



life groups
manual



main street
CHURCH.CA

Welcome to Life Groups at Main Street Church

So, Who are you doing life with?

How are you investing in relationship with God & others?

We are Created for Community; for relationship.

God designed us to be in relationship with Him and others.

Jesus taught us that the greatest way to live is to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; and love others as yourself. -

Mark 12:30-31

At Main Street Church, small groups are the best place for sustained life change to occur. We call them Life Groups.

In a Life Group, people study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life. It is also where they pray together, care for one another, and are missed if they don't show up. Life Groups are one of the primary ways we connect and care for people at Main Street Church.

Life Groups are small groups of six to fourteen people. They are usually closed groups with a commitment to meet weekly from September-June (3-4 times per month). Closed – means that once a group is full and has had a couple months of connection, we don't add new members (unless there is consensus in the group). This provides a better sense of consistency for the group as they connect and grow together. We ask everyone in a Life Group to commit to the Life Group Agreement together.

We offer Life Groups for young adults, married couples, men, and women. Some of our groups are mixed, and our Connect Group is a weekly drop-in group.

Our groups often have a mix of couples and singles, young and old. There are people from many walks of life, who are at different stages in their spiritual journey. God uses community to help us learn and grow together.

To get connected please contact our Community Life Pastor.



life groups agreement

Purpose

To provide a predictable environment where participants experience authentic community and spiritual growth.

Values & Goals

***Relationships**

While prayer and discussion of curriculum are key elements of a Life Group, a driving force behind the group is building of relationships. This requires commitment and availability to the needs of each other.

***Authenticity**

The atmosphere of a Life Group should encourage openness and transparency among members. This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves.

***Confidentiality**

For authenticity to occur, members must be able to trust that issues discussed with a Life Group are not to be shared outside of the group.

***Respect**

Group members should avoid saying anything that will intentionally embarrass their spouse or members of the group.

***Multiplication**

Group members recognize that one of the goals of their group is to identify and encourage new leaders, and start a new group within the life cycle of their group (1-2 yrs). This allows others to experience the benefits of Life Group relationships.

Structure



***Typical Meeting Plan:**

Connection – Study/Discussion – Prayer

***Group Intensity:**

Begin Light and End Light. Start on Time & End on Time.

***Authentic Community:**

Acts 2:42. Hebrews 10:24-25 Accountability – Belonging – Care

Group Guidelines

1. The group will meet from _____ (mm/yr) through _____ (mm/yr).
2. The group will meet on _____ (day of the week).
3. The group sessions will begin at _____ (am/pm) and end at _____.
4. This group will be a closed group unless there is consensus to add members.
5. Group members will attend and participate on a regular basis.
6. Group members will provide current contact info and notify their Leaders if they will be absent, or if they decide to leave the group.





life groups description

Life Groups are an integral part of what we do as a church.

We believe that sustained life change occurs as we are growing in a relationship with Christ, and this happens best when we are prioritizing intentional relationships with others who are seeking this same goal.

Life Groups provide people with the opportunity to connect with others, grow in their relationship with Christ, and experience community.

Our Life Group leaders create environments for people to develop and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul taught the Corinthians that some plant the seeds, others water them, but God makes them grow (1 Corinthians 3:6). Group leaders have the privilege of creating environments in which seeds of faith are planted and watered in the lives of those they lead, while trusting God with the growth.

Our leaders play a pivotal role in helping us achieve our mission of helping people discover wholeness in Christ.

Role of Life Group Leaders

Life Group Leaders are responsible for providing their groups with vision, direction, and support. Leaders are successful when they are personally growing in their relationship with God, connected in community, actively serving, and are leading their groups in such a way as to encourage the group members' growth in these three areas as well.

+ Qualifications

- Have a personal, growing relationship with Jesus Christ (for at least 2 years).
- Recognize the Bible as the authority for their lives.
- Have Life Group experience with us (preferably 4+ months).
- Have attended Next Steps and then committed as Partners of Main Street Church.
- Have completed our Set Free Retreat and our Hearing God Workshop.
- Have the time, emotional capacity, & moral discernment to lead a group.

+ Expectations

- Lead the group by facilitating the group meeting, monitoring its health and duration, and promoting participation among group members.
- Commit to engage in leadership development opportunities provided by the church.
- Identify and encourage potential leaders within their group.

+ Leadership Support & Training

Life Group leaders are supported and resourced by the Community Life Pastor and potentially a Life Group Coach.

Leader Huddles take place 3-4 times a year and provide an interactive training environment for leaders to learn, share and encourage one another. Group Leaders are expected to attend these huddles, and potential leaders within their group are also welcome to attend. Childcare or Childcare-Reimbursement is available.

Become a Leader: If you are interested in becoming a Life Group Leader please contact the Community Life Pastor for more information.

Leading Well

In leading groups, we have discovered eight 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 rooted and growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

+ Cultivate Relationships

* This essential is focused on how we build community.

* By encouraging and facilitating connections with Group members.

> How are you & your group members connecting relationally?

+ Promote Participation

* This essential is focused on how you involve your group members.

* Shared participation (facilitating the study, hosting the meeting, preparing the snack, leading prayer time, planning socials 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 influences of the group while strengthening the relationships within the group.

> How could your group serve our church or community this year?

+ Celebrate Change

* This essential helps us stay focused on the purpose of the group.

* Invest-in and celebrate the spiritual and relational growth of your group.

> How do you and your group members celebrate the growth you see occurring in each other?

+ Provide Care

* Life Groups are a primary environment for people to connect and care for one another.

> How is your group expressing and growing in its care for one another?

+ 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?



life groups **message based discussions**

Most of our group discussions are based around our Sunday morning teachings. Our hope is to see our Sunday mornings go further, by providing more personal connection and life application in our Life Groups.

This makes discussion preparation much simpler for Leaders, and it allows our church family to be on the same page as we learn and grow together. Life Group Leaders receive weekly emails (LG Weekly) from the Community Life Pastor, which includes an attached discussion guide for the upcoming Sunday message.

Leaders are encouraged to listen to the message with these questions in mind, make any personal notes or changes for their group, and then prepare for their discussion that following week.

Leaders may forward the discussion guide on to their group members in advance if they like. Leaders are welcome to occasionally share the responsibility of facilitating discussion with appropriate group members

The general rhythm of the Discussion Guides is as follows:

Connect:

- Icebreaker or Highlight of your week?
- What's God been teaching/showing you this week?

Main Discussion Questions & Scripture

Personal Application

Prayer

*If you have any questions or concerns about a Discussion Guide please contact the Community Life Pastor.



life groups **how to lead a discussion**

1. Come to the study prepared.

Ask God to help you understand and apply the passage to your own life. Unless that happens, you will not be ready to lead others. Work through each question in the guide, and become familiar with any leader's notes.

2. Pray for the members of your group before the study.

If the Bible is to have an impact on their lives, the Holy Spirit must be at work in their hearts before, during, and after the study.

3. Begin the study on time.

If people know the study begins on schedule, they will work harder to arrive on time.

4. Explain that the studies are meant to be discussions, not lectures.

Encourage everyone to participate, but realize some may be hesitant to speak during the first few sessions.

5. Encourage more than one answer to each question.

A good question should have more than one possible answer, and each person has his or her unique perspective. Ask, "What do the rest of you think?" or "Anyone else?" until several people have responded.

6. Affirm people's answers.

People often are reluctant to speak up unless they know you appreciate their insights. Simple words such as "That's a great insight," "Good question," "Excellent idea," or "I hadn't thought of that before" are enough to show people you value their participation & input.

7. Don't be afraid of silence.

It usually seems longer to you than to the other members of the group.

8. Resist the temptation to answer your own question.

Rephrase the question until the group understands what you are asking. A group will become passive and silent if they think you will do most of the talking.

9. Never reject an answer, even if you think it is wrong.

When you reject people's answers, they feel rejected as well, and they may decide it is too risky to give their opinion again. A better response would be, "Which verse led you to that conclusion?" Or let the group handle the problem by asking them what they think.

10. End the study on time.

A healthy Life group will do more than study the Bible together, so leave enough time for other activities such as food, sharing and prayer. If these are merely tacked on at the end, the health of the group will suffer.

***Icebreakers:**

Having a fun or engaging question or activity to begin (or shift) a discussion - will enhance group discussion greatly. You will be provided will Icebreaker ideas, but feel free to create and use your own.

2 ways to hinder group health

1. Don't meet regularly
2. Have too few members
3. Have too many members
4. Don't use a Group Agreement
5. Don't deal with a problem member
6. Allow prayer request time to become storytelling time
7. Don't follow a guide/curriculum
8. Allow members to bring guests without clearing it with other members
9. Ignore the personal needs of group members
10. Never multiply to form a new group

**Every Group will face one or more of these challenges in its life cycle. We want to help you grow through this together. Feel free to talk to your Community Life Pastor or Life Group Coach about these challenges.*



life groups **extra elements of a life group**

Communion

Many have expressed a desire to celebrate communion more frequently than we do on Sundays (we serve Communion at our monthly Prayer Summit). We believe that the context of a Life Group is great place for this to happen regularly. The Community Life Pastor will provide you with leader-friendly instructions that will inform and encourage your group to share Communion together wherever you meet.

Pastoral Care

The primary and most effective means of pastoral care in any church is through its people (not just the pastoral staff). Care is one our Life Group Essentials. If you have questions or requests about extra pastoral assistance – Benevolence support, Meals Team, Counseling services, or Hospital visits...please contact the Community Life Pastor.

Supper & The Summit

God wants to give you a breakthrough in your prayer life. He wants His church to be a praying church. Join us on the last Sunday of each month (Sept-June) as we seek God for His power in our lives and His leading for our church. We begin with a Church Family Dinner and then move into our time of Worship, Prayer and Communion. We believe it will be a catalyst for bringing about a breakthrough in your life. Invite your Life Group to come join us! We provide an interactive Kids Summit for ages 2-Gr.6.

Baptism

We encourage every believer in Christ to be baptized, and our Baptism Celebrations are amazing. Please contact the Community Life Pastor if you know anyone in your group who is interested in getting baptized, or if you need information on Baptism for group discussion. Members of your group may even ask to have their group leader or another group member baptize them at the celebration. In fact, we encourage that.

Serving

We encourage Life Groups to serve together. You will be given ideas of ways to serve in our city, our church, or even on an international mission's trip together. Serving together builds strong bonds and memories.

Other Ministry Opportunities



The following ministry events are additional learning opportunities for our church community - beyond Sunday morning and Life Group discussions. Life Groups and individual members are encouraged to participate and benefit from these opportunities.

Please visit the church website or office for more information.



Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, then you are really my disciples and you will know the truth and truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). A Set Free weekend is an opportunity to embrace the truth of Jesus so that we can experience and live the freedom that He says we can have.

Through worship, teaching, breakout groups, prayer and listening prayer you will experience a profound connection with Jesus.

During this weekend...

- Recognize and deal with those hurts, habits and hang ups that have kept you from living life in the fullness that Jesus promised.
- Experience a greater degree of spiritual renewal and lasting victory that only Jesus can give.
- Hear and distinguish the voice of Jesus in your life.
[Offered 2 times per year. Fall & Spring]

HEARING GOD



We live in a culture of voices that are competing for our attention leaving us deaf to the One voice that really matters. The fact is God wants to speak to us but often obstacles such as busyness, fear and unbelief hold us back from hearing His voice. Hearing God is a 5 week workshop that helps you overcome those obstacles

and hear God's voice clearly. Hearing God equips you to study God's word, journal and pray more effectively, with the goal of hearing God's voice in your life clearly and then responding to it! Hearing God is a practical, effective and essential part of becoming a whole life follower of Jesus!

[Offered once a year. Fall]



The Alpha course is your opportunity to explore the Christian faith.

Over 11 weeks you can expect relevant topics, relatable hosts, and a relaxed environment. Each session begins with refreshments, providing an opportunity to get to know others in a casual setting. This is followed by a short video-teaching, which

examines a different aspect of the Christian faith, then open discussion.

Some of the topics we'll explore are: Is there more to life than this? Who is Jesus and why did He die? Why and how do I pray? How can I develop a relationship with God? What about evil?

What about the Church?

*Life Groups are welcome to participate together.

[Offered once a year, Jan-Mar.]

Childcare Reimbursement Guidelines

We don't want Childcare costs to be a hindrance or excuse for people who would like to connect with a Life Group. Our church is willing to reimburse families for part of the cost of childcare needed to allow them to attend their life group or a church ministry event.

Here are the guidelines:

- 1. Parents are required to find their own childcare worker and pay them out of pocket initially.**
- 2. Parents are reimbursed at the set rate of \$10/hr for the cost of an individual childcare worker. Reimbursement is provided for up to a maximum of 3hrs, unless it is a special event (eg. Alpha Saturday, Set Free Retreat...)**
- 3. Individual forms are to be filled out after each group meeting by each family requesting reimbursement. Each form must be submitted within 30 days of the group meeting or church event, but it is helpful if parents send in 2-4 of them together, so that we can write one cheque per month.**
- 4. Parents are to return completed forms to Pastor Eryn, Guest Services or the church office at the end of each month.**
- 5. Reimbursement forms are available at Guest Services or the Office.**

*Reimbursement Rate up to a maximum of 3hrs/wk - \$10 per hour.

*For forms or more information contact the office.



GroupLink is our big connecting event for Life Groups.

We hold our GroupLink in late September to launch all of our groups for the Fall. Those people who are not yet connected with a group are encouraged to attend.

Please register for GroupLink. Childcare is provided.

***What if I miss it?**

Anyone who is unable to attend GroupLink should contact the Community Life Pastor for information and assistance.

*** Groups may start up or open up at other times of the year.**

Those who have previously expressed interest in connecting (but have yet to connect) will be contacted if an appropriate group comes available.

www.mainstreetchurch.ca/life-groups



life groups ministry staff

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Facebook: Main Street Church

Catch our Messages & Discussion Guides online:

Visit: www.mainstreetchurch.ca/media

Audio podcasts on iTunes: Main Street Church

our vision

We exist to connect spiritually seeking people with the truth and love of God and to equip them to become whole life followers of Jesus Christ

“...you must love the Lord, your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength (and) love your neighbor as yourself.”

Mark 12:30-31

our mission

Helping people discover wholeness in Christ

our wins

We have a passion to see people obeying Jesus' commands and becoming more like Him. We believe that this happens when three things are active in the lives of those who have connected with the body of Christ:

- 1. People personally experiencing intimacy with God.**
- 2. People corporately connected in community.**
- 3. People actively serving in their gift set and passion.**



our values

We are whole life, faith filled, all in risk takers

We'll never insult God with small thinking & safe living

We are all about the local church

The local church is God's "Plan A" to reach the world - He has no "Plan B!"

We will do anything short of sin to reach people who don't know Christ

To reach people no one is reaching, we'll have to do things no one is doing

We will contribute more than we consume spiritually

The church does not exist for us. We are the church and we exist for the world

We will keep short accounts

The greatest weapon we have against the Devil is repentance and confession

We will be relentless with truth and grace

We will teach and model the hard truths of Jesus so that we can experience and model the deep grace of Jesus

We will practice irrational generosity

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

We will intentionally listen to the voice of God

We recognize that the voice we listen to the most will determine the direction of our life

our beliefs

The Bible

We believe the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God and that men were moved by the Spirit of God to write the very words of Scripture. Therefore, we believe the Bible is without error.

God

We believe in one God who exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus Christ is the second member of the Trinity (the Son of God) who became flesh to reveal God to humanity and to become the Savior of the lost world.

Humanity

Created in the image of God to have fellowship with him but became alienated in that relationship through sinful disobedience. As a result, people are incapable of regaining a right relationship with God through their own efforts.

Salvation

We believe that the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, provides the sole basis for the forgiveness of sin. Therefore, God freely offers salvation to those who place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ as sufficient payment for their sin.

Christian Living

We believe all Christians should live for Christ and not for themselves. By obedience to the Word of God and daily yielding to the Spirit of God, every believer should mature and be conformed to the image of Christ.

Church

We believe that the church is the body of Christ, of which Jesus Christ is the head. The members of the church are those who have trusted by faith the finished work of Christ. The purpose of the church is to glorify God by loving him and by making him known to the lost world.

**For a more extensive Statement of Faith please contact our Church office or you can visit our denominational site: www.bcmb.org*

why church partnership?

Although the Bible never uses the phrase “church partnership”, the concept is implicit throughout the New Testament. Believers clearly identified themselves with a specific local church and were challenged to become devoted participants of that church.

As a church grows it is important to know who it is that makes up the congregation. Who are the people that can be counted upon to set the pace, sustain ministries and make decisions?

At Main Street Church partners are those who have been identified as the core of the church. They are the ones who have grown in their commitment, walk with Christ and have intentionally signed on with this local body. They are not an elite club or an exclusive union.

A Christian without a church to call their own or without acknowledgement as a part of the family or team can easily get drawn into feeling like they don't have a voice, a place, or a responsibility. On the other hand, an informed, affirmed, confirmed, celebrated believer who knows beyond a shadow of doubt their legitimate place of belonging, as affirmed by the leadership, functions out of fullness and confidence.

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another”

Romans 12:5

Ministry Partnership also provides a spiritual family to support and encourage a person's walk with Christ (Galatians 6:1-2, Hebrews 10:24) and gives a believer a place to discover and use their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-27). Finally Ministry partnership puts the believer under the spiritual protection of Godly leaders and establishes accountability (Hebrews 13:7, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:21)

Partnership helps keep the expectations clear. It helps the members know what is expected from them, while equally keeping the leadership aware of the expectations of the partners.

Partnership helps us to be sure that we hold to the same core beliefs and are committed to each other's growth in a unified way. It ensures that we corporately build upon a strong foundation of faith, creating a church which truly advances the cause of Jesus Christ. By defining our core beliefs and values we keep ourselves focused on the same vision and direction.

The responsibilities of a ministry partner are not complicated at all. Essentially all that is required is to be a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. However, there are a number of responsibilities that ministry partners commit to:

- ▶ **Personal relationship with Jesus Christ**
- ▶ **Public profession of faith through baptism**
- ▶ **Personal commitment to generously support the ministry of the church financially**
- ▶ **Relational Integrity by pursuing honorable and loving relationships: at home, with coworkers, neighbors, friends and people within the church body.**
- ▶ **Spiritual maturity by seeking to serve more than be served.**

These commitments are expressed through what we call our Ministry Partnership Commitment:

partnership commitment

Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, following Him in obedience by being baptized and being in agreement with Main Street Church' beliefs, vision and values, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Main Street Church' family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members of this church to personally do the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church

- by acting in love toward other members
- by refusing to gossip
- by following leaders

“So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up”

Romans 14:19

“Show a sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart”

1 Peter 1:22

“Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them”

Ephesians 4:29

“Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit”

Hebrews 13:17

2. I will share the responsibility of my church

- by praying for its growth
- by inviting the un-churched to attend
- by warmly welcoming those who visit

“We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly”

1 Thessalonians 1:2

“So his master said “Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full”

Luke 14:23

“Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory”

Romans 15:7

3. I will serve the ministry of my church

- by discovering my gifts and talents
- by being equipped to serve by my pastors
- by developing a servant's heart

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another”

1 Peter 4:10

“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ”

Ephesians 4:11-12

“Don't be selfish, don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had...he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave”

Philippians 2:3-7

4. I will support the witness of my church

- by attending faithfully
- by living a godly life
- by giving regularly

“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near”

Hebrews 10:25

“Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ”

Philippians 1:27

“On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once”

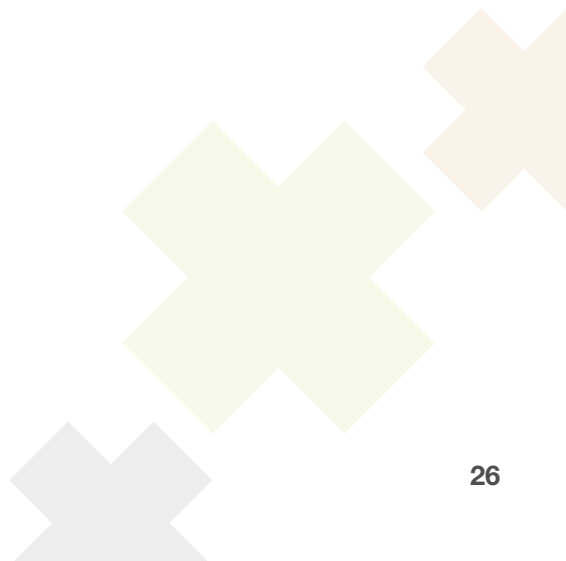
1 Corinthians 16:2

“One tenth...belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to him as holy”

Leviticus 2:27:30

This is my commitment to Main Street Church. 25

notes



notes

our values

We are whole life, faith filled, all in risk takers

We'll never insult God with small thinking & safe living

We are all about the local church

The local church is God's "Plan A" to reach the world - He has no "Plan B!"

We will do anything short of sin to reach people who don't know Christ

To reach people no one is reaching, we'll have to do things no one is doing

We will contribute more than we consume spiritually

The church does not exist for us. We are the church and we exist for the world

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The greatest weapon we have against the Devil is repentance and confession

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