

Small Groups at Bentley Baptist Church

Policy v.1.0 approved by Church Council 13.1.2025

We believe in Small Groups as vehicles for deepening relationships, discipleship, and mission. All members and regular attenders (collectively 'adherents') of Bentley Baptist Church (the Church) are encouraged to be part of a Small Group, if possible.

Definition

Small Groups are intentional communities, normally of 3 to 12 people, who gather regularly for the purposes of spiritual growth, deepening relationships, and engaging in mission. The primary kinds of Small Groups in the Church are Discipleship Groups (D-Groups), and Missional Communities, the former emphasising the spiritual formation of followers of Jesus and the latter on reaching unbelievers.

D-Groups typically include Bible study, prayer, sharing, caring, and eating together.

Missional Communities may involve numerous kinds of interest-based activities but are deliberately missional in their intent and design.

Policy Scope

The Church has a duty of care towards all our adherents and those who access our facilities and services, as well as legal and insurance responsibilities. As Small Groups usually meet off-site and away from public scrutiny, it is especially important that they operate in a way that is spiritually, emotionally, and physically safe. This policy applies to all Small Groups affiliated with the Church.

Leadership and Accountability

Leadership is essential for Small Group health, and all Small Groups should have a leader when possible. While Small Groups operate with significant autonomy, they are accountable to the Church through the Lead Pastor. (In this document, 'Lead Pastor' includes a Ministry Leader appointed by the Lead Pastor.) Furthermore, the Church is responsible to Small Group leaders and other volunteers under work health and safety laws.

For this reason, Small Group leaders should be Members of the Church who are growing in spiritual maturity, love God and people, and are known to have a good character and reputation. They must be approved by the Lead Pastor, who should ensure they receive adequate training, support, and resources.

Meeting Time and Location

Small Groups may meet at times and places that suit them with the following caveats:

1. Meeting times should not conflict with the rhythms and schedule of the Church.
2. Meeting venues should be physically safe and accessible to all participants.

Teaching and Other Resources

The Church has a duty of care for the spiritual health and safety of its adherents. From the earliest days, false teaching has been a danger in the church and even correct teaching can be used as a weapon for division. On the other hand, good teaching can be a powerful multiplier for spiritual growth and church unity.

For this reason, Small Groups may not use teaching resources or curriculum without approval of the Lead Pastor.

Starting a Small Group

- A Small Group may only be started by a Member of the Church who is over 18.
- The Small Group Leader must hold a current Safe Ministry Check and Police Certificate.
- The Small Group leader completes an Application for Small Group Leadership and returns it to the Lead Pastor.
- Before the group meets, complete a Small Group Venue Safety Check and return to the Lead Pastor.

Application for Small Group Leadership

An online copy of this form is available at bentleybaptist.org/card/69

Applicant Details

Name:

Email:

Mobile:

Address:

- I am a Church Member who is over 18 years old
- I agree with the church's doctrine, mission and values
- I have you read the 'Small Groups at Bentley Baptist Church' policy document
- I will endeavour to attend Small Groups leaders meetings when possible
We plan quarterly meetings. We recognise life is busy and understand if you can't make it but request a good faith effort to attend.
- I have supplied a Safe Ministry Check and National Police Certificate or will do before the group starts

Office Use:

Date met with applicant:

Safe Ministry Check completed:

Application approved by (name and date):

Small Group Venue Safety Check

(Include all venues where the group will regularly meet. Use separate forms if needed. If a venue is not confirmed at time of application, complete later)

Small Group Leader:

Proposed meeting location(s):

- I have permission to use the premises
 - The venue can comfortably hold the planned number of participants
 - The meeting be held without causing nuisance to the neighbours
 - The location is accessible to the intended participants
 - The location free from electrical hazards
 - The location free from trip hazards (or appropriate measures are in place)
 - The location free from other potential hazards
- Will children under 18 be present at the meeting, or at the location during the meeting? Y / N
If yes, we will discuss appropriate safety measures, if needed

Office Use:

Safety Check approved by (name and date):
