

Grow Group Leader Handbook

SPRING 2025

Wallenpaupack Church

WWW.WALLYCHURCH.ORG/GROWGROUPS

GROW GROUP LEADER HANDBOOK

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WELCOME FROM PASTOR HELEN!

February 11, 2025

Dear Leaders,

Welcome to a new semester! I am so grateful for each and every one of you, not only because you are leading but because you are a valued part of the church, and your obedience sets an example for others. I've been circling you each in prayer, by name, and have a blessed anticipation for what's to come in the next few months.

This handbook represents a high-level compilation of resources for you: some from my seminary journey, some from trial and error, and some from my own heart. It's what I wish I knew/was equipped with when I started leading others. It's a way for us to create a shared language around important concepts and be on the same page with expectations.

Please review this document as you prepare for the semester, even if you've read it before. It's been lovingly and thoughtfully put together to help you on your leadership and discipleship journey. We can never benefit enough from reminders!

As always, do not hesitate to reach out to either myself or your assigned Coordinators with any questions, ideas, or prayer requests. You are all loved beyond measure and appreciated!

For Him,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Kelly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Reverend Helen Kelly

KEY DEFINITIONS FOR CONTEXT

Our Church's Mission

Our mission is for people to know God in a life transforming way, grow in that relationship and go and tell that story to others.

Our Church's Vision

Our vision is for Wallenpaupack Church to be defined by our commitment to making and multiplying disciples. We do this by cultivating three critical environments: Micro (2-3), Small Group (4-12), and Large Group (13-125).

The Purpose of Grow Groups




We offer and participate in grow groups to foster healthy spiritual lives centered around the study of God's Word.

Disciple


A disciple is someone who is being changed by Christ and is committed to following Him and His mission.

GETTING STARTED: CHECKLISTS

Pre-Semester Checklist

- ☐ Pray over your group, new members God is preparing, any new leaders which you can encourage, your heart as a leader, etc.
- ☐ Once your group is set up in Church Center:
 - ☐ Access on the app AND on Planning Center (the back end of the app). If you've never been in planning center's groups before, you will get an invite via email. Check spam!
 - ☐ Double Check all details
 - ☐ Make any known adjustments to the event calendar
 - ☐ Reach out to past members (if applicable) to confirm if they still want to be in the same group. If so, add them, check the email confirmation box, and let them know the plan for any materials needed.
 - ☐ Locate any materials that have been uploaded to your group's *Resources*
 - ☐ Create *Discussion* for introductions, prayer requests, and questions in app
- ☐ Personally invite potential members once registration opens to the public
- ☐ Provide a welcome call, email or text to each member
 - ☐ Double check the meeting time, location and start date with them
 - ☐ Confirm that they have the app downloaded & offer to assist if needed
 - ☐ Ensure they have access to any needed materials ahead of first session
 - ☐ Prayer requests
- ☐ Review this resource document in full, including linked resources. An online version can be found at <http://www.wallychurch.org/policy.html> → 
- ☐ Watch the brief Discipleship 101 recorded training: <http://www.wallychurch.org/discipleship.html> → 
- ☐ Print enough Group Guidelines for everyone. Guidelines can be found at <http://www.wallychurch.org/policy.html> → 
- ☐ Allow ample time to prepare for the first night

1st-Night Checklist

- ☐ Opening prayer
- ☐ Icebreaker/Introductions (suggest nametags)
- ☐ Review House Rules/Building Usage Guidelines, depending on location
- ☐ Review and sign Group Guidelines (and childcare [waiver](#) if applicable) → 
- ☐ Confirm everyone has Church Center, profile info is current, and pic is uploaded
- ☐ Point out other key aspects of Church Center (calendar, "Me" tab, registrations...)
- ☐ Review *Biblical Basis of Grow Groups* and *Ministry Overview* sections of this doc
- ☐ Begin to delegate (see *Share in Leading with Intentionality...* below)
- ☐ Introduce the idea of being inward, outward and upward focusing. Discuss having at least one fellowship and one service and/or outreach project outside of group (those activities can replace your usual weekly gathering).
- ☐ Study content (if done on first night)
- ☐ Closing prayer

BACKGROUND

Biblical Basis for Grow Groups Explained

These were some of the most formative verses for our church's Grow Group ministry. Collectively, they provide the foundation and framework for how we do Grow Groups at Wallenpaupack Church.

EXODUS 18:13-26

Affirms the need for organizational structure to spread responsibility. Each leader in the ministry focuses on a few (i.e., those in our group and up to 5-6 leaders if a coordinator), and there is a powerful desire to raise more leaders.

1 PETER 5:10 AND 1 COR. 11:1

Convicts ministry leadership to do a heart check. Are motives to lead pure and out of a servant's heart? With these verses we are invited to contemplate on how leaders might imitate Jesus. Examples include pouring into group members, protecting the bride of Christ (i.e., the church) by setting a positive attitude against gossip, pluralistic ideas, etc. When leading, Christ is always the prime example as he humbled himself vertically and horizontally (to God and to others).

ROMANS 12:3-8

Encourages leaders to not only use their gifts, but to foster others in the group using their gifts as well. The Body of Christ works best and as intended when everyone uses their God-given gifts to advance the kingdom for his glory! Delegation is the norm; as an individual is empowered to use their gifts (or discover their gift, through trial and error), the group is further empowered. As the individuals and groups of the church are empowered, the local church is mobilized! As the local church is mobilized, more can come to know the saving love and grace of Jesus and be transformed by that Truth.

ACTS 2:42-47

Establishes the stage for the framework in which Grow Groups operate. Grow Groups are inwardly, outwardly, and upwardly focused. Each group should find a balance between the three to avoid becoming an inward facing clique, outward facing servants who fail to get filled spiritually, or upwardly facing followers who fail to use their gifts for the kingdom. While there need not be a balance each week, there should be an overall balance across the span of each semester.

PSALM 46:10 AND MATTHEW 11:28-30

Gives permission to rest! Leaders should be able to serve from the overflow of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, not in a deficit. Regular sabbath rest is always encouraged. Leaders are expected to have regular time with God outside of Sunday service and group meeting time. Beyond regular rhythms of rest, the group calendar is created so that there are no official "study" times during the summer. This is a time for leaders to replenish and everyone to self-feed. Groups are always encouraged to meet for fellowship or service whenever they want so that does not change during the summer; just the formality and commitment to be present is lifted while school is out of session. The church offers other forms of enrichment during the summer for attenders to take part in, if desired.

Grow Group Ministry Overview

Grow Groups exist to foster healthy spiritual lives centered around the study of God's Word.

Grow Groups focus their attention in three ways:

1. inward: toward each other
2. outward: toward others/the community
3. upward: toward God

Grow Groups are groups of up to 12 people¹ who meet for 8-12 weeks at a time (depending on semester length) throughout the school year. New groups/vacancies open each semester (Sept and March). Group members are encouraged to stay in the same group each semester but have an opportunity to switch between semesters to find the group that best meets their needs.

Each group is expected to produce leaders-in-training who will go on to launch their own group. Once a group is "full", the hope is for that group to continue to grow in their relationship with God and one another and that they then form two groups the next semester, although leaders-in-training may launch new groups before their current group fills up. To best steward the resources God has blessed

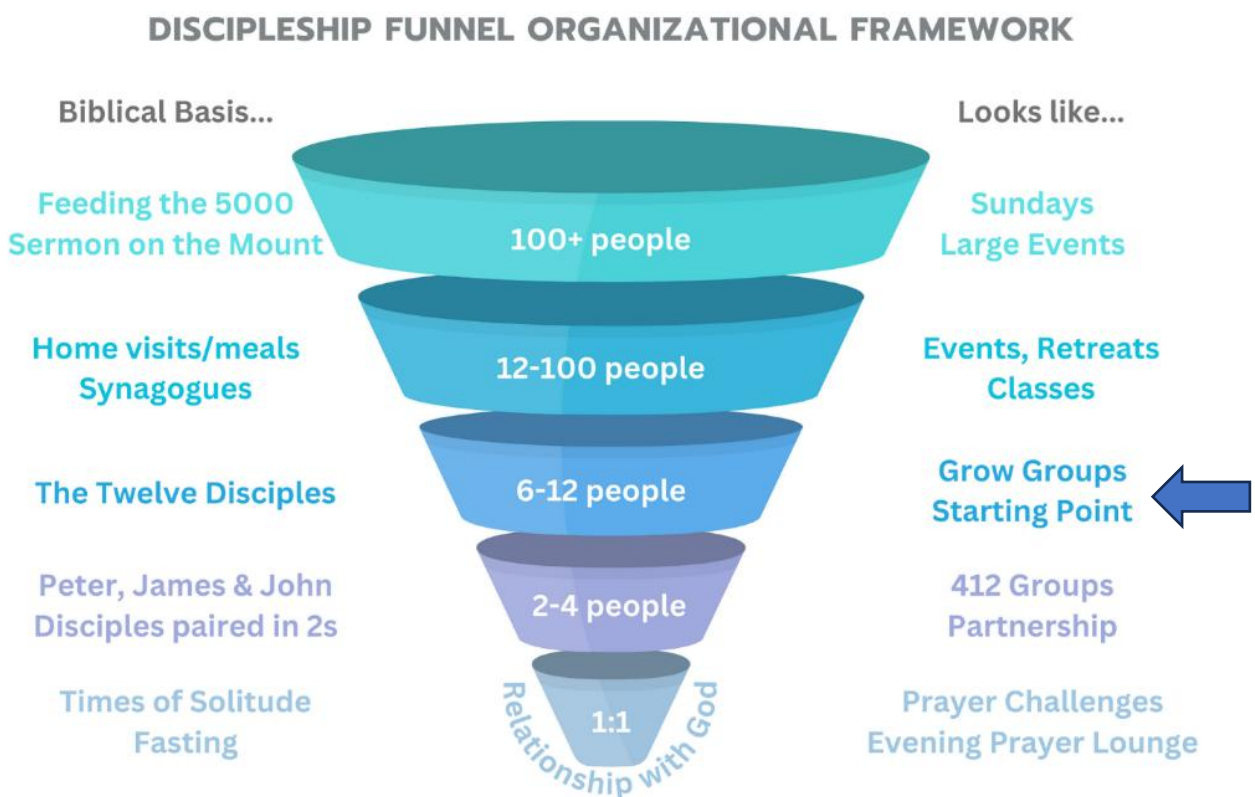
¹ Following Jesus' example, small groups of 12 or less are best suited for disciple making. The primary reason for keeping a group small is so each person can be known. Groups may be on the smaller side (six or less) due to how many sign up for that particular group, but each group should be open to serve up to 12 (leader included) so that more may be reached in this intimate setting.

the church with, Wallenpaupack Church is passionate about not just creating Grow Groups, but creating groups that create groups!

Although Grow Groups will always have a "study" to focus on, groups will also pray, worship, serve and spend informal time with one another over the course of a semester.

The pastoral staff prayerfully chooses the topics/studies offered. Leaders are supported by the Pastor of Discipleship and/or their assigned Coordinators.

Where Grow Groups Fit into Our Church's Discipleship Plan



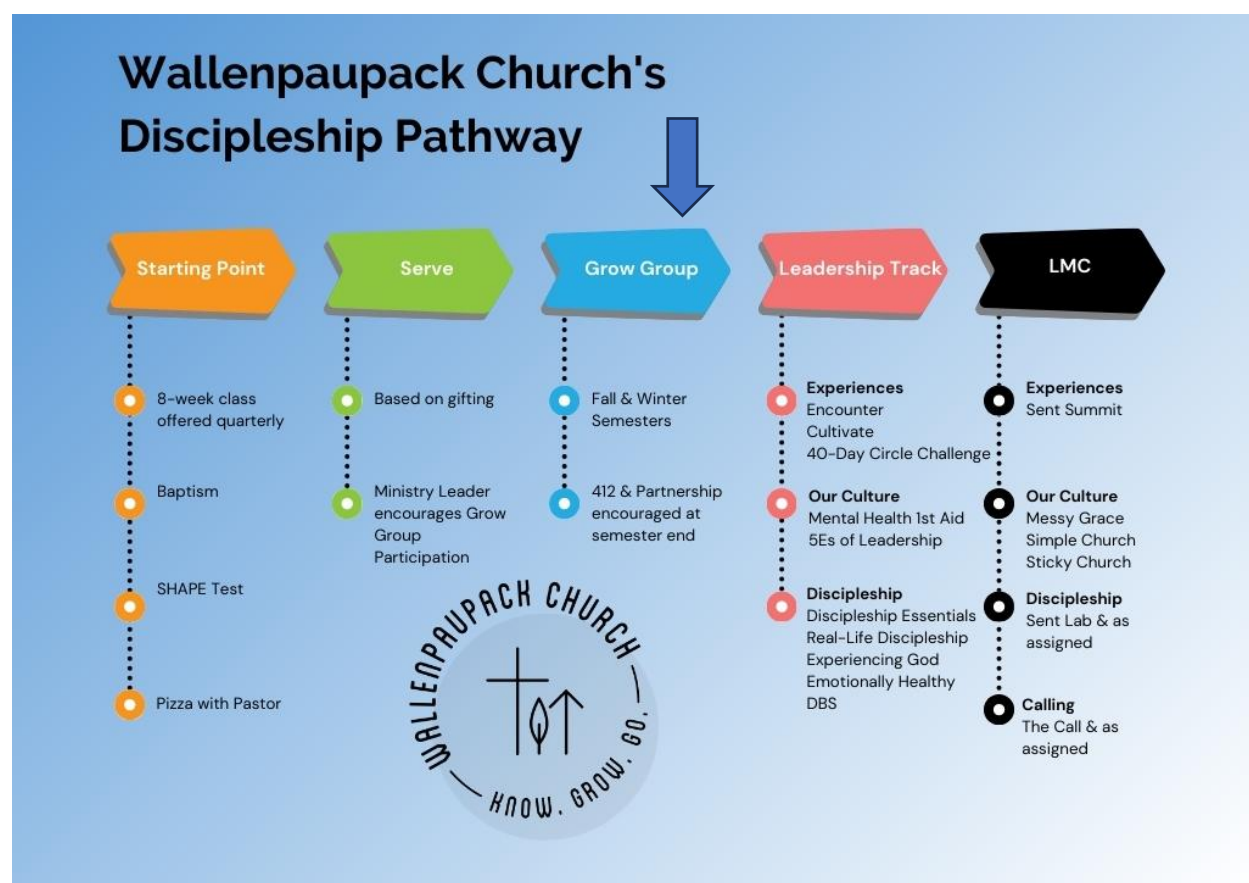
As one gets deeper into the funnel, the level of commitment increases. Studies show that most transformation happens nearer to the bottom of the funnel than the top. For that reason, Wallenpaupack Church's greatest priority is creating experiences and spaces at the Grow Group level and below.

Groups nearing 12 people are considered pregnant and should pray about developing a second group so that more people can be served.

If group members want a more intimate setting than what a Grow Group can provide, they should pray about forming a [412 group](#), either with other members of the Grow Group, others, or a mix of the two. →



Grow Groups are also an integral part of our church's *Discipleship Pathway*. That pathway shows the flow our church has adopted for discipleship purposes.



As you can see, Grow Groups fall right in the middle, receiving members from serving roles, and further cultivating them to move onto other more advanced discipleship efforts after.

Upwardly, Inwardly, & Outwardly Focused

This is the framework we use for groups and discipleship in general.

Healthy groups are inwardly focused on caring for members, upwardly focused on knowing and worshiping God, and outwardly focused on service and evangelism. These are also the components of a healthy disciple: nurturing relationships with believers, God, and others.

UPWARD FOCUS: KNOW & WORSHIP GOD

- Know: Studies of Scripture and resources foster deeper knowledge of God. Regular application grows confidence in His character and trustworthiness.
- Worship: Groups experience God's love in community, mercy through confession, and presence through song. Shared answers to prayer cultivate lifestyles of responding to and glorifying God.

IDEA: Attend a Sunday service or Evening Prayer Lounge as a group.

INWARD FOCUS: GROUP CARE

- Discovering Gifts: Small groups allow people to explore their gifts in a loving community, be affirmed in using them, and stimulate each other to build up the body. This develops lay leadership.
- Leadership Development: Leaders observe members more closely in groups, identify leadership potential, and provide opportunities to develop that potential through apprenticeship and training. This raises leaders from within the body to expand ministry impact.
- Congregational Care: Groups meet intimate needs often unseen in large gatherings.. Groups provide support in tangible ways and through prayer.

IDEA: Provide care baskets or meals if any group member is struggling.

OUTWARD FOCUS: SERVICE & EVANGELISM (COMMUNITY MINDED)

- A group that only focuses on itself will not practice the skills/gifts that typically get honed through serving others. At least once a semester, the group should look participate in an activity that benefits others.

IDEA: Take on a service project as a group.

COMMUNICATIONS

Church Center

Website Version: <https://wallychurch.churchcenter.com/home>

App Version: <http://www.wallychurch.org/app.html> →



Church Center is the main hub for church life: event calendars, registrations, etc. All leaders are expected to know how to navigate it, what is on it, etc. Leaders should contact their Coordinators if they need any assistance navigating the app.

The main form of Grow Group communication is the Church Center app and website. Both are the same so if someone does not have the app, they can still access the information on their web browser, although the app is more user friendly for alerts.

Each Grow Group will have their own Group on Church Center. This group can be found by:

1. Selecting "Groups" from the menu and then selecting Grow Groups **OR**
2. Selecting "Me" from the menu and then scrolling down to groups enrolled in

Open groups for registration purposes, can be found either under "Sign Ups" in the app or [here](#) →



Coordinators

Each leader is paired with a coordinator (formerly "mentor"). Coordinators and leaders will establish their own means of communication with each leader which could include text, Church Center, or some other mutually agreed upon platform. Coordinators and leaders will check-in at least monthly with one another. The primary way leaders stay informed about group life and share their own feedback is via the leader:coordinator relationship. Coordinators then communicate directly with the Pastor of Discipleship and vice versa.

Wallenpaupack Church Website

MAIN LANDING PAGE



<http://www.wallychurch.org>

While we share a few relevant links in this guidebook, there are more which may be helpful for leaders and members. Leaders should click through the site to become familiar with contents.

LANDING PAGE FOR GROUPS (PUBLIC FACING)



<http://www.wallychurch.org/growgroups.html>

This is what the congregation sees. It explains more about Grow Groups and lays out the timeline for current and future semesters (up to a year out).

MENTAL HEALTH



<http://www.wallychurch.org/behavioral-health.html>

If leaders recognize that someone in their group is struggling with issues beyond what pastoral counseling can address, they are encouraged to offer access to subsidized counseling. Leaders are also encouraged to access if needed. All requests are confidential among a limited number of pastoral staff.

LEADING WITH INTENTIONALITY ACROSS RELATIONAL LINES: TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

A relational environment is the vehicle that God uses to bring about real change in people's lives. Without true relationship, discipleship is difficult and rarely successful. An intentional leader can guide and strengthen a Grow Group's relational environment in several ways:

Model: Transparency and Authenticity

In order for a small group to have a relational environment, the leader must model transparency and authenticity. These two characteristics set the stage for disciples to draw closer in relationships. All leaders can develop transparency and authenticity if they set their minds to it. It's not for our comfort but rather for the Kingdom of God. Intentional leaders must remove any roadblocks that might keep them from building meaningful authentic relationships within their Grow Group.

Dream: Envision Healthy Growth and Multiplication

Having a God-given vision and dream for your small group is key to realizing its potential impact. With vision, even mundane tasks gain meaning and contribute toward the dream. Effective leaders raise other leaders to multiply groups that can truly transform lives and communities.

The key is not just leading a group but facilitating life change through community that reproduces leaders and groups to reach more people.

Pray: Daily Intercession for Group Members

"Pray like it depends on God; act like it depends on you." -St. Augustine

This is a favorite quote of ours at Wallenpaupack Church! Prayer is the leader's most vital activity. Prayer saves time by inviting God to work beyond human limits. He meets needs you cannot, goes where you cannot, does the impossible. Do not say "too busy to pray" - without prayer you will be too busy and ineffective.

Prayer is the greatest spiritual weapon against attacks seeking to derail leaders and groups. The weapon that pushes back the enemy and bears lasting fruit is prayer.

Invite: Give Personal Asks to New Members

This is CRUCIAL. While some people may join a group because the time works or the topic is of interest, most groups gain members by leaders personally inviting them to join their group at the start of each new semester. Many times, the members continue with the same group from semester to semester, but it starts with the personal ask.

Contact: Regular, Caring Connections

Regularly contact with group members is a key growth principle. If someone does not come, ensure that you, as leader, or someone else in the group reaches out within two days to check in and let them know they were missed.

Benefits of regular contacting include:

- Connecting with visitors to assimilate them
- Increasing average attendance through friendly accountability
- Enabling the leader to know the flock's needs
- Communicating care and concern for members

Practical suggestions:

- Pray for needs openly shared or sensed
- Listen well without dominating conversation
- Use suggested questions to spur discussion
- Get contact info handy to enable quick connections

The goal is to listen, not just talk. Regular contacts grow relationships that Grow Groups. People will share burdens with a leader who shows they care through investing time. Contacting helps identify needs for the shepherding leader to meet.

Prepare: Solid Agendas Bathed In Prayer

Failing to prepare leads to failure. Leaders who do not prioritize preparation will often experience declining attendance and dissatisfied group members. In contrast, leaders who regularly pray and plan see their groups thrive. Wise preparation opens the door for God to work.

Effective leaders devote at least as much time preparing as the group meeting itself. This communicates value to members. Preparation builds leader confidence and keeps the focus on Christ, not logistics. Members can sense if a leader values the group by the time they invest.

Three key areas of preparation:

1. **Personal** - Through prayer, fasting, etc., be in right relationship with God and others. This is most crucial.
2. **Logistics** - Ensure the meeting place is ready to facilitate discussion.
3. **Agenda** - Bathe the plan in prayer. Planning with leaders-in-training allows you to further delegate components of the meeting.

Consistent, strategic preparation is indispensable for groups that transform lives. God uses leaders who lay this groundwork to bear lasting fruit.

Share: Delegate Group Responsibilities

Every Grow Group member should be delegated *something*. As group members begin serving, they will also begin to discover & use their spiritual gift(s) in His body. As they use the gifts that He has given to them, the body will be strengthened & will become healthier as more of the parts begin to function.

There are a lot of ways to get involved, but it is up to us to help others discover and use their gifts. As gifts are discovered & practiced, people become intrinsically motivated as they experience Christ working in & through them!

As a leader, do not feel compelled to do it all! Graciously delegate tasks so that members can discover their gifts, put them to use & glorify God with them! Here are some tips:

- Not all roles will apply to all groups. Use what you can & leave the rest.
- Be proactive in identifying potential leaders as "leaders-in-training." Tasks like leading prayer or discussion could be great practice & experience for them. Create spaces for people to practice.
- Be intentional about asking people to fill a role a week ahead of time so they can prepare & they know you put thought into the request.
- Try a mix of asking people to cover specific tasks, based on what you know would be a good fit & opening roles up to the group to see who wants to take on what.
- Roles can be covered on a one-time basis or for the duration of the semester.
- Once roles are delegated, check in on the volunteers every so often to see how it is going.

Here are some suggestions to involve people in serving within Grow Groups:

- Leading the icebreaker portion of the group
- Planning the worship segment of group life

- Planning the group's refreshment schedule
- Planning the group's fun activities
- Planning the group's outreach efforts and activities
- Hosting the group
- Leading the group discussion
- Leading the group's prayer time
- Recording and keeping track of the group's prayer requests and communicating those requests to group members
- Becoming a leader-in-training with an eye to starting a new group in a future semester
- Following up with cards or calls to absentees

Mentor: Raise Up Leaders-In-Training

Once a group has 10-12 people in it, that group can be considered "pregnant" with another group. Within a semester or two, that group should give life to another group. Therefore, ALL leaders are expected to identify someone whom they can train to eventually lead their own group. If a leader needs to step down for a season, they should plan to identify a leader ahead of time so the group may remain together.

Training a grow group leader is best done through close mentorship, following the examples in Scripture of discipleship through life-on-life relationships (Phil 4:9, 1 Cor 11:1, Phil 3:17). Leadership is more caught than taught.

Here is the process for finding and training a future leader:

1. Pray for God to reveal a potential leader-in-training. Look for someone eager to serve, friendly, with strong character, teachability, and a heart for God.
2. Give them small leadership responsibilities to assess their willingness and capability.
3. Invite them into formal shadowing. Explain the process and goals.
4. Meet regularly for prayer, planning, and evaluation. Have them start leading parts of the study.
5. Include them in leader meetings and training. Evaluate progress with coordinator.
6. Help them start their own group, ensuring proper supporting roles are in place. Continue relationship through prayer and support.

Manage: Minister To Difficult People/Personalities

"Challenging people" can hijack groups, dominating discussion and time. With prayer and wisdom, leaders can guide them to allow others to contribute too. Here are some suggestions:

- Redirect questions to quieter members
- Verbally note tangents but draw discussion back to the main topic
- Respond to inaccurate views by soliciting other perspectives
- Allow silence rather than filling space, giving time for thought
- Proactively pray for difficult people, asking God for wisdom and love. Remind them privately that groups thrive when all can contribute. With patience and care, leaders can guide challenging individuals to grow

The goal is gracious redirection into healthy patterns so all can benefit.

Commit: Personal Spiritual Growth

Following is a basic overview of what a leader should be aware of and practicing in terms of spiritual growth.

CATALYSTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The journey towards godliness involves three primary catalysts: people, circumstances, and spiritual disciplines.

1. **People:** Proverbs 27:17 states, "Iron sharpens iron," emphasizing the role of relationships in shaping character. Friends and enemies, family, and colleagues—God uses these individuals to mold and refine us.
2. **Circumstances:** Romans 8:28 highlights God's ability to use all circumstances for good. Financial pressures, health conditions, and even weather become tools in Divine Providence, propelling believers toward holiness.
3. **Spiritual Disciplines:** Unlike the external influence of people and circumstances, spiritual disciplines work primarily from the inside out. They offer believers a greater measure of choice in their involvement. While self-discipline alone will not make one holy, growth in holiness remains a gift from God.

GUIDELINES & POLICIES

Grow Group Gathering Guidelines

These should be reviewed with each group at the start of each semester. Electronic copies of these guidelines are uploaded to each group's resources. They read:

I agree with the following statements guiding our time in group together: For our group to be healthy we need to:

- Focus on spiritual growth as a top priority ([Romans 8:29](#))
- Accept one another in love just as Christ has accepted us ([Romans 15:7](#))
- Take care of one another in love without crossing over the line into parenting or taking inappropriate responsibility for solving the problems of others ([John 13:34](#))
- Treat one another with respect in both speech & action ([Ephesians 4:25-5:2](#))
- Keep our commitments to the group including attending regularly, doing the homework, & keeping confidences ([Psalm 1:1-2](#), [4b](#))
- Reserve from consuming alcohol during sessions or events so as to avoid causing a brother or sister to stumble ([1 Corinthians 8:1-13](#), [Romans 14:19-21](#))
- Avoid gossip and immediately resolve concerns by following the principles in [Matthew 18:12-17](#)

Additionally, I agree to and understand that:

PURPOSE

We are participating to grow healthy spiritual lives centered around the study of God's word.

CHILDCARE (CIRCLE ONE)

Group members are responsible to arrange for childcare for their children OR

Self-sufficient children are welcome with the host's permission OR Children are welcome.

ATTENDANCE

We are committed to consistently attend the group we are in until the end of the sessions. We will make our time together a priority & participate in all group sessions unless urgent circumstances beyond our control prevent our attendance. We will let our group leader know if we cannot attend and utilize the RSVP function in groups.

SNACKS

We will coordinate with the group leader to alternate providing light snacks

SAFE ENVIRONMENT

We will maintain a safe & gracious space where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, opinions offered when not requested, etc.). We will be patient with one another as God works in us to make us what He wants us to be.

PRAYERS

Prayers should be kept confidential, unless given permission to share more broadly. Prayers should also be respected as prayers and not opportunities to give unsolicited advice.

DISCUSSIONS

While discussions can go off on tangents, some discussion topics are better situated for spaces outside of the Grow Group Environment. These topics include, but are not limited to politics or other politically-charged tangents, parenting preferences (other than in the context of biblical parenting), or controversial current events. We agree that there is a time and place for such discussions, and the our limited time in Grow Groups probably isn't it. We agree to focus on the topic and discussion questions provided.

SCHEDULE

Day of the Week:

Arrive:

of Sessions:

Discussion Begins:

Last Session Date:

Leave:

CONTACT

Leader's Name & Preferred Contact info:

Leader Guidelines and Expectations

PURPOSE

The Grow Group Leadership uses their specific spiritual gifts within the Grow Group setting, prepare for and facilitate sessions, and shepherd the members within their group. At Wallenpaupack Church, we offer & participate in grow groups to foster healthy spiritual lives centered around the study of God's Word. In a nutshell: they help members connect and grow.

SPECIFIC GROW GROUP LEADERSHIP ROLES

- **Leader/Co-Leader:** Facilitates and coordinates an individual grow group
- **Coordinator:** In addition to being a leader (usually), the coordinator acts as a liaison between the leaders assigned to them and the Discipleship Pastor. The coordinator also shepherds their assigned leaders much like leaders do with group members.
- **Leader-in-Training:** Works closely with the Leader, anticipating that they will have a group of their own within a semester or two.
- **Host (optional):** Opens their home/space up for group gatherings and coordinates closely with their leader. In instances where there is a host and leader, the two should be recognized as a team and the leader's shepherding responsibilities may also be shared with the host.

THE SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- **Policy:** It is the leader's responsibility to know the Grow Group Guidelines and implement consistently across groups.
- **Financial:** There is no cost burden on leaders to facilitate groups. If materials are needed for the chosen study, Wallenpaupack Church will purchase those materials for leaders.
- **Ministry Oversight:** Leaders are responsible for shepherding and discipling the members of their group. Each group can be seen as a micro church wherein each member is encouraged to identify their spiritual gift and use it for kingdom purposes. The leader maintains a balance within their group to ensure that the group is inward focused (taking care of one another), upward focused (spending time in the word, worship and prayer), and outward focused (serving the local church or community in some way). As they facilitate their groups, they recognize that the "study" is meant to be a portion of what the group focuses on, not *the* focus.
- **Time:** Leaders/Leaders-in-Training should spend as much time preparing for a session as they will spend actually in the session (i.e., 2 hours of prep for a 2-hour group) each week. This prep time can include reviewing the materials ahead of time, praying over the time and members, and studying relevant

scriptures. Additional time will vary based on the size of the group and how many are in leadership roles within the group to share responsibility with;

- **Conflict Resolution:** Should conflict arise within the group the people involved in the conflict are to follow the standards for resolution set forth by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17. If the problem is not resolved, the order in which support is brought into the situation is as follows:
 - Coordinator (although leaders may choose to reach out to their coordinator earlier in the process for additional guidance, prayer, and discernment)
 - Discipleship Pastor
 - Lead Pastor
 - Board of Administration (This is rare, but there is always a potential. In these very rare cases when the pastors have exacerbated all their resources to resolve interpersonal issues, that issue will be handed over to the board for resolution. Not every board member will be part of these processes but often a subgroup will be assigned).

EXPECTATIONS

Each person in Grow Group Leadership² must:

1. Be a growing follower of Jesus who understands and believes in the mission and theology of Wallenpaupack Church and the Free Methodist Church-USA.
2. Be a regularly attending guest³ in good standing at Wallenpaupack Church.
 - a. Attend Sunday worship faithfully. Minimum of 3 services/month.
 - b. Give financially to the work of Wallenpaupack Church (as long as their spouse, if applicable, is also in support of giving).
3. Allow room for the Holy Spirit to adjust plans within group time. Sometimes the “detour” or “distraction” is a divine opportunity and should be followed with discernment.
4. Engage in personal prayer time throughout the week, if not daily. This is imperative and cannot be overstated enough!
5. Set an example of servant leadership in your own group, bearing in mind that future groups should grow from yours and those leaders need strong examples to draw from.
6. Attend training sessions and keep current with the leadership development resources shared throughout the semester by Wallenpaupack Church.

² The exception is the Leader-in-Training who may still be working toward incorporating these aspects into their lives. Leaders should encourage their leaders in training where possible to these ends and help guide them to where they ought to be by the time they lead independently.

³ While regular attendance is a minimum requirement, Grow Group Leadership are strongly encouraged to pursue Partnership if they haven’t already.

7. Commit to respond to group communications outside of regular meeting time (Call, text, email), although group leadership is encouraged to set boundaries as to when they will and will not respond.
8. Commit to reach out 1:1 at least every two weeks, outside of the group's meeting time, to each member of the group. Leaders are strongly encouraged to spend time, in person 1:1, with each member during each semester (this time can be shared with hosts, if willing, and should include the leader in training for learning purposes).
9. Seek permission from the Discipleship Pastor for any materials, lessons, methodologies, etc. desired to be used beyond what is already available within the chosen study's provided materials (with the exception of Scripture itself).
10. Learn how to use and use the Groups functionality within Church Center/Planning Center to coordinate group logistics, attendance, meeting schedules.
11. Follow the Building Usage Guidelines if the group gathers on church property at any time.
12. Follow the Childcare guidelines (if applicable).
13. Review Grow Group Guidelines with group and ensure the guidance is honored by the group.
14. Honor deadlines set regarding new group registration logistics, feedback surveys, and the like when shared by Wallenpaupack Church. If the deadline cannot be met for some reason, reach out to the person who shared the information initially ahead of time.
15. Finally, extend grace more often than not. No one is perfect, and all the leaders at church all want the same thing: to point people back to Jesus. Sometimes this means giving the benefit of the doubt, extending forgiveness, or practicing patience. We are all sinners in need of grace, sometimes even the best of intentions lead to mistakes made, and we are all servants seeking to advance His Kingdom first.

LEADERSHIP WILL KNOW THEY ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK IF THEY⁴:

1. Are seeing fruit from abiding in Christ (internally with the manifestation of fruits of the spirit and fruits of their labor manifesting within the group).
2. Are able to hear from and adapt to the Holy Spirit.
3. Maintain a balance of inward, upward, and outward activities within their groups.
4. Can speak the truth in love.

⁴ This is meant to be a tool for self-assessment. Coordinators and/or the Discipleship Pastor will also look at the same indicators for supportive and accountability purposes.

5. Regularly monitor and reflect how their time as leader is going (journaling immediately after each session is a best practice to try to adopt).
6. Know where to direct members to with their questions if they cannot answer themselves.
7. Consistently keep apprised of communications from Wallenpaupack Church so they are aware of opportunities and updates as available (and members are well aware of these as well). Be the source of church updates for your group!
8. Can disclose to their Coordinator or Discipleship Pastor if they are starting to feel burned out or overwhelmed. We want to support you in that space. Leaders shouldn't shoulder it alone! We also want to ensure the group remains well supported throughout the struggle.
9. Are building relationships with the people in their group or the leaders assigned to them. They know what's on their hearts, where they are in their walk with God, etc.
10. Group members and leaders feel well supported, empowered, and unjudged by their leaders and coordinators, respectively.
11. Group members and leaders are respected by their leaders and coordinators, respectively.
12. Group members and leaders are transparent with their leaders and coordinators, respectively. This indicates a level of trust and openness that can be healthy if received without judgement.

METRICS

These win statements and metrics were developed in conjunction with Grow Group Leaders and Coordinators and are aligned with the church's mission and vision.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Win Statement: Grow Group members will share how their relationship with God has deepened, reflecting spiritual growth through testimonies and feedback.

Measurement: This can be observed through end-of-semester feedback surveys, testimonies during group meetings, or personal conversations between leaders and members. This win will be measured completely qualitatively, based on member, leader and mentor reports.

HEALTHY GROUP DYNAMICS

Win Statement: Grow Groups will maintain a balanced focus on upward (God), inward (each other), and outward (community), as reflected in their activities and engagement.

Measurement: Leaders and mentors will regularly assess group dynamics through reflections, informal check-ins, tracking service projects in planning center, and end-of-semester evaluations with members. This win includes, but is not limited to:

- 100% of groups participate in at least one outward-focused service activity/semester.
WHY: This reinforces the outward mission of the groups (toward the community) and ensures that groups are actively engaging beyond study and fellowship, in alignment with your church's value of serving others.
- 80% of remaining participants return for subsequent semesters
WHY: This measures member retention and discipleship progression. It tracks whether members are staying engaged, growing spiritually, and taking steps toward further involvement in the church.
- Anecdotal reporting from members, leaders and mentors.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CULTURE

Win Statement: Current group leaders and mentors will deepen their own knowledge base and actively develop and equip new leaders, growing future leadership within the church, thereby multiplying groups as a result.

Measurement: Leaders and mentors will keep track of leadership development within their groups by noting how often they engage in leadership conversations, and by the emergence of new leaders/leaders in training. Planning Center can also be used to track leader/group multiplication. This win includes, but is not limited to:

- At least 20% of Grow Groups raise up a new leader or co-leader each semester, resulting in new groups being formed.
WHY: This aligns with your goal of creating groups that create groups. It encourages leadership development and group multiplication, ensuring the church can continue to disciple more people without being limited by group size.
- 80% of current leaders complete assigned leadership development resources each semester (such as reading a designated book or engaging in a specific training).
WHY: This ensures that leaders are continually growing in their capacity to lead and disciple others, supporting the overall health and sustainability of the Grow Group ministry.
- Anecdotal reporting from members, leaders and mentors.

Childcare (as applicable)

PURPOSE

Wallenpaupack Church is committed to fostering a safe and engaging environment for children during church-sponsored activities, including Grow Groups and other events. This policy outlines the procedures, ratios, and requirements for on-site and aligns with Wallenpaupack Church's goal to provide a welcoming and safe environment for families while maintaining a high standard of care and accountability.

SUMMARY

Childcare during Grow Groups is available under the following conditions:

1. A maximum of 12 children per background-checked adult sitter.
2. Teen helpers must be two years older than the oldest child present.
3. Parents must pre-register their children (method determined by leader)
4. If childcare is unavailable or children are left unattended, parents must sign a [waiver](#) assuming full responsibility. →



ELIGIBILITY AND RATIOS

- Childcare may be offered for children whose parents/guardians are participating in Grow Groups.
 - There must be no more than 12 children per adult sitter at any given time.
 - All adult sitters must have a current, passed background check on file with the church.
 - Child or teen helpers must:
 - Be at least two years older than the oldest child they supervise.
 - Be vetted and supervised by an adult sitter.
-

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

If childcare is unavailable or children are left unattended (e.g., playing nearby), parents must sign a Waiver of Liability acknowledging that the church is not responsible for unsupervised children.

OFF-SITE CHILDCARE

If childcare is offered off-site (e.g., in a home or park), parents must sign a Waiver of Liability releasing the church of any liability.

COMMUNICATION AND REGISTRATION

- Parents must pre-register their children for on-site childcare.
- Childcare will be capped at 12 children per sitter to maintain the established ratio.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Sitters are required to report any injuries or incidents to the Grow Group leader immediately.

Churchwide Policies

The most recent version of these can be found on the church website [here](#). The policies include:

- Inclement Weather
- Counseling Benefit/Subsidy Usage
- Leader Enrichment Fund Usage
- AI Usage
- Building Usage
- Other



A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

We fail only when we disobey God by not sharing our faith. Anytime we step out, despite doubts or fears, we succeed in God's eyes. We are not responsible for causing a hardened heart to turn to Christ—that is God's work. But we miss blessings when we miss opportunities to share freely what He has done for us.

One cannot fail when following His lead in showing love. What counts is your availability to be used by Him however He wills. It is important to be aware of common fears when sharing one's faith so that can be brought to the Lord in prayer, both for the leader and for members.

FEAR OF REJECTION

Rejection hurts but remember evangelism success is faithfully sharing Christ - the response is up to God. If rejected, they are rejecting Jesus, not you. Keep lovingly sowing seeds; God alone changes hearts.

FEAR OF FRIENDS' OPINIONS

Jesus promised persecution for living out our faith. We are blessed when persecuted for righteousness. Do not stay silent and love friends into hell. Many wait for explanations from Christian friends. Lovingly share the gospel.

FEAR OF NOT KNOWING ENOUGH

Simple faith and obedience make the biggest impact. Jesus uses willing hearts over intellectual prowess. Admit what you do not know. The goal is faithfulness in sharing truth, not having all knowledge.

FEAR OF LOSING RELATIONSHIPS

Following Christ above all may cost earthly relationships. This is hard but necessary. Some families divide over the Gospel. We must be willing to risk rejection to share the truth in love.

FEAR OF NOT KNOWING HOW

With some basic training, anyone can learn an uncomplicated way to share the Gospel that is faithful and fruitful. Equipped with a method, fear of "not knowing how" disappears. Ask God to overcome your fears with boldness to share Christ out of love for others. What matters most is a willing, obedient heart

ASSESSMENTS

Below are a variety of assessments which may be of interest to leaders and/or Grow Group members.

Semester-End Assessments

An anonymous survey will be conducted at the end of each semester as a formal way to solicit feedback. Coordinators will share the link with leaders once it is available, and leaders are expected to encourage all group members to complete.

Leader's Self-Evaluation⁵

React as honestly as you can to the following self-evaluation. For each character quality you will circle a number, from 1–5, based on your perception of yourself.

1 = "weak" and 5 = "strong."

Relationship With God (up)					
Desire for God's Will	1	2	3	4	5
Willingness to let God have control	1	2	3	4	5
Humility	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship With Self (in)					
Self-confident	1	2	3	4	5
Aware of strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	5
Risk-taking	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship With Others (out)					
Nurturing	1	2	3	4	5
Sensitive in listening	1	2	3	4	5
Vulnerable	1	2	3	4	5
Willing to give leadership away	1	2	3	4	5
Time and energy	1	2	3	4	5

⁵ Dempsey, Rod; Earley, Dave. *Spiritual Formation Is...: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Kindle Locations 4542-4580). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Personal Spiritual Growth Assessment⁶

Love for God (upward)	1 to 10 (low to high)
I am daily reading God's Word.	
I am systematically memorizing God's Word.	
I am writing out key passages and meditating on God's Word for application.	
I have a daily prayer time and plan.	
I have a dated prayer request list for people and requests.	
I pray daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit.	
I keep a journal and record how the Lord is at work in my life and around me.	
I regularly practice fasting from food and other areas for my spiritual development.	
I regularly disconnect from the world (including all media) and in solitude connect to Jesus.	
I try daily to listen and follow the still small voice of Jesus.	
Add up the section _____ and divide by 10 = _____	

Love for One Another (Inward)	1 to 10 (low to high)
I meet weekly in a small group with other believers.	
I have discovered my spiritual gift.	
I am using my spiritual gift to build up others in the body of Christ.	
I am daily praying for other believers.	
I am guarding against the lust of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life.	
I am confessing my faults, sins, and shortcomings to other believers.	
I am not involved in gossip against other believers.	
I am not holding a grudge or offense toward any person.	
I regularly clear up/ resolve hurts and offenses toward other believers.	
I am daily praying with my family or for my family.	
Add up the section _____ and divide by 10 = _____	

⁶ Dempsey, Rod; Earley, Dave. Spiritual Formation Is...: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence (Kindle Locations 4542-4580). B&H Publishing Group.

Love for our Neighbors (outward)	1 to 10 (low to high)
I have a prayer list for people who do not know Christ.	
I am praying specific requests for their salvation.	
I am seeking friendships and relationships with people who do not know Christ.	
I am listening first to what they have to say.	
I am planning for opportunities to eat with people who do not know Christ.	
I am seeking to use my spiritual gift to serve others outside the body of Christ.	
I am praying for opportunities to show and share the good news of the gospel.	
I have prepared a simple explanation of the gospel to share with others as God opens the door.	
I am seeking to become a blessing and serve the poor and under- resourced in my community.	
I am seeking to build bridges with people who have hurt me and to love them like Christ.	
Add up the section _____ and divide by 10 = _____	

Sum of three sections: _____ Divide by 3: _____ = overall score

SHAPE Spiritual Gift Assessment

Website access: <http://www.wallychurch.org/shape.html>

Once Jesus is accepted as someone's Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit will bestow at least one spiritual gift on that person. This gift is to be used specifically to advance the Kingdom of God for His glory. The Bible reveals several types of spiritual gifts; these are different than talents like singing or building. One of the best ways to identify a spiritual gift is through trial and error: try serving in some part of church life and see if it clicks. If not, try something else. To help guide this gift identification process, one might also take an assessment geared toward such a discovery. At Wallenpaupack Church, the SHAPE test is the assessment of choice. The results are not necessarily set in stone, but they may point the assessment taker in the right direction.

All leaders should take this test and feel welcome to discuss the results with their Coordinators. Group members can also be encouraged to take and then serve in their giftedness.

