

Life Groups at CoroUniting

Our Theological Vision

Timothy Keller in his book “Center Church” defines a theological vision as “a vision for what you are going to do with your doctrine in a particular time and place,” and states it is, “to bring the entire counsel of God into the world of its time in order that its time might be transformed” and “it is a faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry and mission in a type of culture at a moment in history.” It is with this thought we consider the place, action, time and format of the Life Groups at CoroUniting. It will necessarily imply that different groups will function differently, for their needs and structure will be different. We could also expect an individual Life Group to change over time as its own micro-culture changes.

How they Work

Life Groups have a wonderful opportunity to introduce new people into the life of the church. This may be new converts, transfers or those who have been disaffected and want to rediscover what they left before. A smaller group can facilitate this if done wisely. The discovery of the specific gifting of individuals by God can be discerned more easily in a smaller group and this should be one of many goals of the group. These gifts can be tested and encouraged in the wider church family.

When people join a church they expect it to be a body, a community where they can find friendship with others who are on the journey of following Jesus and seeking to find an authentic Christian faith. They expect to learn together, pray together, support each other, and discern where God is leading. They’ll want to be involved in reaching others with the faith they have found. This means we often meet together in groups smaller than the gathered congregation. We need to be committed to finding ways to meet together. The size, frequency, place and time, format and style will vary because of the various needs of people.

Key Components

A Life Group of CoroUniting would hopefully cover aspects such as being:

1. **Relational and pastoral.** Faith is expressed in love. We would expect individuals connecting with each other pastorally between gatherings or passing on pastoral needs to those better able to help.
2. **Growing as disciples of Jesus.** The Bible will be used to discover the whole counsel of God, the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and biblical literacy would be emphasised.
3. **Growing in prayer.** This would entail personal, local, national, international and intercessory prayer.
4. **Mission focussed.** Within the group we would support each other in the God-given mission of each individual; and seek to discover the ministry gifts of each group member and train up new leaders as required.
5. **Open to the newcomer.** We would need to exegete our culture as much as our bibles, so we get an integrated faith between our faith and culture, so all newcomers are welcome.
6. **Led by leaders who are both accountable and supported.** Leaders need ongoing review and input if they are to be relevant to their situation, able to discern the gifts of individuals in their group, and to train others in ministry opportunities.

Leadership

Leaders will be responsible to, served by, and overseen by the Church Council. There would preferably be a leader and co-leader. One may be a pastoral leader and one may lead in teaching.

Leaders are expected to pray regularly for their group and should be looking for gifts within the group, and encouraging and equipping them to use their gifts. They should seek to mentor those with potential to lead new groups.

Note that the host who provides the venue may not necessarily be the leader.

Life groups as Pastoral Communities

Life Groups should provide pastoral support for their members. For those not in Life Groups we would seek to encourage them to join a group. For many reasons there will be those who do not, or cannot, join a group. For these individuals we would encourage Life Group members to seek to have their Life Group pray for those they connect with and to invite them to appropriate activities.

Leadership Support

The leadership of the Life Groups is key to a vibrant, effective church. We wish to honour leaders' vital ministry. We encourage them to prayerfully enhance their gifts for greater effectiveness and to support each other in this. We would encourage leaders to:

1. Meet with each other and/or the minister for encouragement, direction, input and mutual support.
2. Attend training seminars as they arise. These would be for those involved with leading Life Groups or those people connecting with those not in a Life Group. All pastorally gifted people are welcome.
3. Have periodical one on one mentoring and evaluation with a suitable mentor.
4. Choose courses or other avenues that would enhance their ministry and gifts. The leaders should encourage individuals in a Life Group who would be enriched by such events to also seek these opportunities.

Life Groups and the Church

The groups will see themselves as part of CoroUniting. It is through the group that many of the members will make their contribution to the church. The groups themselves may initiate outbreaks of witness to the Kingdom of God, and as groups contribute their gifts to the whole congregation in worship, and in practical help.

The Life Group Meeting

The Life Group meeting will of necessity vary according to the structure of the group. However, it would be helpful if some, or all, of the following aspects are included.

Welcome: Make sure everyone is free to speak, newcomer or oldest member: have a good icebreaker.

Worship: Use a variety of ways to come together experientially before God. You could respond with song, written prayer, symbolic action that focuses on Christ, or on connecting with each other as the body of Christ in prayer or praise.

Word: Open the Bible together. The key to good Bible reading is to set up tasks and experiences that lead to people making their own discoveries. Nothing beats the joy and challenge of that. "Teaching" in this context would not be achieved by the leader doing all the talking.

Witness: Find a way the group can pray for each other, support each other in witness, and plan to reach out to others.

The Life Group Program

Life Groups will meet at different times and with different frequencies. Flexibility of approach is favoured.

Each Life Group may be studying different topics and following different methodologies according to their needs. At other times it may be appropriate for all groups to do a common study for a specific purpose eg. Lenten studies.

It may be helpful for groups to stop their normal meeting from time to time (eg. a weekly group may do this one meeting in four or once a term) for either a gathering for prayer or a social event which can be an outreach to invite friends, unbelieving partners or others.

Each Life Group should periodically assess itself to determine if it is vitally fulfilling the needs of its members or if it has become too settled and is merely following a well-worn path with little reflection or prayer as to its direction before the Lord.