



New Group Leader Training

Dear Bayside Groups Leader,

Are you ready for a great adventure? As the Director of Groups at Bayside Lakewood Ranch, I want to personally welcome you to the team!

We are excited about Bayside Groups because we know that life change happens in the context of relationships. Groups are a place where people can have fun, develop friendships, grow spiritually, serve others, experience authentic biblical community, and multiply future group leaders.

We hope that this information will be a valuable resource as you lead your group and develop other leaders at our church.

We are looking forward to taking this journey with you. Your Bayside Groups Team is committed to praying for you and supporting you!

Let's have some fun and watch God do **immeasurably more!**

**Pastor Julia Mateer
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Meet Your Bayside Lakewood Ranch Groups Team

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The best place to begin anything is at the beginning.

With that in mind, this resource will help you unpack the following items:

- **Why Do We Have Groups?**
- **What Does a Bayside Group Look Like?**
- **Who Can Lead a Group?**
- **How Do I Become a Leader?**
- **How Do I Form and Lead My Group? Details, please!**
- **What Resources are There to Help Me?**
- **Defining the Win**
- **FAQ's**

Why Do We Have Groups?

1. We are created for relationships.

- God created us in His image to have a relationship with Him and with one another (Gen 1:26).

2. In Bayside Groups, people grow deeper in authentic relationships as modeled by Jesus Himself and the early church.

- Jesus calls the disciples His friends, and allows them to see His pain and struggle with the will of God (Matt 26:36,37).
- In the early church, they connected for fellowship, prayer, and discussion of spiritual growth (Acts 2:46,47).

3. Honest friendships help us grow and mature in Christ.

- Group environments create opportunities for people to become more fully devoted followers of Christ through lasting friendships.
- Just as we cannot get our outward person or body ready in the morning without looking in a mirror, we can never get our inner person or spirit in shape without the 'mirror' of honest accountable relationships (Ephesians 4:15,16).

4. Relationships make us stronger spiritually and prevent spiritual drift.

- The Bible describes Christ-followers as a body, and no body-part can remain alive and or strong if disconnected from the rest of the body.
- You will become like your inner circle of friends (our Friday-night crowd will influence us as much or more than our Sunday-morning crowd).
- Jesus described Himself as the 'Good Shepherd', and as His followers, we share in this ministry of caring for and protecting each other.

5. Bayside groups mature and equip future leaders.

- Part of Bayside's mission is to reach people for Christ, raise them up to become followers of Christ and release them into their God-given purpose. As a Group leader, you are on a mission to identify and raise up potential Bayside Group leaders. God's Kingdom can only grow when Christ-followers take a step of faith and lead in the local church.

What Does a Bayside Group Look Like?

- 1. A Bayside group must have 3 or more people attending, including the leader.**
- 2. They meet weekly, semi-monthly.**
- 3. They are designed around common interests with the goal of building relationships and growing spiritually. For example,** Life-stage (ex. newlyweds, new parents, empty-nest), Subject/Curriculum (ex. Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, The Bevere's), Activity. Leaders choose the type of activity or subject for their group with approval from the Bayside Groups Department. (A variety of curriculum is available to borrow.)
- 4. They provide an opportunity for future leaders to learn and grow.**

Bayside groups:

1. Are fun and relational!

- At Bayside, the services and events are fun, energetic and relational, so most effective small groups mirror these qualities with crowd breakers, games and music. If you aren't having fun, neither is anyone else!
- Go on group outings such as road trips, camping, shopping, vacations, BBQ's to build a sense of belonging outside normal group times.
- It is a great idea to take the first meeting to build relationships by having members tell how they got connected to Bayside. When we understand each other's story, friendships are formed.

2. Are catalysts of spiritual growth and transformation.

- Ask questions about life experiences but avoid doing all the talking.
- Encourage the quiet ones in the group to participate.
- If conflict occurs during the discussion, encourage members to respect and care for each other even when they don't agree.

3. Develop future leaders.

- Invite members to share responsibilities of the group such as hosting, co-leading, leading a discussion, being in charge of food, and/or handling group emails or group texts.

- Cast vision at every meeting for leaders to consider leading a group in the future.

4. Serve each other, their local church, their city, and the world by:

- Meeting the practical needs of members going through hardship. For example, bringing meals to someone after surgery, mowing their lawn, and/or visiting them in the hospital.
- Praying for/with members who are going through hardship or celebrating life's special moments.
- Serving as a group in an area of the church like Bayside Kids or an Outreach event. The opportunities are endless.

5. Allow dialogue for everyone wherever they are on their spiritual journey.

- Sometimes, people that have not experienced Jesus as their Lord and Savior attend groups . Groups need to be a safe place for members to bring their unsaved friends or co-workers.
- Allowing group attenders to investigate faith and belong before they believe is often the tipping point that allows God to bring people to saving faith.

6. Have clear communication.

- Contact with new sign-ups ***within 24*** hours of them joining your group through PCO.
- Remind members about your group through weekly calls and emails ***especially when there are changes in schedule or location. Try not to change the schedule and location after the group begins because people tend to stop attending.***
- Coordinate sign-ups for refreshments.
- As a Bayside group leader, make sure to pray for your group members, and connect with them throughout the semester to encourage and support them. Groupme is a great tool to use for group texts.

7. Are safe.

Here are some Ground Rules for Creating Safe Groups:

- Confidentiality - what is said in the group stays in the group.
- Honor – aligns with the heart of Pastor Randy and Bayside Group leadership.
- Respect everyone’s opinion- we can disagree respectfully and grow through loving conflict.
- Appropriately Transparent - some subjects should be saved for a close friend, coach, pastor or counselor. *For example, something your spouse is not comfortable with you sharing with the group* or a past abuse or trauma.
- Avoid over-participation - allow everyone to speak, give guidelines such as: go around the circle, take 60 seconds to answer, let’s hear from some of you that have not answered yet.
- Bayside groups are a place for positive growth in our walk with God, so avoid negativity about a person in or outside the group. Steer discussions toward personal growth, not gossip about other people, churches, or politicians.
- Make sure the group does not become centered on one person’s problems.
- The following are **not allowed** in Bayside Groups or church sponsored gatherings:

- Alcohol or tobacco, because Pastor Randy’s heart is to never cause someone struggling with addictions to stumble. Romans 14:21 says,

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

- Be careful what you put on your social media! As a leader, please avoid divisive political or opinion posts.

- Recruiting for businesses because:

➤ Bayside groups are a place for spiritual and relational growth, **not financial gain**. For example, recruiting for

multi-level marketing or other types of businesses is not allowed.

- Bayside Groups develop Christ followers to be planted in their local church family and to partner with our Pastor's vision to reach our city.

Who Can Lead a Group?

Any Christ-follower who **has completed the entire Growth Track including Freedom Groups and Freedom Weekend.** You must also complete **MyLeadership** (online training) along with a **New Leader Training**.

How Does a Leader Become a Leader?

Has someone asked you to lead a group? If they have, then they see something in you that perhaps you don't (we rarely see this in ourselves). Trust the ask and just say yes!

Are you sensing a prompt from the Holy Spirit to lead a group? We are praying you will say, yes, to that prompt!

Remember, you don't need to be a Bible scholar or a public speaker to lead a group. If you have ever had people in your home for dinner, enjoyed conversation and fellowship, then you can lead a group. All you need to do is have a teachable attitude to learn a few skills to have an irresistible group. God will do the rest.

How Do I Form and Lead my Group? Details, Please!

The best groups are born out of someone's personal passion whether it is volleyball, movies or in-depth bible study. Identify what you love to do, invite others to do it with you and you have a group.

Once you have completed the training requirements (above) and know what kind of group you want to lead, simply go to baysidegroups.com and fill out the Dream Team Questionnaire form under "Apply to Lead a Group". Once that is completed, you will receive a follow-up email from your group coordinator with instructions for your next steps.

If you need further information before you do that, reach out to your Groups Coordinator (see "Meet Your Groups Team" for who that is).

Before your group starts, you will be assigned a "coach." This person is specially trained to support you, pray for you and help you lead a fantastic group.

How Does a Leader Name a Group?

What you name your group is very important! Make sure you give the person searching for a group a clear picture of what they are joining. Ex: Breakfast Blessings, Single and Satisfied, Men of Purpose, Weekend Warriors, Women's Bible Study.

In PCO you will be able to write a description of your group and give details about what the group will cover. Make it clear! Be sure to include details such as if childcare is available, and mask policies (if applicable).

How do I promote my group?

Tell your family and friends about your group. Send an email blast.

Post your group on facebook, twitter, instagram and more.

Volunteer on Launch weekends where you will help others find a group but will also be on hand to answer questions about your group.

How does someone join my group?

Potential members will be able to join a group by signing up on a Bayside Groups Launch Weekend or through our website. You are also able to add members yourself through PCO.

Before Your Group Starts:

Prepare your space ahead of time. Whether you meet at the church, in your home or another location, make sure your space is ready to receive your guests, create a comfortable environment (picked up, free from distractions, well lit, ample seating, etc).

Prepare prayerfully as well. Review your material ahead of time and pray over it. Pray for each person in the group. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you help others take steps toward Jesus each week.

Think through your timing. Honor people's schedules by beginning and ending on time. Know how much time you need for each portion of your group (prayer, icebreakers, check-ins, study/video, discussion).

Group Time!

As guests arrive, welcome them. Make any introductions and announcements.

Set "ground rules" such as confidentiality, respect and kindness.

Open with prayer. Simply invite the Holy Spirit to speak personally and powerfully to each person.

Begin with "check-ins" or ice-breakers. Need ideas? Your coach or coordinator can help.

During group, encourage discussion. No one expects you to "teach." As a leader, you are first and foremost a facilitator of discussion. You do not have to have all the answers, "I don't know" or "I'll find that out" are perfectly fine responses to questions.

Give everyone who wants to speak a chance to do so. Not everyone will want to, and that is ok. Be respectful. Politely redirect discussion if anyone dominates the conversation. Moments of silence are good things, don't feel the need to fill every minute with conversation, let the Spirit stir hearts. When someone shares, affirm them for speaking up and thank them for their helpful response. Build personal connections with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things.

Remember, God's Word is Truth. Opinions and experiences can be useful and helpful, but God has given us His Word to be authority and His Spirit to work in people's lives. Continue to point others to the Bible and to next steps of faith.

After the first meeting, send an email to thank them for coming and reminding them of the details of the next group. Calling members, acknowledging birthdays and special occasions, praying for their families are great ways to create community.

What Resources are Available to Help Me?

Your Coach and Lead Coach!

1. **You are not leading alone! You will be provided with a Bayside Group Coach.** This is your most important support relationship as it relates to your role as a leader. Lean into them often. **A Coach has been chosen by leadership, has led Bayside Groups, and has been trained to help you become the BEST group leader you can be. Your coach will pray, encourage and support you and will also visit your group during the semester.**
2. **Meeting with your Coach is a requirement for leading a Bayside Group.** Please respond when they reach out to you and make your time with them a priority.

Your meeting may look like this:

- At Bayside before service, at a coffee shop, having lunch together. Coach/group leaders can even meet using video chat via Zoom or Google Hangouts.
- When you meet you will discuss your “wins,” prayer requests, and share Bayside information that impacts you as a leader.

The Bayside Care Department

Quite often group discussion will uncover or trigger personal issues that are outside the purview of groups and better discussed in a counseling setting. Our Care Department offers counseling referrals AND personal guidance through CARE MENTORS. These are church members that have been specially trained to offer care and next steps. They are NOT counselors.

To access care of any kind, direct your group member to:

<https://bayside.churchcenter.com/people/forms/158274>

Other Relational Connections

Your Relationship with Your Savior

Your relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship ever! You may already have a good plan for staying connected and keeping your relationship with Him refreshed and growing. We pray that is so. However, sometimes we find ourselves in desert seasons, times of discouragement or feeling disconnected. You are not alone! If that happens, please let us know. We would love to pray with you and help you navigate that season.

Your Relationship with Your Groups Staff Team

Your Groups team is in your corner! You are prayed for regularly and your category (men, women, coed, marriage, young adult) Coordinator is available to you at any time for any reason. It is our heart's desire to pastor you well and provide spiritual and leadership growth opportunities for you. If you desire it, we can help provide it!

Another Important Tool

- groups.planningcenteronline.com

Bayside uses a church database called Planning Center Online (PCO) to keep track of groups, take attendance, maintain group rosters, among other things.

Training will be provided by your coach and online resources.

Leaders will manage their groups through the Church Center App. This is where you will add members, communicate with them and take attendance.

Reporting attendance is MANDATORY as it is the only metric we have for determining how many people are connecting relationally.

If you add a member to your group and their name does NOT APPEAR in the database, please **do NOT CLICK "CREATE A NEW PERSON"**. Direct the person to: [Update.mybayside.church](https://update.mybayside.church) and have THEM fill out their personal information, then you can add them to your group.

Defining the Win

8 ingredients for a great group:

1. **Have fun!** Laugh, use ice-breakers, play music, have food, plan fun outings.
2. **Be Relational!** Your group should engage in authentic conversations before and after discussion time to build friendships.
3. **Grow Spiritually!** Great groups encourage spiritual growth for heart and life transformation.
4. **Multiply leaders!** Group leaders, keep your eyes sharpened for those in your group who could/should be leading a Bayside group of their own.
5. **Serve!** Great groups serve one another and the community at church outreach events and into our city.
6. **Communicate!** Clear and consistent communication to your group members.
7. **Safety!** Follow the guidelines located here:
<https://trainedup.church/baysidecommunitychurch/#/course/69/module/1259>
8. **Utilize resources!** Those can be found on our Leaders Resource page at <https://www.mybayside.church/connect/leader-resources>. Your Groups Department can help you create videos to promote your group in PCO and on your facebook page* *(optional and your Group Coordinator must also be an Admin for the group, if you decide to have a group specific page!).

FAQ's from Other Group Leaders

Can someone be a member of more than one group?

Of course!

As a leader, am I able to delete the group if we no longer meet?

No, you are not able to delete your group. Contact your Coordinator in the Groups Department for assistance.

What if my group gets too big and we can't accept new members?

What a great problem!! Consider multiplying with another person willing to lead. If that's not possible, please notify the Groups Department for assistance.

How do I make changes to my group's title, time, etc?

We are here to help you with that. Please notify the Groups Department for assistance.

How can someone search for my group?

Someone looking for a group would first determine Campus (LWR, Bee Ridge, Fruitville, NRC, etc), and then filter for preferences.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Always contact your coach first and if they cannot answer your question, they will point you in the right direction.

How long is a semester?

Spring - 12 weeks | Summer - 10 weeks | Fall - 12 weeks

Why do I need a coach?

We are not meant to lead or do life alone. Your coach will be someone who will encourage you, answer your questions, bounce ideas off of and help you develop potential leaders.

What are some ways to promote my group?

Recruiting for your group happens before your group starts. Building relationships and influence is one of the most effective factors when it pertains to promoting your group. The majority of your influence is with people you already know! Invite your friends and neighbors. You can also utilize communication e.g., email, calls, texts, social media, etc. Be creative!

How do I incorporate childcare?

- 1) Use a sitter in another space in your home. Pool your resources.
- 2) Incorporate them into the group.
- 3) Have group members rotate attending to children.
- 4) Check with the Groups Department to see if there is space on Monday nights when childcare is available.

Why is it important to build relationships?

Pastor Randy often says, “Life change happens in the context of relationships”. The more you can build a relationship with the members in your group, the more personal growth they will experience. When a friendship is established, this will allow you the opportunity to speak into their life. “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” ~ Theodore Roosevelt

How do I build relationships within my group?

Icebreakers are always good. Share your story. Include food; it keeps things comfortable and casual. Give people a role or responsibility; from choosing a song for worship, bringing refreshments or leading the icebreaker. This will help them feel involved and more emotionally attached.

How do I build relationships outside of group time?

Attend church together, serve together, go out for a meal or coffee, take a day trip, a retreat, go on a mission trip together, etc. Find ways to build memories.

How do I establish trust and confidentiality within my group?

This is key. Model it. Remind people that confidentiality is a core value of your group.

How should I conduct my first group meeting?

Prepare by praying.

Get the house or location ready - make it comfortable and clean. If your group is not in your home, be sure to arrive at your destination early so that no members are waiting for you. About 5-10 minutes into the group, start the icebreaker or introductions. Have light discussion and get to know each other. Be mindful and respect people’s time - start on time and end on time. Communicate those times clearly. Set “ground rules” such as confidentiality, respect and kindness. After the first meeting, send an email to thank them for coming and reminding them of the details of the next group.

How should I incorporate prayer?

Prayer should be a part of every group. If your group is relational or activities-based, pray at the beginning or end (or both!). You can ask for specific prayer requests for all

to write down or have one person pray for the entire group. You can break up into smaller groups of 2-3 for prayer. Never ask someone to pray out loud without first asking them privately if that is ok.

How do I lead an effective discussion?

Stay on course yet be flexible if needed.

Ask good questions by being familiar with your material.

Do not fish for a “right” answer - all answers should be welcome.

Practice “active listening”: look at the person who is speaking, do not interrupt, suspend judgement, don’t counsel, fix or solve problems. Seek to understand, not to judge. Ask follow-up questions.

How do I handle challenging people?

Here are some personalities you may run into:

- The dominator - always has something to say, interrupts and controls the group.
- The story topper - feels the need to “one-up” everyone.
- The comedian - constantly makes jokes and derails the group topic or dynamics.
- The emotionally needy person - wants the group to be his/her therapy session.

Solutions:

- Pray for wisdom, for a pure heart and for the Lord to prepare their hearts as well.
- Enlist support from your coach.
- Carefully talk to the person alone after the group or invite them to coffee.
- Never have the conversation via email, text or in front of the other group members. Communicate in a manner that you would want to receive.
- State your observation and ask them what they think about it, so you are not mistaken.
- Ask, “What can I do to help with a solution?” Follow through with your part.
- Acknowledge and celebrate progress even if it’s minimal.

How do I engage less vocal people in the group?

Give people space and time to respond. There is sacredness in the silence. Ask, “Maybe someone who hasn’t responded yet would like to share?” Or simply ask directly, “Chris, what do you think about _____?” Do your best to know your people and their personalities and encourage them accordingly.

What do I do if my group numbers decrease?

This is fairly normal within a semester. Over time, people will naturally drift or have other time conflicts. The ones that stay with the group are your committed core (you may have a leader in that core!). Make calls to people who have not showed up - this

will make them feel valued - just don't stalk them! **If someone leaves your group - that is OK! Be gracious and kind and do NOT take it personally.**

How do I use good discretion?

Avoid gossip with other people about your group members. If there is an issue in your group, discuss these with your coach, pray about them and always practice Matthew 18 by going to the person first.

What are some group killers?

Lack of communication.

Lack of authenticity.

Disorganization.

Holidays and vacations. Instead of dropping the group, invite a potential leader to lead in your absence.

Being "clingy".

What do I look for in potential leaders?

Look for someone who has a growing relationship with Christ and is life-giving. They should be FAT - faithful, available and teachable. We believe most everyone can lead or facilitate a group, so encourage people to lead.

How do I develop leaders?

Identify, invest and involve them!

Give them opportunities to lead or do a project. Challenge them. Pray for them.

Encourage them. Notify your coach of your potential leaders.

How do I end my group?

Communicate with your members the exact date the group is ending. Go out with a BANG!! Have a PARTY!! Some ideas include a pot-luck meal or something fun.

Continue your connections after the group has finished - you've probably made some really good friends!

How do I stay healthy Spiritually?

Maintain a growing relationship with Christ.

Start your day with prayer, be in the Word, participate in church services.

Make the most of your time in your car by listening to praise and worship, a sermon or a podcast. Take advantage of other opportunities Bayside offers for spiritual formation.

Allow other leaders/mentors to pour into your life and remember, your COACH is a great resource!