HOPE CHURCH CONNECTION GROUPS
APPRENTICE LEADER OVERVIEW

Belief
We believe that discipleship happens in community. At Hope Church we put this conviction into practice by placing a major emphasis on Connection Groups. In terms of spiritual formation, what happens during the week is often more important than the weekend for the people of Hope Church.

At Hope Church we are a church OF Connection Groups, not a church WITH Connection Groups. What we mean is that Connection Groups are not an add-on to what we do at Hope Church. Connection Groups are essential to who we are as a church.

What does a Connection Group leader do?
Below are the expectations of a Hope Church Connections Group leader. As for an apprentice leader, they will work under an existing Connection Group leader to develop the skills to lead a group in the areas listed below. As time goes on it is expected that the apprentice leader will take more leadership in the group in terms of teaching, leading, gathering with people in the group, etc.

Fellowship
• First and foremost, the Connection Group is exactly that, a community. We hope that by providing structured environments organic relationships will happen. These relationships will mutually edify all who are involved as we live out our commitment to each other as a true faith family.

• Structured environments produce organic relationships. The Connection Group leader has a responsibility to create environments outside of the structured time in order to see relationships happenings (dinners, trips, events, etc.). Furthermore, the Connection Group leader has a responsibility in the group to welcome new people, encourage people who are hurting and struggling, and be the relational glue for the group.

Pray
• Even over teaching we want our Connection Groups to be filled with prayer. This is where we intercede for each other, our locality, our nation, and the world. Prayer guides will be provided the majority of the time.

• The Connection Group leader is responsible for creating such an environment in Connection Group. Sometimes this will happen at the end of group, sometimes groups will break into smaller groups to pray, etc. The point is Connection Groups are to be places where people are prayed for.

Teach
• Each gathering will have some time devoted to a teaching point/discussion from the previous or upcoming sermon. This will be a chance to further en-grain some truth already exposed by the sermon. By discussing, we are also giving our congregation the chance to personally work out what they are learning. Discussion guides will be provided the majority of the time.

• Also, teaching/discussion times should be regularly filled with testimonies from your group’s members. These can be true salvation type testimonies or more mission oriented.
• The group leader is responsible to facilitate the teaching and discussion time. The leader should be a continuous learner always trying to hone their skills in teaching the Bible.

**Connect**
• Our congregation will have the best chance to stay connected to their local community and global church planting through their Connection Group. Each Connection Group is encouraged to meaningfully partner with one church planting team (domestic or international) and one local community mission (pregnancy services, a local school, etc).
• The group leader should always be thinking about ways their group can be involved and engage the community in terms of missions. The easiest way to think through these opportunities is to talk to one of our elders.

**Plant**
• Each Connection Group will have a burden to see other groups planted. We will not, however, multiply through division. Our strategy in group planting will closely resemble that of our church planting strategy. Each Connection Group leader should have an apprentice they are preparing to be a capable Connection Group leader. When this person/couple is ready, they will most likely be paired with a small core from their existing group to begin a new work.
• Group leaders are always to be on the lookout for potential apprentice leaders. Once these leaders are identified the Connection Group leader needs to approach this person about becoming an apprentice. From there they must be assessed, trained, and eventually sent out.

**Time Structure for Connection Group**
• Connection Group structure can vary but should typically follow these general guidelines...
  o 15 minute welcome/refreshment time
  o 45 minute teaching/discussion time
  o 30 minute prayer/accountability time
  o 15 minute closing fellowship/refreshment time

**Leader Accountability**
• Each Connection Group leader will be a Covenant Partner in good standing with Hope Church
• Each Connection Group leader will have a direct relationship with an elder of Hope Church
  o This relationship will have its basis in coaching and encouragement but is also the primary means for Elders to shepherd the flock. When issues of church discipline, absence, major life change, or celebration occur in the life of church members, they should be passed from the Connection Group leader to the elders promptly.

**Commitment**
• Besides the basic skills it takes to lead a Connection Group, one of the most important things for Connection Group leaders is consistency. Below is an outline of the time commitment required for leading a Connection Group.
  o Weekly Connection Group meeting.
  o Monthly coaching meeting with your Connection Group elder.
  o Quarterly Connection Group leader meeting (will typically be on Sunday afternoons).
  o Attendance at GroupConnect, which will take place 2-3 times a year.

**Steps to going from an Apprentice to Connection Group leader**
Steps 1-4 are to become an apprentice leader.
1) Recommendation from a Connection Group leader.
• This is a Connection Group leader recommending someone as a possible apprentice to their Connection Group elder.

2) Read Connection Group leader overview document and complete apprentice application. (Accessible through the Apprentice Leader Resource Page)

3) Confirmation of spouse.

4) Meeting with a Connection Group coach.

Steps 5-9 are to get through the apprentice leader process.

5) Apprentice with a Connection Group for 3-6 months. Over these 3-6 months the apprentice should take on increased responsibility in the duties and responsibilities of a Connection Group leader.
   o Teaching and leading the group through the discussion guide.
   o Lead the prayer time in group.
   o Take on responsibility of initiating community and fellowship in the group.
   o These should gradually take place based on the comfort level of the apprentice leader and their skill level in leading.

6) Begin to attend monthly Connection Group coaching meetings and quarterly all-leader meetings.

7) During the apprenticeship process listen to the message “Communion of the Saints” by Matt Chandler (Accessible through the Apprentice Leader Resource Page)

8) During the apprenticeship process read “Life Group Ministry” and “Connection Leaders Handbook”. (Accessible through the Apprentice Leader Resource Page)

9) Become a co-leader in the group you are in with the intention of eventually planting a new Connection Group out of that group.