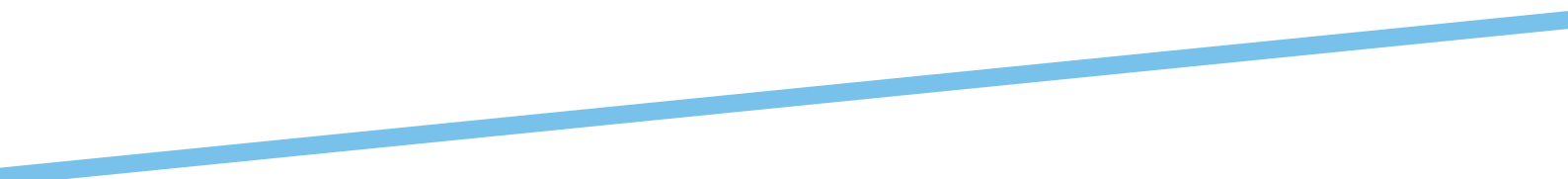




# Small Groups





*“And their calling is to nurture and  
prepare all the holy believers to do their  
own works of ministry, and as they do  
this they will enlarge and build up the  
body of Christ”*

Ephesians 4:12 TPT



# Small Group Philosophy

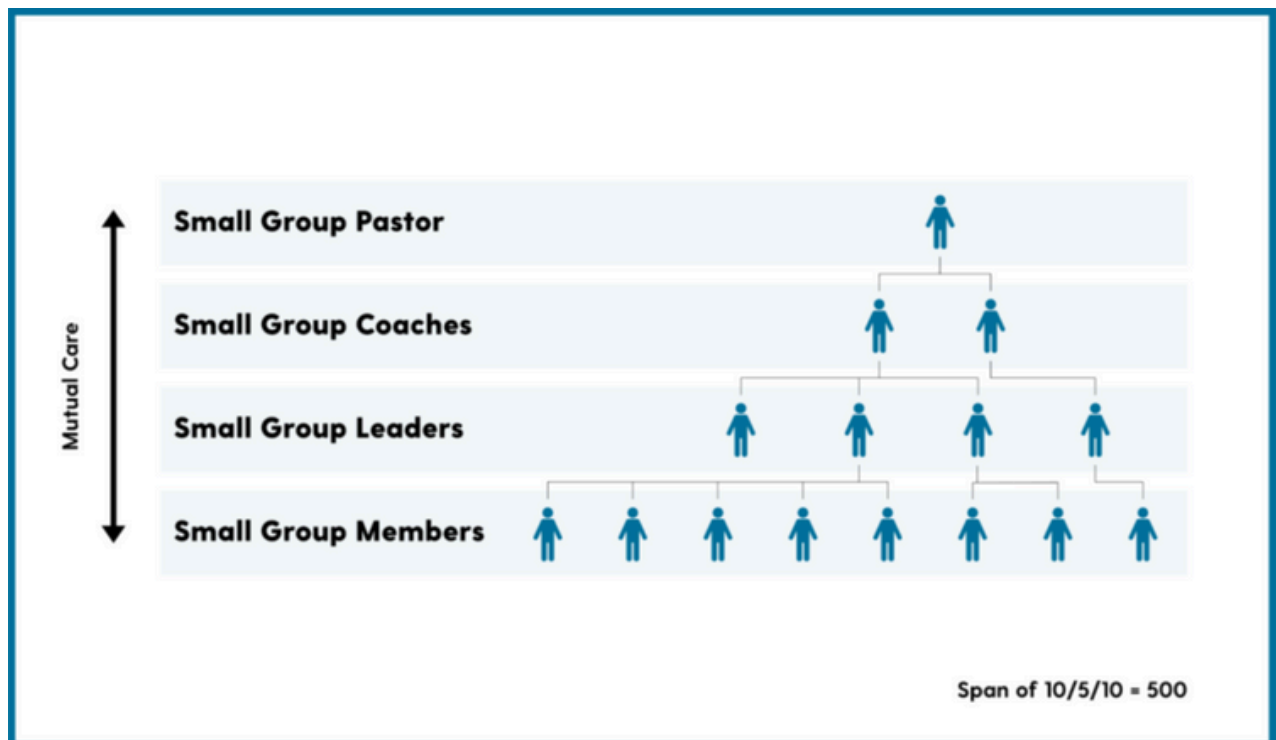
Highlands is a church of small groups, not a church with small groups. Many churches have utilised small groups as an additional extra to Sunday celebrations attendance. However, small groups in Highlands are a primary component of the church. The Celebration Services on Sundays are viewed as the coming together of the small groups to worship together.

Small groups are essential to the growth and the health of the church. In the book of Acts, specifically Acts 2:42-47, we see that one of the keys to the growth of the early church was the establishment of “house-to-house” small groups. Small groups have been an integral part of the life of Highlands Church since its inception and will continue to be a primary method of discipleship and community to outwork our mission of leading people into a growing relationship with Jesus.

For these reasons, small groups are encouraged to be unique and gather around interests or activities that are common to the group. Group interests include dinner parties, Bible studies, prayer groups and some play or watch sports together. The common element to all small groups is the relational and spiritual growth that occurs. Small Group Leaders are paired with a Small Group Coach who supports and encourages the Leader to lead an effective, growing small group, cultivate and develop apprentice leaders, and facilitate effective care for the group members.

# Ministry Structure

The small group ministry structure is designed to give Small Group Leaders the best chance at success in their ministry setting. The structure is overseen by the Small Groups Pastor, who works directly with up to 10 volunteer Small Group Coaches. Each coach is responsible for up to five Small Group Leaders, providing them with guidance and support as they lead their respective groups. This structure ensures that the small groups operate within the vision and mission of Highlands, while still allowing each group the freedom to grow and evolve under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is a scalable and repeatable structure designed to equip leaders, encourage mutual support, and foster an environment where every member of the Highlands community can grow in their relationship with Jesus, and with each other.



A Small Group Pastor directly leads up to 10 Small Group Coaches, who in turn are responsible for up to five Small Group Leaders, who lead groups of up to around 10 members.

# Small Group DNA

Each small group across Highlands is unique. There is no set curriculum or meeting structure that all groups must work through, but each Small Group Leader, by working with their Small Group Coach, is encouraged to discover how they want to lead their group. To help each group maintain their uniqueness but remain consistent with the vision and values of Highlands, Small Group Leaders use **Love Learn** and **Do** as the “DNA” of the group.

## Love

Our love for one another grows and is expressed in numerous ways in group meetings, and sometimes through opportunities in our daily life. Sharing a meal, celebrations, birthdays, job promotions etc, sharing resources, serving one another, and caring for one another are just some of the ways we can express love and build community with a small group, our church and those in our community.

## Learn

Jesus and His command to love God and love people are central to the vision and values of Highlands. Every time a small group meets the Small Group Leader should look for opportunities to allow Jesus to become the focus of conversation and learning so that the group are continuously reoriented toward Jesus’ mission and His purposes. Disciples are learners, and a small group is a fun and safe place to explore His work, ask questions and support one another in becoming devoted followers of Jesus.

## Do

Knowledge that does not evoke action can simply become information. A healthy small group will take what they are learning and allow it to translate into action in their lives. The Small Group Leader and Small Group Coach can work together to ensure the members of the small group are identifying and taking their next steps towards Jesus.

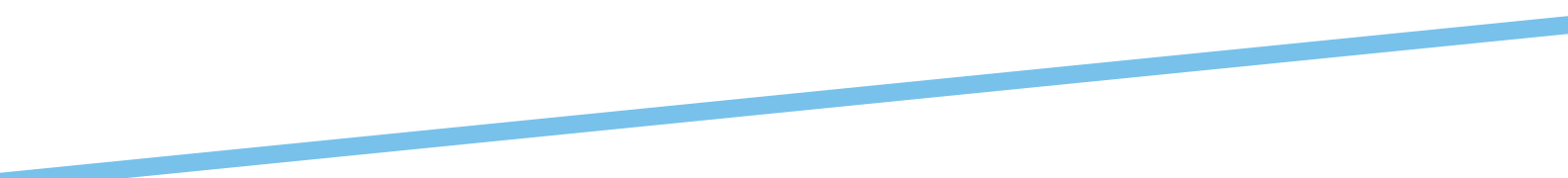
Using **LOVE LEARN** and **DO** as DNA markers, the Small Group Leader and Small Group Coach can determine together whether effective care and growth are taking place in and around the small group, or if there is more in any area that the group could be doing together.

## Care in Small Groups

Love and care for one another in Highlands is not seen as a “hierarchical system” (someone above cares for me). Care is the responsibility of the whole group, and it should be seen as mutual care. We see this in the New Testament “one another” passages. Mutual care means the Small Group Leader and group members care for each other.

## Prayer in Small Groups

Prayer in Small Groups is essential. Each group at Highlands is unique and will be at a different stage of what prayer looks like in the group, but it is a necessary element of a healthy group. In some groups, the prayer may be the Small Group Leader asking for prayer requests and going away to pray for the group, in others the group prays together at every meeting and actively throughout the week. Small Group Coaches work with the Small Group Leader to assess the level of prayer and if necessary, work together to continually increase the amount of prayer amongst the group.



*“They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while Praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”*

Acts 2:46-47 NLT





# Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is essential for multiplication. We need to be mindful and, therefore intentional of what and who we are multiplying. To multiply a Small Group Leader of Highlands who is able to lead, grow and multiply an effective small group, Small Group Coaches and Small Group Leaders walk an Apprentice Leader through the following 5-step journey:

## 1. Identified

- The Apprentice Leader has been identified by the Small Group Leader or Small Group Coach and has been invited to begin their leadership journey.

## 2. Watching

- The Small Group Leader uses an “*I do, you watch*” approach with the Apprentice. Regular communication and feedback take place.

## 3. Helping

- The Small Group Leader uses an “*I do, you help*” approach with the Apprentice. Regular communication and feedback take place.

## 4. Doing

- The Small Group Leader uses a “*You do, I help*” approach with the Apprentice. Regular communication and feedback take place.

## 5. Practicing

- The Small Group Leader uses a “*You do, I watch*” approach with the Apprentice. Regular communication and feedback take place.

The final step in the process is the multiplication from the existing group of the Apprentice into new Small Group Leader, who now working with a Small Group Coach, begins the process again.



# Multiplication

Small Group Leaders are concerned with the learning, growth and development of their individual members. They are also concerned with the mission of Jesus. If these two come together healthily then the growth and multiplication of the group is a natural outcome. A method of “addition” focuses on creating new groups from within the church and is not a “wrong” method. However, “Multiplication” focuses on new groups forming from within the existing small groups. This approach is more effective at reaching more people in, and outside of the church, and a sure way for Small Group Leaders to form ownership of their ministry, rather than “facilitating” activities for the church. To ensure the thought of multiplication does not evoke tension and the fear of “friends being separated”, the goal of multiplication and the idea of expanding God’s kingdom is instilled from the formation of the group.

The Small Group Coach works with the Small Group Leader to move towards multiplication in any of the following ways:

## **Original Leader Starts a New Group:**

The Apprentice Leader becomes the leader of the original group as the former leader starts a new group with new people (who are not members of the original group). This method is effective for those who are natural people gatherers who can connect with new people quickly, and are able to use their influence as an established Small Group Leader to attract new Apprentice Leaders and new small group members.

## **Apprentice Leader Starts a New Group:**

The same method as above but instead of the established Small Group Leader leaving, the Apprentice Leader, full of their own vision, starts a new group with new people, while the established group remains.

### **Multiplication by Division:**

The established Small Group Leader and the Apprentice Leader each lead “new” groups by multiplying the original group evenly. This method of multiplication is effective when the group is consistently growing larger in number and the Apprentice Leader is ready to lead.

### **Original Core Starts a New Group:**

Either the established Small Group Leader or the Apprentice Leader and 3 to 5 people from the original group form a new group. This is one of the easiest ways to multiply a group from the original group. The main advantage of this type of multiplication is the leader is ready to lead with people who are ready to follow.

### **Leadership Multiplication:**

Two (or more) new leaders multiply the original group into two (or more) small groups. The original leader’s main focus is giving attention to the new leaders. This process promotes the former leader into a Small Group Coach.

Multiplication is a core element of the overall ministry and each small group. The multiplication process should not be rushed; however, it is the goal each Small Group Leader works towards.

# Steps to Becoming a Leader

The following steps of a leader's journey should be completed before beginning to lead a Small Group. Doing so provides the leader with the best chance possible to successfully lead an effective and growing small group. The journey is not linear, and it does not matter what order the leader completes each step.

## **Regular attendee of Highlands services (2-3 times a month minimum)**

Small Group Leaders form part of the wider leadership of Highlands. Being an active member of the church family, leading the way in worship, and connecting with new people on Sundays are important roles of a small group leader.

## **Has completed Small Group Leader Training – New Leader Training**

New Leader Training provides everything necessary to start leading a Small Group successfully.

## **Has attended Welcome to Highlands**

Understanding the history and DNA of Highlands and how it operates is necessary to help leaders effectively embrace their role in the wider leadership of Highlands.

## **Has completed Freedom in Christ**

Freedom in Christ helps provide a solid foundation to be able to lead and disciple others by helping the leader to be secure in their identity in Jesus.

## **Has completed GRIP Spiritual Gifts Workshop**

GRIP helps provide an understanding of the supernatural gifts each leader already possesses and how to utilise them to lead and disciple others.

# Beginning the Journey

## **1. Meet with a Small Group Coach to work out compatibility and timing availability**

This can be done with the existing Leader's Coach or a new one.

## **2. Work through the Ministry Description**

Debrief with the Coach and consider including the existing Leader

## **3. Work towards completing any workshops left to attend before Leading**

This will ensure the Leader is ready to lead and disciple the group freely and confidently from their natural and supernatural abilities, knowing who they are in Christ

## **4. Meet with the Coach to confirm the group's meeting details and finalise the Leader Onboarding process.**

## **5. Begin leading!**

The Coach will have worked with the leader through this journey to leading and will continue to support the Leader.

# Ministry Description

NAME:

ROLE: **Small Group Leader**

Responsible to (Coach):

## A. The Role of the Small Group Leader.

### 1. Lead an effective/growing Small Group

- Prayerfully prepare and lead regular small group meetings (usually weekly or fortnightly).
- Ensure that any teaching material used in the small group is in harmony with the vision and values of Highlands
- Maintain an openness in which all small group members can discover, develop and be released into the use of their spiritual gifts
  - In the context of the small group; and,
  - In the wider ministry of the church.
- In conjunction with your Coach, formulate goals and strategies for your group and regularly monitor the progress towards these goals.
- Be committed to the growth of your small group:
  - Personally invite people to join the group
  - Maintain a prospects list. Individually, and as a group, that can be used for prayer and personal invitation
  - Encourage the group to accept responsibility for growth
  - Follow up on people who are referred to your group
- Maintain the size of the Small Group around 10

### 2. Develop and release Apprentice Leaders

- Be alert for potential new apprentice leaders in the group
- Invest time in these potential new leaders by encouraging them with the vision for small groups and giving them ministry opportunities in the group
- In conjunction with the Coach, share with the potential leader the stages and requirements of becoming a Small Group Leader
- In conjunction with the new apprentice, prepare the existing group for the beginning of a new group.

### 3. Facilitate Effective Care for the Group Members

- Personally pray for those in the small group regularly and be willing to encourage and model this prayer as an activity for the group.
- Facilitate mutual care for all small group members and their families:
- Where necessary, and working with your Coach, refer those who need specialist pastoral care
  - Inform your Coach of people who require specialist pastoral care, i.e. extra grace and support
  - Help individuals to relocate to another group if necessary

### 4. Work in conjunction with a Coach

- Attend coaching sessions with your Coach
  - Report on attendance and group dynamic
  - Discuss and follow through with any applications for Baptism
  - Feedback to the Coach on any testimony that would be encouraging for the wider church
  - Inform the Coach of any situation in the group that may require a response or counselling that exceeds your experience level.
- Be prepared to spend time with your Coach for:
  - Personal encouragement and/or guidance
  - Updating if you miss Leader's Nights or necessary training events
  - Debriefing session after the Coach visits your group
  - Reviewing the goals and strategies of the group
  - Two planning sessions a year with the other group leaders
- Attend Small Group Leader Nights

## B. Characteristics of a Small Group Leader.

1. A Christian, able to confess Jesus as Saviour and Lord, filled with the Spirit of God and showing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit
2. Loves Christ's Church and desires to work toward growth in quality and quantity
3. A consistent and committed Christian lifestyle, with a daily desire to put God's priorities at the centre of your life. This will include:
  - A consistent prayer life
  - A desire to worship with the church
  - An openness to give to the work of the church (financially and otherwise)
  - Teachable and willing to be dependable and accountable to Highlands' leadership.
  - Open to reporting and receiving feedback regarding your small group ministry

### **C. Requirements of a Small Group Leader.**

1. Born-again, Spirit-filled, Baptised Disciple of Jesus.
2. Has been a functioning small group member; and/or,
3. Has completed the basic training requirements of a Small Group Leader and is in agreement with Highlands' philosophy of small group ministry.
4. Willing to see this as a primary ministry and to set aside the time required to fulfil the role of Small Group Leader.
5. Willing to set aside time for specific training for the role of Small Group Leader.
6. Willing to take time out from leadership, if necessary or requested, in order to work through and resolve personal or ministry issues.



*“And let us consider how to stir 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.”*

Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV