

LifeGroups

Shepherd's Community UMC

What is a LifeGroup?

A LifeGroup is made up of 5-12 people who come together for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and service to grow deeper in their relationship with God, to share life with one another, to reach new people for Christ, and to cultivate new leaders in the church.

The Four Practices of a LifeGroup

All LifeGroups are constituted by four essential practices that correspond to our church mission: Connecting-Growing-Serving.

1. **Fellowship and Care:** Create close community and care for one another.
2. **Prayer:** Pray for those far from God, friends, our church, and each other.
3. **Bible Study:** Study the Bible and help each other apply it to daily life.
4. **Service:** Join together in service projects (at least once per quarter) to meet concrete needs of the larger community in the name of Jesus.

Purpose & Strategy

The primary purpose of a LifeGroup is to help realize the vision of our church: to reach new people for Christ, and through this labor of love, grow a church of 1000's of Christians completely devoted to Jesus Christ and wide-open to the Holy Spirit for the transformation of the city of Lakeland. In order to reach new people for Christ, each group member will commit to regularly inviting unchurched friends to their gatherings (at least two people per year). To accommodate continual growth, and to maintain a group-size conducive to in-depth sharing and accountability (no more than 14), each group will intentionally multiply new groups by apprenticing potential leaders. Each LifeGroup leader will prayerfully discern an apprentice, work closely with that person for six months (teaching them how to lead a group of their own), and then send the apprentice out with a few other members to launch a new group. This cycle will be repeated once or twice a year, depending on how quickly a group grows. Successful LifeGroups will multiply themselves several times over, expanding opportunities for new people to grow in their relationships with God through Christ.

Where and When Do LifeGroups Meet?

We recommend that LifeGroups meet in the homes of members on a rotating basis, because this provides community-building experiences that cannot be encountered in a classroom on campus. However, space will be provided at the church for LifeGroups as needed. Each group should meet at least twice a month, but most will meet every week for 1-2 hours.

LifeGroup Leadership

Group facilitators will be Christians who have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ, members of Shepherd's Community UMC who are faithful to their membership vows, and true servants who fully embrace our church mission, vision, and core values. They will commit to leading approved studies that are consistent with United Methodist theology, and agree to attend quarterly leadership gatherings for training, mutual accountability, and support. Facilitators will be accountable to the Adult Discipleship Team Leader, communicating weekly their attendance, stories that illustrate how God is at work in their group, prayer requests, and if any member is in need of a phone call or visit from the Pastor (e.g., illness, tragedy, or is absent from small group or Sunday worship for more than two weeks).