

Joining a Growth Group (GG) is a beneficial for all sorts of reasons.

At Living Church, GGs are a place where people can continue to explore the bible teaching after Sunday, as smaller groups come together to discuss the passage and the impact teaching has on them and their lives. It is a safe place to ask questions and explore answers together.

GGs provide community in a big church.

It's largely within GGs where pastoral care occurs. Care from the everyday catch-ups to the deep and intimate comfort and challenge that is brought by reading God's word together and being in relationship that is built over time – where we are safe and supported to grow in Christian maturity.

Generally at Living Church, entry to GG has been centralised, with staff and key volunteer leaders recommending a GG to newcomers after they had completed a Connect Course.

Recently there has been more flexibility for people to enter GGs as an entry point into the church (where previously a connect activity would be the entry point). We are also seeing an increasing number of cases where people are approaching the Grow Team with "I have spoken with such & such Growth Group Leader & they are happy for me to join their GG." Where ever possible – these requests are fulfilled.

Given this flexibility care with group composition needs to be given. The right balance of people is crucial to ensure that the role of GG continues – that it is an environment where people can grow in their relationship with God.

Community is the relationships that form within such an environment, helping people grow in Christian maturity. Thus invitations need to be issued keeping these two matters in mind – we need to make space for new comers to join and meet Jesus and GG must remain focused on the "growth" of each member.

A number of Growth Group Leaders have also expressed the desire to invite people directly to their GG, before they attend or commit to church as a way to evangelize. While other Growth Group Leaders invite people from the congregation without consultation. A third situation exists where people go directly to a Growth Group Leader and ask to be added to their GG.

This paper is designed to set out important aspects of inviting people to GG . We would like to prioritise centralised allocations where possible, but accept that there may be cases where this approach may not be suitable. In those instances, the Grow team will work with GGL to find the best outcome for members and leaders.

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Babies and Bathwater

There is much to recommend both centralised and decentralised approach with inviting people to Growth Group.

Centralised

Coordination of make-up & size of the GG – *a chance to make sure that GG don't become a concentration of any particular type of need* (e.g. aged, parents of small children) or skill (e.g. all the spiritually mature people end up in a GG) and thus are broadly reflecting the diversity of our church community and the world.

Management of size – so that GG remain a place where people can experience comfort and challenge (too big & that becomes impossible)

Provision of space between the person requesting a GG & the GGL – thereby *giving the GGL (& in some cases the GG) an opportunity to think & pray without the "pressure" of someone turning up to GG.*

Some level of *getting to know the person before they enter the GG* – this is sometimes super helpful and sometimes makes no contribution

Helps ensure that the *balance of Christians & non-Christians* remains such that the GG continues to be Christ focused and working towards members growing in their relationship with God

Sharing, as much as possible, the pastoral care burden across the whole church

Can take a long time from request to placement

Decentralised

Allows *GG Leaders to manage their own GG membership & therefore a little more responsive* to people's felt needs

Time between request & placement can be quick

Evangelism is facilitated given that people can invite their friends along to group

Shared Understanding

The GG Leaders at Living Church are a great bunch of people. They love Jesus and they seek to help the members of their GG to become more like Jesus, to grow in their relationship with God.

Inviting people to GG looks simple but there is much to be considered. The best approach is a case by case basis – GG Leaders chatting with GG Coaches or staff when they would like to invite someone along and then chatting through the various priorities so that overall, a balance can be struck.

Living
Church.