidelines will help ensure information is recorded consistently and supports effective pastoral care across our church.

Purpose Of The Report

To help our pastoral team, Zone Shepherds and leaders understand how members are going, identify opportunities for follow-up, and ensure pastoral care continues well if members move between Life Groups.

Who Submits The Report

The Life Group Leader and Assistant Leader may decide between themselves who will submit the attendance and pastoral care report each meeting. Only one report needs to be submitted per Life Group meeting.

Attendance

Please ensure attendance is recorded for all members each week. Where known,

reasons for absence should also be recorded in the relevant person's individual notes if pastorally significant.

Individual Pastoral Note

Record information about individuals in that person's profile by selecting "Add Note" next to their name. Examples include:

- ▶ Prayer requests
- ▶ Praise reports
- ▶ Discipleship or mentoring progress
- ▶ Pastoral conversations
- ▶ Follow-up actions
- ▶ Welfare concerns or other pastoral matters
- ▶ Reasons for absence (where known and pastorally relevant)

Please remember to tick "**Private Note**" whenever recording pastoral or sensitive information.

Group Notes

The "**Notes Specific to the Entire Group**" section should only contain information relevant to the whole Life Group. Examples include:

- ▶ General updates about the group
- ▶ Guest attendance (including the names of any guests, visitors or BLESS friends)

Please **do not** record information relating to a specific individual in this section.

Why This Matters

If group members ever change Life Groups, notes entered under the group do not carry over with the person. Recording pastoral information in an individual's profile

helps maintain continuity of care, keeps information more secure, and ensures future leaders can continue supporting them appropriately.

Submit Reports Promptly

Please submit your attendance and pastoral care report within a few days of your Life Group meeting. Timely reporting helps our Zone Shepherds and pastoral team stay informed and enables appropriate pastoral follow-up where needed.

Keeping Reports Concise

Please keep group notes concise and focused on the key highlights from your meeting. There is **no need** to report on routine aspects of the meeting, such as who led worship, announcements, prayer or the icebreaker, unless they are particularly significant. This helps ensure reports remain easy to review and that important pastoral information can be identified quickly.

Where a husband and wife have the same pastoral update, there is no need to repeat the same information for both people — simply write "**Same as spouse**" for the second person, to help keep reports concise and easier to review.

Irregular Members

Members who have become irregular in their attendance should remain on your Elvanto list for pastoral care purposes, so that everyone continues to be accounted for. Please continue reaching out to them personally and inviting them to Life Group and Sunday services. If they are no longer able to attend Life Group, you may keep inviting them to IBMs and social events. If they have not attended either Sunday services or Life Group for 3–4 months, their status can be reviewed and archived in Elvanto.

Thank you for faithfully caring for those God has entrusted to you. Your diligence in recording attendance and pastoral information helps our church continue providing effective and consistent pastoral care.

- ▶ Please include any BLESS friends or newcomers that visited in the notes section.
- ▶ We upload all necessary information for events at **idmc.live** and on our website, **idmc.church**, so members can access information and resources at their own convenience.
- ▶ Life Group leaders are responsible for ensuring their members have access to idmc.live.
- ▶ Life Group announcements are found on idmc.live 2–3 days before the Life Group meeting.
- ▶ Life Group materials can be found either on idmc.live or on our website at **idmc.church/life-group-material**.
- ▶ Encourage your members to go through IDMC College and sign up at **idmccollege.com**. Available content includes Discipleship and Leadership courses, and Pastor Paul's Mentoring Moments videos, for your own reference and training.

Newcomers, New Believers & Seekers

NEWCOMERS ASSIGNED TO YOUR LIFE GROUP

As part of our commitment to intentional disciple-making, we assign Life Groups to newcomers so they can be welcomed into a caring community and begin their discipleship journey. Thank you for partnering with us!

- ▶ Be available to meet and greet when our Hosting & Connection Team introduces newcomers to you. Where possible, bring along members of your Life Group to help them feel welcomed.
- ▶ Intentionally invite and encourage newcomers to attend your IBMs and Life Group gatherings.

Elvanto Update

After a newcomer's first Life Group visit, they will be added to your Elvanto Life Group list and labelled as a Contact.

- ▶ After they have attended your Life Group three times, we trust they have moved from being a guest to a friend, and they can then be updated as a Member on your list.
- ▶ If, after three invitations or connection attempts, the newcomer is not interested in joining your Life Group, please leave a connection note when submitting your Elvanto attendance report. We will then remove the newcomer from your list.
- ▶ Please keep us updated on each newcomer's connection progress by recording notes in your Elvanto attendance reports.

Connection Notes

This is a note category in the Elvanto attendance report, found amongst the other labels of pastoral care, prayer requests and praise reports. This category helps us keep track of the movements of visitors and newcomers coming to our church. It can be used for the following scenarios:

- ▶ To provide an update for a newcomer — whether they have attended, expressed interest in attending, or a follow-up has been made
- ▶ To report when a newcomer has made a decision to call IDMC Church their home and become an official member
- ▶ To request that a person be archived from Elvanto due to non-attendance

So, when submitting Life Group attendance reports, please make use of the connection notes for anyone who is a newcomer or visitor.

Important note: when requesting to archive a person, please include the full reason in the notes so that we can review the request before archiving.

Newcomers Welcome Tea

We hold a Newcomers Welcome Tea (NWT) monthly, where newcomers can discover the IDMC vision, meet some church leaders, and hear changed-life stories. It also gives us an opportunity to warmly welcome our newcomers to IDMC Church. Please invite newcomers to NWT and help them sign up via our website at idmc.church/newcomers.

Discovering the Christian Faith (Alpha Course) For Seekers Or New Believers

We encourage those who are seeking to know more about the Christian faith, or who are new believers, to go through our Alpha course. These are 8-session courses dealing with basic foundations, such as: Who is Jesus? What has He done for us? How do I read the Bible? How do I pray? The full 12 sessions are available for those interested in the complete course. We have facilitators trained and available to lead seekers and new believers through Alpha, either online or face to face.

Discovery Track

The IDMC Discovery Track guides you to discover our church, our vision and culture, and how to take your next steps to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is made up of two steps: (1) Discovering our church and its vision, purpose and culture, and (2) Discovering your purpose, gifts and strengths and your place within our church family, in groups and in serving. See **idmccollege.com** for details.

Please encourage anyone in your Life Group or your BLESS list who is a seeker or new believer to sign up for the course at **idmccollege.com/spaces/17809646/content**.

Baptism

We believe in full-immersion water baptism as a next step following salvation, and as an outward act and public declaration of an inward decision to follow Christ. We empower our Pastors, Zone Shepherds and Zone Directors to conduct water baptisms with their Life Groups or Zones, or, if able, together with others at one of our church baptism onsite services.

We encourage every believer to be baptised soon after they have made their decision to follow Christ, and to go through the baptism class teaching video first, to ensure they understand the importance and purpose of water baptism. See **idmc.church/knowning-jesus** for the teaching videos and to register interest in getting baptised.

IDMC College

We also have IDMC College available, with online courses for those who want to grow deeper in the Word and in discipleship. Encourage the members of your group to take the next step and go through these courses at their own pace or with a group. Enrol for free at **idmccollege.com**.

Accountability & Boundaries

Assistant Lifegroup and Life Group Leaders are under-shepherds of the church. They are accountable to Zone Shepherds for pastoral care of their Life Group members and sending in fortnightly Elvanto reports and reporting any other pastoral care issues.

For any issues or questions, the flow of communication should be:

- ▶ Any issues with members or Life Group Leaders — talk directly with the Life Group Leader first, then the Zone Shepherd if needed
- ▶ Any new initiatives within the Life Group — talk them through with the Life Group Leader first, then the Zone Shepherd if needed
- ▶ Feedback should go up to the Life Group Leader, not be discussed or gossiped about amongst members
- ▶ Do not discuss issues with members that have only been discussed at leadership level

As a caution with boundaries, please minister to the same gender only. Refrain from regular texting with the opposite gender — try to redirect them to your spouse or a same-gender Life Group Leader / Assistant Leader. If you must text regularly with the opposite gender, include your spouse in the WhatsApp channel, for safety and appropriateness.

Why Life Groups?

9 GOOD REASONS WHY PEOPLE SHOULD BE IN A LIFE GROUP

1. **You will understand the Bible better in a Life Group.** In a smaller group setting, you can ask questions, participate in discussion of the text, and hear others share insights and illustrations of the truth you are trying to grasp. The Bible must be applied to your personal situation, and that happens best in Life Groups.
2. **You will begin to really feel like part of God's family.** Over fifty times in the New Testament, the phrase "one another" is used to describe our relationship to other believers. We are instructed to love, encourage, pray for, accept, bear one another's burdens, and build up one another. The only way you can obey these commands is in a smaller group! We really do need each other — God never meant for you to go it alone in the Christian life.
3. **Prayer will become more meaningful to you.** In a smaller group, you will learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. In praying together with a few others, we are drawn together and find answers to the needs in our lives.
4. **You will find a place to grow.** Life Groups are a great place to grow — not just in knowledge of the Word, but also in your relationship and walk with God and with your Life Group family. As you grow in authenticity and in sharing your life, you will also grow in accountability, in upholding one another in prayer and encouragement, in your convictions, and in your commitment to the Lord. Life Groups are also a great place to grow in using your gifts to serve the Lord and one another.
5. **You will be able to handle stress and pressure better.** Life Groups provide excellent support in times of crisis, change and stress. You'll have a sense of stability and security knowing there are people who really care for you and are

committed to standing with you.

6. **You will have a natural way to share Christ with friends, relatives and work associates.** Unbelieving friends may be open to an invitation to a casual Bible discussion in a home. In a Life Group, your unbelieving friend can ask questions and express honest doubts without feeling "put on the spot." When your friend sees the love, warmth and honesty of your group, it will make them more receptive to the Good News.
7. **You will develop leadership skills you never knew you had!** The Bible teaches that every believer is given certain talents or "gifts" to benefit others in the family of God. As you share and participate in a relaxed Life Group setting, you'll discover your confidence and self-esteem rising — helping you at work, at church, and in every other relationship.
8. **You will deepen your understanding of worship.** Worship happens any time we focus on God, and sometimes that happens best in a smaller group, praying or singing together.
9. **You will be a New Testament Christian!** The book of Acts is very clear about how God intends for His people to grow and have their needs met in the church.

CONSIDER THESE VERSES:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Every day they continued to meet together; they broke bread in their homes and ate together, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." – **ACTS 2:42, 44, 46-47**

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the Good News that Jesus is the Christ." – **ACTS 5:42**

“Greet also the church that meets at their house.” – ROMANS 16:5

“Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.” – 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19

“Give my greetings to Nympha and the church in her house.” – COLOSSIANS 4:15

We are excited about the incredible potential of the network of Life Groups being built within IDMC Church. Groups have these nine benefits that no believer can afford to pass up.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR IN A LIFE GROUP

Questions people have:

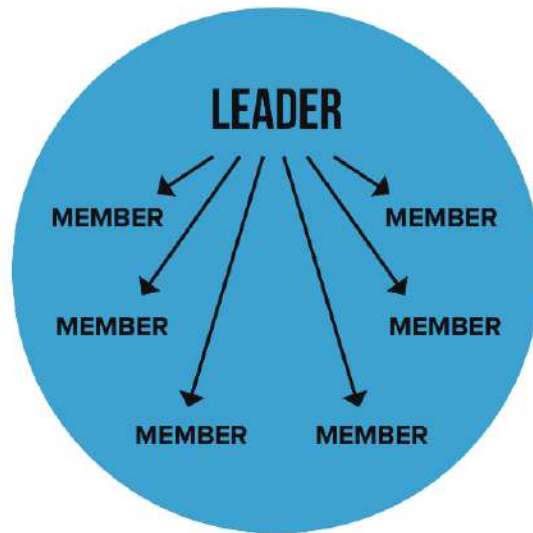
- ▶ **Do I fit here?** This is the question of acceptance.
- ▶ **Does anybody want to know me?** This is the question of friendship.
- ▶ **Am I needed?** This is the question of value.
- ▶ **What is the advantage of joining this group?** This is the question of benefit.
- ▶ **How, and what, can I receive from being part of this group?** This is the question of expectation.

Tips For Facilitating Discussion

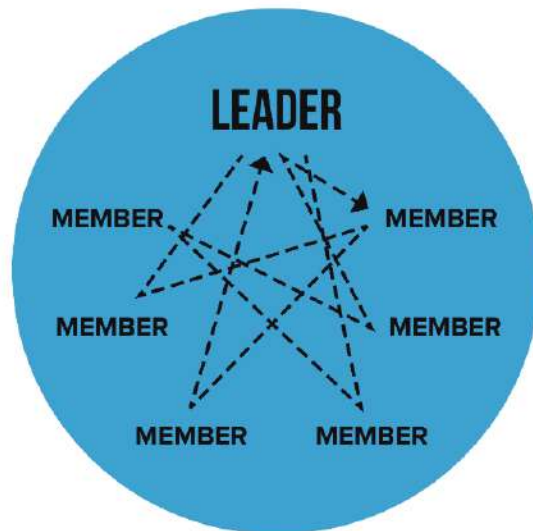
- ▶ Don't answer your own questions
- ▶ Get comfortable with quiet
- ▶ Encourage more than a yes-or-no answer
- ▶ "Anything else? How about...? Someone else?"
- ▶ Give affirmation whenever you can
- ▶ Try to involve everyone
- ▶ Be a good listener — provide support, not quick fixes

- ▶ Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Provide transitions between questions
- ▶ Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage
- ▶ Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud
- ▶ Begin and end on time
- ▶ Don't underestimate growth moments in your group meeting
- ▶ Remember we are to facilitate for life change
- ▶ Remember it's not just about information, but transformation

Because our groups are aimed at transforming people's lives, discussions can sometimes get pretty personal. Because we are trying to get people to interact on a deeper, more personal level, how these moments are handled make or break a Life Group. If handled with compassion, care and concern, that person – and others – will be more likely to share their lives deeply in future discussions. If those moments are dealt with judgmentally or in fear, it is likely no group member will want to try that again, and relationships and discussions will remain on the surface. Be prayerful for God's wisdom in how we react and direct conversations at such times.



UNHEALTHY MODEL



HEALTHY MODEL

Ping pong ball ...KEEP IT IN PLAY!

How To Create Good Group Dynamics

Set Expectations

A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Take time to share how the group will flow from week to week – including when you will begin and end, how discussion or group activities will happen, and how group members can share prayer requests or best engage in the group.

Follow The 70-30 Rule

Give the members of your group room to speak up, instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader.

Keep Discussion Positive

If conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, follow up with them after the group, or call your Zone Shepherd to help you respond well.

Keep The Conversation Relevant To Everyone

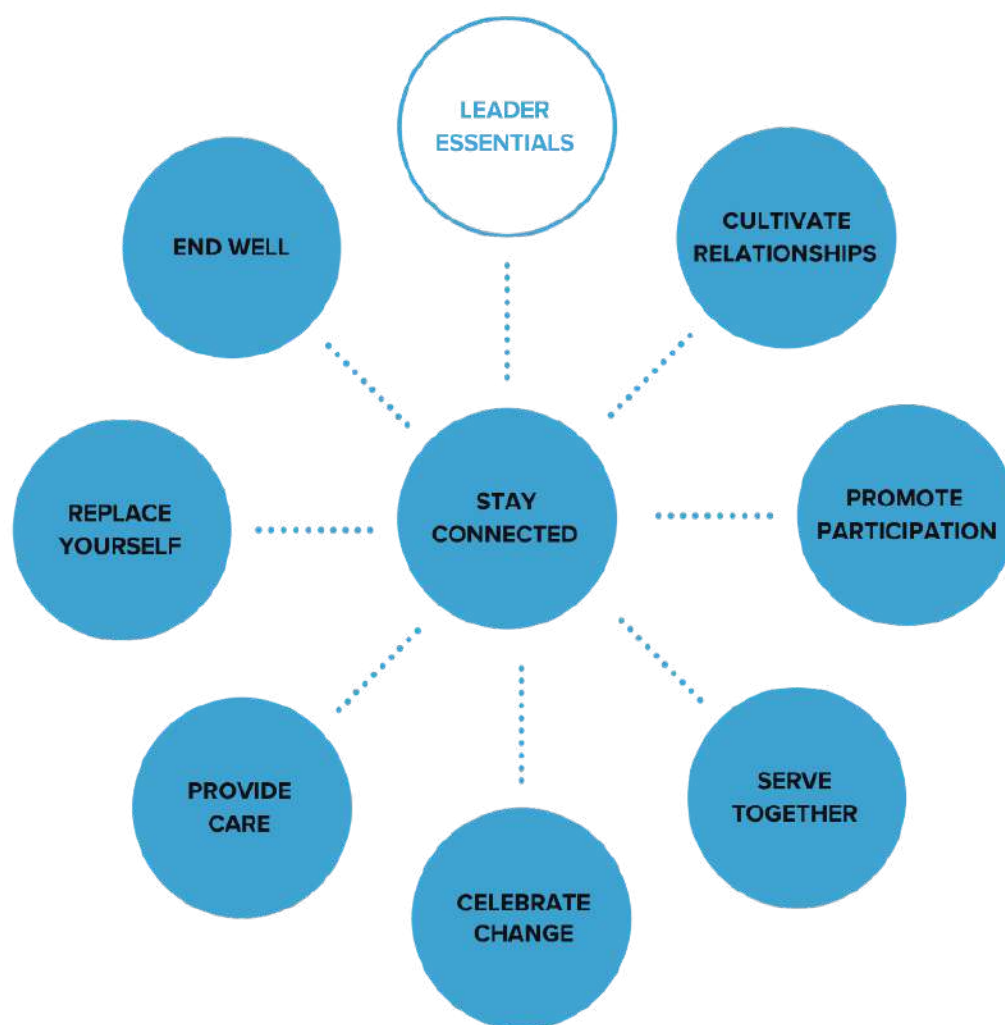
Remember that people in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journey. Be thoughtful when discussing spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new churchgoers.

Respect Boundaries

Men should minister to men, and women should minister to women. A couple may minister to a single person. We want to maintain integrity and purity in our Life Groups. These boundaries help protect leaders and group members from entering an uncomfortable or inappropriate situation.

8 Leadership Essentials

In leading groups, we have discovered several key essentials to creating the optimum group environment for God to work in.



Stay Connected

- ▶ This essential reminds us to stay spiritually nourished.
- ▶ In John 15, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and branches to instruct his followers to "abide." When we stay connected to Jesus in this way, we welcome God's work in us and through us.
- ▶ **Are you staying rooted in your relationship with Jesus Christ, realising that apart from Him you can do nothing?**

Cultivate Relationships

- ▶ This essential is focused on how we build community.
- ▶ By encouraging and facilitating connections outside of regular group meetings, you demonstrate the priority of relationships.
- ▶ **How are you and your group members connecting outside of group time?**

Promote Participation

- ▶ This essential focuses on how you involve your group members.
- ▶ Shared participation — facilitating the study, hosting the meeting, preparing snacks, leading prayer time, planning socials, guiding the curriculum-choice discussion, etc. — creates broader ownership of the group.
- ▶ **How are you involving your group members in supporting the group?**

Serve Together

- ▶ This essential expands the focus of the group beyond itself.
- ▶ Serving those outside of the group is a great way to leverage the influence of the group while strengthening the relationships within it.

- ▶ **Is service a consistent part of your group experience?**

Celebrate Change

- ▶ This essential helps us stay focused on the purpose of the group.
- ▶ If we truly value the life change God brings about in people, it is important that we take time to celebrate it in our groups.
- ▶ **How do you and your group members celebrate the growth you see occurring in each other?**

Provide Care

- ▶ This essential focuses on the big and small ways we can provide care.
- ▶ Often, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.
- ▶ **Do you make it a priority for your group to support and care for each other?**

Replace Yourself

- ▶ This essential challenges us to prepare others for leadership.
- ▶ By passing on knowledge, skills, and opportunities, you are preparing others for future leadership while sharpening your own.
- ▶ **How are you intentionally investing in a potential leader in your group?**

End Well

- ▶ This essential prepares us to transition our groups well.
- ▶ As all groups have a natural life cycle, leaders must work with their group members to craft a picture of a strong finish.
- ▶ **How are you planning today for a successful end to your current group?**

Safer Practices Protocol

I. CHILD ABUSE

Definition according to the Australian Christian Churches Child Protection Policy:

Harm to a child or young person below 18 years of age that has any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child or young person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, as a single act, omission or circumstance, or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Types of Child Abuse

a. Neglect

Continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for their proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care, and adequate supervision.

Indicators / signs in children:

- ▶ Poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation or poor health
- ▶ Inappropriately dressed for weather conditions
- ▶ Extended stays at school, public places, or others' homes
- ▶ Extreme longing for adult affection
- ▶ Self-comforting behaviour, e.g. rocking, sucking
- ▶ Delays in developmental milestones
- ▶ Low weight for age and / or failure to thrive and develop

- ▶ Untreated physical problems, e.g. serious nappy rash
- ▶ Extreme anxiety about being abandoned
- ▶ Child not adequately supervised for their age
- ▶ Scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival

b. Physical Abuse

Non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person. Examples: beating, shaking, lacerations, burns, fractures, poisoning, attempted suffocation, physical mutilation.

Indicators / signs in children:

- ▶ Unexplained bruising to face, head or neck
- ▶ Bruising showing the shape of the object that caused it, e.g. belt buckle, lacerations and welts
- ▶ Explanation of injury inconsistent with the injury itself
- ▶ Abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs
- ▶ Fractures of bones
- ▶ Burns and scalds (including cigarette burns)
- ▶ Drowsiness, vomiting, fits, or retinal haemorrhages
- ▶ Aggression or withdrawal
- ▶ Inappropriate clothes for weather conditions
- ▶ Discomfort with physical contact, and emotional problems

c. Emotional & Psychological Abuse

Behaviour by a parent or caregiver that destroys a child's confidence, resulting in significant emotional disturbance or trauma. Psychological abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition,

perception and moral development. The harm experienced is assessed as detrimental in effect and significant in nature to the child's wellbeing.

Indicators / signs in children:

- ▶ Passive and aggressive behavioural extremes
- ▶ Habit disorders
- ▶ Feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves
- ▶ Inability to value others
- ▶ Lack of trust in people and expectations
- ▶ Lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Disruptiveness
- ▶ Persistent running away from home

d. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, or someone who is stronger, bigger or older (including other children), involves a child in sexual activity by using their power over the child or taking advantage of the child's trust. Examples: sexual touching, sexual intercourse, sexual suggestions to children (including exposure to pornographic material), use of children in the production of pornographic videos or films, exhibitionism, child prostitution.

Indicators / signs in children:

- ▶ Child, or the child's friend, telling you about it, even indirectly
- ▶ Describing sexual acts
- ▶ Excessive seductiveness
- ▶ Going to bed fully clothed

- ▶ Sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for age
- ▶ Regressive behaviour, e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting
- ▶ Bruising or bleeding in the genital area
- ▶ Sexually transmitted diseases
- ▶ Bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- ▶ Self-destructive behaviour
- ▶ Suicide attempts / self-mutilation
- ▶ Child being in contact with a known sex offender
- ▶ Anorexia or over-eating
- ▶ Unexplained accumulation of money and gifts
- ▶ Persistent running away from home
- ▶ Unusual aversion to physical contact
- ▶ Inappropriate expressions of friendship with an adult

e. Witnessing Domestic Violence

"A child being present (hearing or seeing) a parent or sibling subject to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, and/or the damage caused to person or property by a family member's violent behaviour." (adapted from the Australian Institute of Family Studies, www.aifs.gov.au.)

Indicators / signs in children:

- ▶ Displays of aggressive behaviour
- ▶ Development of phobias and insomnia
- ▶ Displays of anxiety
- ▶ Symptoms of depression
- ▶ Diminished self-esteem

- ▶ Poor academic performance and problem-solving skills
- ▶ Reduced social competence skills, including low levels of empathy
- ▶ Displays of emotional distress
- ▶ Physical complaints

When To Report

- ▶ A child tells you they are being harmed (first-hand disclosure) – the fact that a child or young person tells you they have been abused means they have a high level of trust in you, so it is important that you respond appropriately
- ▶ Another person tells you a child is being harmed (second-hand disclosure)
- ▶ You have a reasonable concern that a child is at risk of harm (using the indicators above)
- ▶ There are concerns that the child or young person may have been, or is at risk of being, harmed or abused

Understanding Our Roles

- ▶ Your role is not to conduct an investigation
- ▶ Your role is to nurture and minister to the child, not to engage in discussions about the abuse or investigations
- ▶ Everything shared is confidential, except for those who need to know for pastoral, risk management and reporting purposes

Do's

- ▶ Listen – do not add anything to what the child says (you will need to write this down exactly)
- ▶ Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in speaking to you
- ▶ Inform the child that you need to tell people who will try to help them

- ▶ Ensure the child is not in immediate danger

Don'ts

- ▶ Start an investigation into the information; do not ask leading questions, e.g. questions that may have a yes-or-no answer
- ▶ Promise the child that the abuse will stop
- ▶ Tell anyone who does not need to know

Note: Keep it brief — do not have a long conversation, as this may be seen as you having influenced the child. Remember, this is not the only time the child will have to share their story, and you may hinder an investigation by drawing out too much detail.

Process For Reporting

- ▶ Applicable forms may need to be completed online.
- ▶ A Local Safer Churches Team is to be formed, whose roles include receiving reports, assisting in the reporting process for Child Protection concerns, and keeping accurate records permanently and securely.
- ▶ If a child is at immediate risk of sexual or physical abuse, or a disclosure occurred at a program or event, contact the local Police immediately. Otherwise, report concerns to, and seek advice from, Family and Community Services (FACS). The Child Protection Helpline is 13 21 11.
- ▶ If a church volunteer worker is directly involved, also contact the National Safer Churches Helpline for advice and assistance at 1800 070 511.
- ▶ The local Church Board is expected to implement pastoral care and support for all parties involved, including the child or young person and their family, as much as practicable

Child abuse is a serious and complex problem in the lives of children and young

people. It often occurs in environments that are isolated and stressful, and affects those who are most vulnerable. Abuse often occurs in situations of trust, frequently by a person known to and trusted by the child. Researchers estimate that as many as 1 in 4 children will be sexually abused. Given the statistics of reported cases, this crime is highly underreported — research indicates it takes an average of 7–14 years for victims to tell someone about their sexual abuse, while males take an average of well over 20 years, if they ever disclose it at all.

Protection for those reporting

When suspicions or concerns about a child are reported in accordance with legislation, the person reporting cannot be sued, even if the notification proves to be unsubstantiated. A notifier's identity will not be revealed to the person they have reported, unless a court determines it is in the best interests to do so.

Source: Australian Christian Churches Safer Churches Manual

II. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic and family violence is a type of abuse that occurs within domestic or family relationships, often marked by a significant imbalance of power within the household. It is common for the perpetrator to be highly controlling. One form of domestic violence has been aptly described as "intimate terrorism." A less common form is "common couple violence," where both adult partners hold roughly equal power within the relationship and both, at times, instigate the violence. The term "family violence" recognises that within a household there may be multiple perpetrators and victims, e.g. a teenage child abusing a parent, or a parent abusing a grandparent.

Domestic violence causes fear and physical and/or psychological harm. It is most often (but not exclusively) violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour by a man against a woman. Living with domestic violence has a profound effect on children and young people, and may constitute a form of child abuse. It is to be emphasised that

domestic and family violence is a crime.

Domestic violence can include:

- ▶ Physical assault (including punching, slapping, kicking, pushing, choking, or the use of weapons)
- ▶ Sexual assault (being forced to have sex or participate in sexual activities, either by watching or physically participating)
- ▶ Emotional abuse (making someone feel worthless, criticising their personality, looks or dress, constantly putting them down, threatening to hurt them, their children or their pets)
- ▶ Verbal abuse (including yelling, shouting, name-calling or swearing at someone)
- ▶ Social abuse (being stopped from seeing friends and family, isolating someone socially or geographically)
- ▶ Damaging property (such as furniture, the house or pets, in order to threaten or intimidate someone)
- ▶ Financial abuse (taking control of money, not giving someone enough money to survive, forcing someone to hand over money, or not letting them have a say in how it is spent)

Supporting a Person Who Experiences Domestic Violence

There are great risks involved in confronting perpetrators of domestic violence. It is important to seek advice from agencies such as the police and Family and Community Services. It is also important not to attempt to counsel the couple together when there is active domestic violence.

If you suspect someone is a victim of abuse and violence but they haven't opened up to you about it, it may be prudent to say, "I'm concerned about your safety. I'm worried

about you and how you are being treated." Avoid giving your opinion. The person may deny there is a problem or avoid the conversation – if this happens, respect their right to privacy and don't force them to discuss the relationship if they aren't ready. Let them know you care and are there to listen and support them whenever they want to talk.

When someone is ready to talk:

- ▶ Believe what they tell you
- ▶ Be empathetic – let them know no one deserves to be abused, beaten or threatened
- ▶ Focus on how they are feeling and coping with the domestic violence; be patient, and don't insist that they leave the relationship or criticise them for staying – this is their decision to make in their own time, and there are many obstacles (such as a cycle of violence) that stop them from leaving
- ▶ Let them know domestic violence is not their fault. They may blame the abuser's behaviour on outside factors such as financial hardship, job loss, stress, alcohol or drug use – let them know that anger is not an excuse for domestic violence, and give them emotional support that they are a good and worthy person
- ▶ Focus on their safety and the safety of their children – increased risk to children's safety gives a clearer, urgent indication to involve the police or child protection agencies
- ▶ Let them know you are there for them (if this does not put your own safety at risk). Help them make a safety plan, e.g. keeping a diary of what's happening, thinking through steps to take if their partner becomes abusive again, making a list of people to call in an emergency, and/or hiding money or clothing for future emergencies
- ▶ Let them know about the Domestic Violence Line: 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) /

1800 656 463 (Family and Community Services)

- ▶ If an assault is in progress, call the police urgently

Things to avoid:

- ▶ Avoid blaming the person disclosing abuse for the domestic violence
- ▶ Avoid blaming alcohol, other drugs or mental health issues for the domestic violence
- ▶ Avoid telling the person what to do
- ▶ Avoid talking to the abuser about their behaviour
- ▶ Avoid making negative comments about the abuser
- ▶ Do not expect the person disclosing abuse to leave the relationship

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse occurs when any act within a relationship of trust results in harm to an older person. It can include physical, sexual, financial, psychological and social abuse, and/or neglect.

Suspicious of abuse may be raised by physical signs and symptoms, or by changes in the older person's behaviour. Be aware of any sudden or unusual changes in behaviour patterns among congregation members. A single possible sign of abuse does not automatically mean abuse is occurring – consider the context.

Concerns requiring reporting may arise from a single event or a pattern of events. The indicators of child abuse listed earlier may be used as a guide for concerns about the elderly.

Source: Australian Christian Churches Safer Churches Manual

Church Protocol on Handling Domestic Violence Cases

The handling of domestic violence cases around the Life Group is complex and entails some great risks. Though it is classified as a criminal action, domestic violence reporting is dependent on the victim's decision unless an active incident is being witnessed or the safety of children is at risk. It is prudent for the Life Group Leader to seek advice and a plan of action with the Zone Shepherd, and subsequently with the Life Group Directors, for support and prayer.

III. SUICIDE

Suicide is nearly always due to untreated depression, causes widespread distress, and represents a tragic waste of life. Around eighty percent of suicides are male, mainly aged 25–44, due to a greater propensity to use violent means and reluctance to raise issues of emotional distress. Nearly every person who dies by suicide has talked about it beforehand.

Thoughts of suicide are a normal human experience — surveys suggest at least 3% of the Australian population have considered suicide in the previous 12 months. From a public-health perspective, predicting and treating the individuals at greatest risk is extremely difficult. Patients recently discharged from psychiatric units are statistically at extreme risk of suicide for the first few weeks, and up to 50% of people will repeat a suicide attempt.

Risk factors:

- ▶ Male
- ▶ Low self-esteem, depression
- ▶ Severe anxiety / hopelessness
- ▶ Substance abuse, such as alcohol or drug abuse
- ▶ Elderly, living alone and recently widowed

- ▶ Psychiatric illness, financial setbacks or serious health problems
- ▶ Non-heterosexual orientation
- ▶ Past suicide attempt
- ▶ Family history of suicide
- ▶ Childhood history of trauma
- ▶ Severe insomnia
- ▶ Pervasive suicidal thoughts with involved planning
- ▶ Poor treatment compliance
- ▶ Access to lethal means
- ▶ Lack of social support; impaired parental relationship; non-intact families
- ▶ Parental mental illness
- ▶ Indigenous heritage
- ▶ Impulsivity; impaired problem-solving skills
- ▶ Recent discharge from hospital
- ▶ Lack of protective factors, e.g. religious beliefs, connection to school, workplace or social supports

Ask questions — it saves lives:

- ▶ Are things so bad you sometimes wish you did not wake up this morning?
- ▶ Do you actually wish you were dead?
- ▶ Have you thought of harming yourself?
- ▶ Have you considered various ways?
- ▶ Have you made plans?
- ▶ Have you made any preparations?
- ▶ Have you been close to doing something?

- ▶ Have you done something?

It is a myth that asking about suicidal ideation makes a person more suicidal – evidence suggests the opposite. If someone admits to suicidal thoughts, it is important to acknowledge their disclosure, express empathy for their suffering, and reassure them that they have a known, treatable illness that can be helped. Suicidal patients are most affected by hopelessness, anxiety, panic and insomnia, nearly always resulting from depressive illness – intensive support targeting these symptoms can save lives. Encourage a person feeling suicidal to avoid alcohol, as it increases the risk of acting on suicidal thoughts.

Immediate Management Principles

- ▶ An acute suicide attempt, by whatever means, is an indication for immediate inpatient management.
- ▶ An acute event involving suicidal intent requires referral to hospital for urgent assessment; if the person refuses admission, further support from a GP, mental health services or police may be needed.
- ▶ Persons with suicidal ideation may often be best assessed and treated by a caring GP, working collaboratively with other mental health professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists.

Developing A Safety Plan

To be developed by an attending GP or psychologist in collaboration with the person and their support network.

- ▶ Identify signs that the person is deteriorating, e.g. decreasing sleep, losing weight, not attending school or work, having suicidal thoughts.
- ▶ Create a list of personalised internal coping strategies, e.g. reasons for living, or a "Hope Box" of pictures from happy times to look at when struggling.

- ▶ Use distraction techniques involving family and friends, e.g. listening to music, playing instruments, watching movies together, regular baths, time with pets, or going for a walk.
- ▶ Involve friends and family in problem-solving during a crisis — ensure the person has ready access to at least 5 people they can call at any time.
- ▶ Identify mental health clinicians or a GP accessible for urgent advice; suicidal adolescents can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.
- ▶ Restrict access to lethal means, including medications

Church Protocol For Handling Suicidal Cases

Encountering a suicidal case within a Life Group should involve a caring GP and subsequent collaboration with other mental health professionals, following the guidance above. The Life Group leader or members, depending on their connection with the person, may play an active role as one of the contactable people for the at-risk person. As with the domestic violence protocol, seek support and prayer from your Zone Shepherd and Life Group Director.

Source: Practical Management of the Suicidal Patient, Dr David Horgan, Australian Family Physician

Responding to Sexual Assault Disclosures (Adults)

As leaders, we may occasionally encounter members who disclose experiences of sexual assault or sexual abuse. These situations require wisdom, compassion, healthy boundaries and accountability. Leaders should remember that their role is not to investigate what happened, but to listen, support, and connect the individual with appropriate care and oversight.

Life Groups are a place for discipleship, encouragement, prayer and support. However, Life Group Leaders are not expected to function as professional counsellors, investigators or crisis responders.

If an adult discloses sexual assault or sexual abuse:

- ▶ Remain calm and compassionate
- ▶ Listen without judgement or shock
- ▶ Thank them for trusting you
- ▶ Do not pressure them to share more than they are comfortable sharing
- ▶ Avoid giving simplistic answers or trying to immediately "fix" the situation
- ▶ Encourage them to seek appropriate professional support if needed
- ▶ Avoid making promises or commitments on behalf of the church that you are unable to fulfil

Many people who have experienced sexual trauma may struggle with fear, anger, anxiety, grief or other emotional reactions. Leaders should respond with patience, gentleness and wisdom, while still maintaining a healthy and safe group environment.

Confidentiality and Accountability

- ▶ Leaders should not promise absolute confidentiality, as there may be situations where pastoral oversight, safeguarding concerns or safety concerns require appropriate escalation.
- ▶ Sensitive information should not be broadly shared amongst leaders or members.
- ▶ Sensitive information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, for appropriate pastoral care, safety or accountability purposes.
- ▶ Wherever possible, inform the person if guidance or support from a Zone Shepherd or Pastor is needed.
- ▶ Wherever possible, seek the person's consent before sharing sensitive information with other leaders or pastors.
- ▶ Leaders are permitted, and encouraged, to seek appropriate pastoral guidance

and oversight where necessary for care, safety and accountability.

- ▶ Avoid recording unnecessary sensitive details in reports, Elvanto notes or group communications.
- ▶ Only those directly involved in providing pastoral care or oversight should receive sensitive information

The guidelines in this section primarily relate to disclosures involving adults (18 years and over). If a disclosure involves a person under 18, leaders must immediately follow the church's Child Protection Policy & Procedures and notify the appropriate Pastor or Child Safety personnel.

Reporting to Authorities

The decision to report a sexual assault to police generally rests with the adult involved. Leaders should not pressure, coerce or shame an individual into making a report. However, leaders may encourage the person to consider seeking legal advice, reporting the matter to police, or accessing appropriate support services where appropriate. Where there are concerns regarding the safety of others, ongoing offending, or other serious safeguarding concerns, leaders should seek guidance from their Zone Shepherd or Pastor regarding appropriate next steps.

Pastoral Care Approach

Where appropriate, pastoral care and support should generally flow through the church's existing leadership and accountability structures, including the member's assigned Life Group Leaders, Zone Shepherds and overseeing Pastors. At the same time, we recognise that individuals may at times feel more comfortable speaking with another appropriate leader or pastor, particularly in sensitive situations. Pastoral care may include:

- ▶ Providing prayer, encouragement and pastoral support

- ▶ Encouraging appropriate professional support, counselling or other support services
- ▶ Limited pastoral oversight from relevant leaders or pastors on a need-to-know basis
- ▶ Supporting the member to continue engaging in healthy Christian community at a pace appropriate for them
- ▶ Maintaining a safe and respectful Life Group environment for all members

For younger adults, leaders should encourage them, where appropriate and safe to do so, to consider sharing their situation with their parents or a trusted family member who can provide additional support and care.

Healthy Pastoral Boundaries

- ▶ Avoid ongoing counselling-style ministry beyond your level of training
- ▶ Maintain healthy emotional and relational boundaries
- ▶ Seek guidance from Zone Shepherds or Pastors if situations become complex or begin affecting the health of the group
- ▶ Follow up privately and gently where appropriate, rather than correcting people publicly during discussions

Our desire is for every Life Group to be a safe, healthy and Christ-centred environment where people can experience support, discipleship, healing and community.

Responding to Marriage Difficulties in Adults

As leaders, we may occasionally encounter members who disclose significant marriage difficulties. These situations require wisdom, compassion, healthy boundaries and accountability. Leaders should remember that their role is not to take sides, determine who is right or wrong, or act as professional marriage counselors,

but to listen, support and connect individuals with appropriate care and oversight.

Life Groups are a place for discipleship, encouragement, prayer and support. However, Life Group Leaders are not expected to function as professional counsellors, mediators or crisis responders.

If an individual or couple discloses marriage difficulties:

- ▶ Remain calm and compassionate
- ▶ Listen without judgement
- ▶ Encourage honesty, humility and Christ-like conduct
- ▶ Avoid taking sides or forming conclusions based on one person's account
- ▶ Avoid making assumptions about the situation
- ▶ Avoid giving simplistic answers or trying to immediately "fix" the situation
- ▶ Encourage appropriate professional support or marriage counselling where needed
- ▶ Avoid making promises or commitments on behalf of the church that you are unable to fulfil

Many couples experiencing marriage difficulties may struggle with hurt, disappointment, frustration, anger, grief or confusion. Leaders should respond with patience, gentleness and wisdom, while still maintaining a healthy and safe group environment.

Important note: where allegations or disclosures of domestic abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, coercive control or safety concerns arise, leaders should follow the relevant Domestic Abuse or Sexual Assault procedures and seek pastoral oversight immediately.

Confidentiality and Accountability

- ▶ Sensitive information should not be broadly shared amongst leaders or members
- ▶ Sensitive information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, for appropriate pastoral care, safety or accountability purposes
- ▶ Wherever possible, inform the person if guidance or support from a Zone Shepherd or Pastor is needed
- ▶ Wherever possible, seek the person's consent before sharing sensitive information with other leaders or pastors
- ▶ Leaders are permitted, and encouraged, to seek appropriate pastoral guidance and oversight where necessary for care, safety and accountability
- ▶ Avoid recording unnecessary sensitive details in reports, Elvanto notes or group communications
- ▶ Only those directly involved in providing pastoral care or oversight should receive sensitive information

Pastoral Care Approach

Where appropriate, pastoral care and support should generally flow through the church's existing leadership and accountability structures, including the member's assigned Life Group Leaders, Zone Shepherds and overseeing Pastors. At the same time, we recognise individuals may at times feel more comfortable speaking with another appropriate leader or pastor. Pastoral care may include:

- ▶ Providing prayer, encouragement and pastoral support
- ▶ Encouraging healthy communication and reconciliation where appropriate
- ▶ Encouraging appropriate professional support, counselling or marriage enrichment programs

- ▶ Limited pastoral oversight from relevant leaders or pastors on a need-to-know basis
- ▶ Supporting the couple to continue engaging in healthy Christian community where appropriate
- ▶ Maintaining a safe and respectful Life Group environment for all members

Healthy Pastoral Boundaries

- ▶ Avoid ongoing counselling-style ministry beyond your level of training
- ▶ Maintain healthy emotional and relational boundaries
- ▶ Avoid becoming the primary support person for either spouse
- ▶ Avoid secretive meetings or communications that could create misunderstanding or unhealthy dependency
- ▶ Seek guidance from Zone Shepherds or Pastors if situations become complex or begin affecting the health of the group
- ▶ Follow up privately and gently where appropriate, rather than correcting people publicly during discussions

Our desire is for every Life Group to be a safe, healthy and Christ-centred environment where individuals and couples can experience support, discipleship, healing and community.

Child Protection Policy & Procedures

Policy Statement

Children and young people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe at all times. These policies and procedures have been developed for the protection of children and youth within the ministries of IDMC Church.

This policy outlines the overall approach adopted by IDMC Church in response to legislation enacted by the Government of New South Wales to stop sex offenders gaining access to children. It also outlines processes regarding screening of volunteers, Working with Children Checks, and the handling and reporting of complaints.

The members of this church are committed to providing a safe environment for children to hear the gospel, grow in Christ, and for leaders to exercise their ministries.

Legislation

At the time of writing this policy, the following legislation created obligations for IDMC Church:

- ▶ Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- ▶ Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- ▶ Child Protection (Working with Children) Amendment (Miscellaneous) Regulation 2013

Object of the Act

To protect children by not permitting certain persons to engage in child-related work, and by requiring persons engaged in child-related work to hold Working with Children Check clearances. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children – and, in particular, protecting them from child abuse – is the paramount consideration in the operation of this Act.

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Child / Children	Refers to those 18 years and under.
Youth / Young People	Used interchangeably with "Child" or "Children" in this policy.
Kids Ministry Leaders / Youth Leaders	Any person over the age of 18 who is responsible for the control and safety of any child placed in their care in the course of a recognised ministry of the church.
Church	IDMC Church
Ministry	An organised, regular activity of the church that relates to a specific age bracket or purpose.
Elder	Church Council members.
Ministry Directors	The person recognised by the Council of Elders as coordinating a ministry.

Term	Definition
OCG	Office of the Children's Guardian
DFCS	The New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services

Nominated Contact People

Persons to be contacted by the OCG if an employee or volunteer is barred:

- ▶ Senior Pastor Paul Jeyachandran — 02 9680 9144
- ▶ Pastor Guy Lam — 02 9680 9144

Child Ministry Positions

The following positions within the church have currently been identified as child-related. If a new ministry relating to children is started, this policy will be amended to include the new relevant positions.

- ▶ All elders or council members
- ▶ Senior Pastors
- ▶ Pastors
- ▶ IDMC Kids Ministry Director
- ▶ IDMC Church Youth Ministry Director
- ▶ IDMC Kids Ministry Teachers and Assistants, including Crèche and Playgroup Carers
- ▶ IDMC Church Youth Leaders over the age of 18

- ▶ Young Family Life Group Leaders and Zone Shepherds
- ▶ Church employees carrying out child-related services
- ▶ Service Providers carrying out child-related services

Conduct Guidelines

- ▶ If in any physical contact with children, leaders should take care to respect the child's feelings and privacy
- ▶ The age of individuals is one of the determinants in deciding what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
- ▶ Leaders should not normally visit children in their homes unless a parent is present and/or another leader accompanies them
- ▶ Adults and children are expected to respect each other's privacy during activities requiring undressing, dressing or changing clothes. Leaders should set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations. No leader shall be alone in a room with a child while either is changing
- ▶ Nude swimming or similar activities is forbidden
- ▶ Initiations and secret ceremonies are prohibited. All aspects of every child-related program are open to observation by parents / guardians
- ▶ Leaders have the right to ask persons who do not have a valid reason to be present at child-related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply
- ▶ When travelling with persons under 18, there must be at least 3 people travelling together at any given time
- ▶ When meeting with persons under 18 – including for mentoring or pastoral care – there must be at least 3 people present

- ▶ There shall always be at least two approved leaders at any child-related ministry event
- ▶ If any personal counselling is to be done, it shall be carried out within sight of another leader
- ▶ Text messages, emails and phone calls with minors should be kept to ministry-related purposes only, and to an appropriate amount. Communicating on public forums such as group WhatsApp channels is generally acceptable

Inappropriate Behaviour by Leaders

Whilst some actions are not regarded as sexual assault, they are nonetheless regarded as unacceptable behaviour for Christians. These include:

- ▶ Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature
- ▶ Coarse language, especially of a sexual nature
- ▶ Suggestive gestures or remarks
- ▶ Jokes of a sexual nature
- ▶ Inappropriate but accidental touching
- ▶ Inappropriate literature or video (e.g. PG, M, MA, R or X rated material used with younger children)
- ▶ Any act of violence committed by a leader in the course of an activity is unacceptable
- ▶ Ministry Directors are to ensure high standards of conduct are maintained at all times

Procedure for Notification of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act and/or threat to perform such an act upon a child. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust in order to involve them in sexual activity. Sexual abuse does not necessarily involve genital contact – it can be any act that erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been, or is being, sexually assaulted on church property or during a church activity, the local Police shall be contacted immediately. Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

- ▶ A child discloses that he or she has been sexually assaulted
- ▶ Someone close to the child (e.g. sibling, relative, close friend) discloses on behalf of that child

These procedures also apply if a child discloses a sexual assault that occurred somewhere other than the church (e.g. home or school).

When a child confides in a leader that he or she is a victim of sexual or other abuse, that leader will refer the matter to the Senior Pastor or another Pastor as soon as possible. The Senior Pastor or Pastor shall become the liaison with DFCS and the Police, and shall complete the Complaints Record Form – used to record any suspicion, allegation or disclosure of child abuse, or a complaint of inappropriate behaviour.

The person to whom the original disclosure is made shall maintain appropriate pastoral care to the one making the disclosure. This includes:

- ▶ Not pushing the child to disclose details of the alleged assault, or attempting to investigate the allegation

- ▶ Assuring the child that they are understood, that their disclosure is being taken seriously, that what happened is not their fault, and that they were right to disclose it
- ▶ Not making contact with the alleged perpetrator. If the leader is already providing counsel to the alleged perpetrator, another person should assume this responsibility for the duration of any investigation
- ▶ If the alleged assault took place recently, the child's clothing should be retained for police forensic examination
- ▶ Maintaining confidentiality — only speak to a Pastor, Elder, Ministry Director, parent / guardian (unless they are the alleged perpetrator), DFCS or Police
- ▶ The church reserves the right to carry out church disciplinary procedures in accordance with its policies

Underage and Occasional Workers

The church recognises the need to use underage and occasional workers in its children's and youth programs. Therefore, subject to the Senior Pastor's / Ministry Director's discretion, volunteers who have not completed a Working with Children Check may be rostered provided they are supervised by a worker who has completed and cleared the check. An occasional worker is defined as a person who is not on a regular roster but is called upon to assist only where unforeseen circumstances have arisen.

Alcohol and Drugs

The consumption of alcohol and/or illegal drugs on church grounds or during an activity is not to be condoned by any leader. Any child found to be under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs is to be counselled, and the parents / guardians

contacted so the child can be returned home immediately.

Any alcohol and/or illegal drugs found on church grounds are to be removed, and the location reported to the Senior Pastor or Elder. Any child required to take prescription medication shall provide a letter from their parents / guardians to the Ministry Director.

Leadership Commitment Pledge

As leaders we are entrusted with a great responsibility to steward the grace that is given to us and run our own race well before the Lord and His people. Hence, we ask all leaders to make the following leadership commitment!

1. I am committed to love God wholeheartedly and demonstrate that love by obeying His Word and loving His Church.
2. I am committed to personal discipleship and spiritual growth evidenced by:
 - a. Having consistent and meaningful communion with the Lord daily and deepening in consecration.
 - b. Rendering my tithes to the Lord's work at IDMC and giving generously towards the vision and mission of the Church.
 - c. Be an active participant of IDMC ministries & all significant events hosted by IDMC.
 - d. Actively share my faith with others as the Lord will enable me to.
3. I am committed to the purpose and vision of IDMC Church of multiplying disciples by being a leader of a Life Group and leading towards multiplication of the group and of disciples.
4. I am committed to volunteer to be accountable and submit to the leadership of IDMC Church.
5. I am committed to attending Leadership Trainings, Leaders Meetings, Breakthrough Weekends (where possible) and other Key IDMC events.
6. I am committed to live out Christlikeness in my character, recognising that

character comes before conduct and attitude is superior to abilities.

Thank you for joining us in building an intentional discipling church that moves people towards authentic discipleship to Jesus and intentional discipling of a certain kind!

Leader's Name

Leader's Signature

Date

“Disciplemaking is all about a certain kind of person, who is radically committed to a certain kind of purpose, who through a certain kind of process, reproduces a certain kind of product.”

REV. EDMUND CHAN



Intentional Disciple Making Church
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