



Policy: Life Groups (Intentional Church-wide)

Approved by Board of Elders: **10.12.25**

Hebrews 10:23-25 "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

I. Purpose

Given that Christ tells us in Scripture that His people are to continually be in one another's lives as they walk with Him, we at Oxlip Church desire to embody this type of fellowship. As such, Life Groups represent one of many outlets that Oxlip offers for fellowship within the life of our church body. It is through these kinds of avenues that the church promotes connection, relationship building, and spiritual growth.

II. Requirements for Life Group Leaders

In light of the above information, those seeking to lead a particular Life Group must meet the following requirements.

- A. He or she must be a Christian, manifesting the fruits of a true faith in Christ by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25). This is shown by living in a manner that is consistent with the presence of Christ in one's life (Romans 6:12-14; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 John 2:4).
- B. He or she must be a faithful member who attends Oxlip church services regularly and is financially committed to the church's vision (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:1-15, 9:6-15).
- C. He or she must use discernment and test all things, hold fast to all that is good, and abstain from all appearances of evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22).
- D. He or she must only teach in a manner aligned with Scripture and the EFCA's Statement of Faith.
- E. If someone is corrected on their teaching by the Lead Pastor or Board of Elders and persists in defiant behavior, he or she will be removed from leading the Life Group (Titus 3:10-11).
- F. Recognizing the importance of the Biblical pattern of leadership in the church (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Titus 2:15-3:2; Hebrews 13:17), he or she must willingly and graciously submit to such leadership (as long as the leadership is loyal to the Word of God), and relate to members in the church body with a spirit of humility and submission (Philippians 2:2-3).

III. Establishment of (Intentional Church-wide) Life Groups

- A. Timeframe
The Board of Elders will establish at least one season a year when Life Groups will be held and encouraged across the church. The Life Group season will typically last for 4 to 6 months.
- B. Content
The Board of Elders will establish the purpose and curriculum for each intentional Life Group. This may be the same content for all groups (unified across the church) or options provided and approved from which to choose.
- C. Accountability and Support
The Life Group setting provides a supportive environment where individuals can build trusted connections, be accountable to one another, and receive encouragement in their faith journey. Group members should be encouraged to check in on one another. Accountability can take

many forms, including prayer partners, accountability for personal spiritual goals, or just regular check-ins on how members are doing. Healthy accountability helps everyone stay committed to their faith, growth, and connection with one another.

D. Expectation of Leaders

1. Establish Clear Expectations

Clear expectations should be established from the beginning. How often will you meet? What kind of commitment are you asking from small group participants? Establishing guidelines for participation, like respecting others' opinions and maintaining confidentiality, can help members feel safe and committed to the process. Being upfront about the group's structure, meeting times, and goals will help you establish a clear foundation.

2. Encourage Participation and Create an Engaging Environment

Active participation is the heartbeat of any Life Group. Life Group leaders need to create an engaging environment where everyone feels encouraged to participate. This could look like rotating discussion leaders, allowing quieter members a chance to speak, or breaking the group into smaller pairs for a more personal conversation. People are more likely to grow when they get to engage in meaningful discussions, so make it a priority to involve every member in a way that works best for their comfort level.

3. Cultivate Relationships

Life Groups are not just about studying the Bible - they are also about building relationships. Prioritize relationship-building. This might look like saving time before or after Life Group meetings for casual conversation and connection or planning non-life group times to get together. This is also a way to encourage members to get to know each other on a personal level, even celebrating milestones like birthdays and other special life events. Relationships formed in Life Groups often last for years and go well beyond the church walls.

4. Maintain Confidentiality

Confidentiality is key to building trust within a Life Group. It's important that the rule be "what's shared in the group, stays in the group". Emphasizing confidentiality helps to create a space where people can be vulnerable, share their struggles, and seek support without fear of judgment or gossip.

5. Be Flexible with the Group's Needs

While structure is essential, flexibility is also important. Each Life Group will have its own personality, and leaders should stay open to adapting the format or focus based on the needs of the group members. Some groups may need more prayer time, while others might benefit from more fellowship or in-depth Bible study. A good rule of thumb is to regularly check in with everyone about their preferences and needs.

6. Pray Together and for Each Other

Prayer is a cornerstone of any successful Life Group. Leaders should make it a priority to pray for their group members both during meetings and throughout the week.