

Renewal

Connect Leader Training

Introduction

Thank you for delivering this Connect Leader training. You will be delivering it to a small group of Connect Leaders in a small group setting. Whilst the content is important, those you are training will learn just as much, if not more, by the way you model how a small group works.

This course is not designed to be delivered in a classroom – it is designed to be delivered in a home, and the content is not designed to be delivered as lessons, but as discussions. As you welcome new Connect Leaders into your home, as you facilitate the discussions that follow, and as you help the group grow together and individually, you are showing what a great Connect group looks like.

Your primary goal over these four sessions is the same as the overall Connect goal – for your group to grow closer to each other, and closer to Jesus. As you equip them to become great Connect Leaders, keep these two goals in mind as your focus – and thank you for your commitment to help reach our community and our world by developing new Connect Leaders. Your personal style may differ slightly from the suggestions here - please feel free to adapt the activities slightly should you need to; as long as the outcome is still the same, it doesn't matter - that is one of the beauties of Connect that you are modelling to the group!

All the resources you need are on Handbook under Connect Leader training – however if you want paper copies please email connect@renewalcc.com and these can be provided.

Documents you will need:

Session 1

- Heartbeat of Pastoral Care
- Pastoral Support Directory
- Connect Manual
- Wellness Plan for people with complex needs
- Risk awareness

Session 2 (these are in the appendix of this document)

- Use of questions
- What makes a good facilitator?
- Do's and don'ts of facilitation

Also, please let us know when you have completed the training and the attendance of the participants.

Session 1 – Heart and Purpose of Connect

The session is all about understanding the purpose of Connect

Because relationships matter.

It's not about the event, it's about the relationships.

Growing closer to Jesus.

And each other.

Welcome

15 mins

- Welcome people to the group and ensure everyone is introduced to each other
- Explain that for the next four weeks this will be our Connect Group as we grow and learn together

IceBreaker – Who did it?

- On a piece of paper ask everyone to write down something positive that they are confident no-one else in the room will know about them.

The aim of this exercise is to create an environment where group members feel that they can trust each other with information that is usually reserved for their private friendships. When facilitated well, it can engender trust and transparency very quickly. Once everyone has submitted their piece of paper, shuffle them, read them out in turn and have the group guess who the author is. Ensure the individual tells the story about what they have written and allow the group to ask questions.

Discussion

20 mins

Read Ephesians 4:15 -16:

“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly.”

Watch Video 1 available at:

<https://vimeo.com/205398999/5b4bb00797>

- Read the Connect purpose above – how does this purpose fulfil Ephesians 4:15-16?

- What are the Heartbeats of our pastoral care? And how do they help us fulfil Ephesians 4:15-16?
- *This is a good opportunity to model good facilitation skills by ensuring everyone is encouraged to contribute to the discussion!*

Discussion – 15 mins

Ask the group to spend a couple of minutes reflecting on this question

What are my hopes and expectations for my connect group?

Ask the group to share their hopes and expectations with each other.

Prayer time

10 mins

Ask the group to pray for each other and for the new connect groups. This a good chance to model encouraging people to pray specifically for each other.

Wider Pastoral Care Structure

20 mins

Either on handbook or on printed copies – show everyone the Job Descriptions for Regional, Area and Connect Leaders in the Connect Manual. Explain how the three roles function together, and explain how the different pastoral teams can offer support and how to refer to the policy to ensure the appropriate support is offered.

Explain, the Connect leaders job is not to solve every pastoral issue, but simply help people receive the right support from the different teams. Allow the group to look thru the Pastoral Support Directory.

Highlight the Risk Awareness document, if they become aware of anyone who is experiencing risks in any of the four areas, they must contact Justyn immediately in order to seek advice on how best to care and keep the person safe.

Show the wellness plan to the group - certain people may experience complex challenges in their physical or mental health which make it difficult for them to fully engage in the life of a connect group. In this case the complex care team will sit with the person and draw up a wellness plan to help them integrate. In these cases the Complex Care team will liaise with the Connect leader to ensure the appropriate support is in place for both the individual, the Connect leader and the whole group.

Technology

10 mins

The group should have access to Handbook and Church Suite. Please show them how to login to both, and how to

- Record attendance on Church Suite
- Add new people to their groups on Church Suite
- How to search for different topics on Handbook

There is a support video on Handbook showing how to log attendance on Church Suite, showing the group how to find this video on Handbook is a good way to help them understand both systems.

Final questions and closing prayer

5 mins

Ask for any final questions from the session and pray a blessing on the group before ending.

Session 2 - Facilitation

This session is all about facilitation, the primary skill the Connect Leaders need to use.

Welcome

10 mins

Ice breaker

Ask each member of the group to briefly recount a story of when they had a bad experience in a shop, restaurant or other venue. How did they feel?

Discussion

10 mins

Read 1 Corinthians 16:14:

“Let all that you do be done in love.”

How can you create a caring environment? Ask the group to discuss what they can do to ensure that people feel welcomed, valued and cared for in their Connect Group.

Brain Storming

5 mins

Keeping the Format Interesting

Activity – see how many different types of activities people can list that they could do in their connect groups to facilitate the relationships growing.

- Playing board games
- Going for a walk etc.

Watch the Video

10 mins

Watch video 2 available at:

<https://vimeo.com/202387155/5ea6390854>

Effective Facilitation

Give the group time to read through the three handouts for this week. They are on handbook:

- Do's and Don'ts of facilitation
- Use of questions
- What makes a good facilitator

Discussion

20 mins

What makes a good facilitator?

Again this is a good time for you as the leader to model how to facilitate a great discussion. Also remember facilitation is not just what happens in the connect meeting, but in how the leaders facilitate relationships outside the meeting too.

Role-play activity

20 mins

How would you handle?

Ask the group to describe behaviours that would be difficult to handle in a Connect group – such as one person always talking, or a person constantly dismissing what others say, etc

Once you have identified a couple of scenarios, ask for a volunteer to role play being a Connect Leader, and another person to demonstrate the difficult behaviour whilst the others take the role of other connect attenders. Give them a topic to discuss, such as last Sunday's message and let the role play begin.

After a few minutes bring the role play to an end and ask the group to discuss how well the leader managed the situation, and for other suggestions of how to manage that situation. Ask each member to describe how they felt in the role play, including the person with the difficult behaviour. We must treat everyone with love, even those who may be challenging.

Final questions and closing prayer

5 mins

Ask for any final questions from the session and pray a blessing on the group before ending.

Ask the group to listen to the podcast on discipleship on handbook ready for next week.

Session 3 - Discipleship and Developing others

Welcome

5 mins

This is the last but one session – ask the group if they have any questions or reflections from the previous two weeks?

Read - Matthew 28 v 18 – 20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Icebreaker

10 mins

Ask the group to share their earliest memories of learning something new for the first time.

Discussion

20 mins

From Steve Beamond's podcast

- What did you learn?
- How would you introduce these principles to your group?
- How can you help your group grow closer to each other and to Jesus?
- How does the idea of making disciples fit with the purpose of Connect?

Discussion

30 mins

Developing others

Watch Video 3 available at:

<https://vimeo.com/202387167/23952ffdd5>

- Can you think of a time when someone has developed/discipled you?
- What did they do?
- What was the result?

The writer of Hebrews says this

Hebrews 10 v 24

“Let us consider how we may spur one another toward love and good deeds”

By saying ‘let us consider’ the writer is asking us to put some thought and effort into this. Ask the group to consider: how will we help spur those in our connect group to grow spiritually?

Discussion

15 mins

Developing Leaders

As we grow others, one of the most important jobs we can do is to develop leaders. Ask the group:

- How would they identify that someone in your connect group would make a good leader themselves?
- Having identified what would you do to develop them?
- How would you know they are ready to lead a group on their own?

Final questions and closing prayer

5 mins

Ask for any final questions from the session and pray a blessing on the group before ending.

Session 4 – Seasons

This session is about how we help the group navigate its different seasons

Welcome

10 mins

Icebreaker – ask the group to share something new that they have learnt about someone else in the room over the last four sessions

Reflection exercise

20 minutes

Ask the group on a piece of paper to answer the following questions

- How did you feel about attending this group before we started?
- How did you feel after week 2
- How do you feel now that this is the last week?

Once they have had time to record their thoughts ask them to share with the rest of the group.

Discussion - Four Seasons

40 mins

Explain that every group of people will go through different seasons

- Infancy, when they first form and everyone is getting to know one another
- Adolescence, when everyone knows each other, but the group still needs to form deeper and open relationships. It relies heavily on the leader to keep the group functioning and caring for each other
- Adulthood, where the group is functioning well and able to speak the truth in love to each other, has less reliance on the leader and able to support each other as equal adults
- Death, where the group's season comes to an end.

Ask the group to identify what challenges the leader will face in each season and how they might overcome them

Ask the group to identify how they help their group members move through the different seasons

Ask the group to discuss what impact they think new people joining a group at the different seasons will have, and how to help the group navigate those impacts and move back towards adulthood.

Revisit - hopes and dreams

10mins

Ask each person to recount their hopes and expectations for their connect group that they came up with in session 1. Has anything changed as a result of the training?

Ask them to state the things they would pray for as they launch their group and encourage the group to pray for each other and for their groups

Final questions and closing prayer

5 mins

Ask for any final questions from the session and pray a blessing on the group before ending.

Remind the group of the on-going support that their area leaders will now be able to provide as they launch their groups.

Appendix

Handout – Use of Questions

Being able to use questions well is very important in facilitation of a small group. Those people who are shy and find it difficult to talk in this kind of situation will benefit from the use of good questions to encourage them to be part of things.

Equally for someone who maybe contributes more than you might want, then using other types of questions, such as closed questions, can help you to manage those situations, more easily.

Open questions

What, where, who, how, why (“why” can sometimes be challenging in certain situations)

- What is really important to you?
- Where do you see yourself...?
- How are you hoping to achieve...?

Closed Questions – are those that can be answered by yes or no.

- Do you agree with that?
- Has that been your experience?
- Are you finding that a challenge too?

Probing questions/statements

- Tell us more about when/how...
- What makes you think that?
- What has been your experience....?

Summary/reflective questions/statements

- Let me see if I’ve got this right...
- So, what you are saying is.....

If facilitation and running a group is new to you, prepare some **“exploration”** type questions for your group

- What are you learning about in your walk with God at the moment?
- Tell us about something good that has happened this week
- Tell about something that you are concerned about at the moment.
- When you have free time, what do you enjoy doing?

What makes a good facilitator?

- Good listener
- Makes people feel welcome and part of group
- Encourager
- Is able to initiate discussion
- Seeks views of others
- Is able to give their thoughts, when appropriate
- Is able to co-ordinate discussion
- Able to manage time well
- Keeps flow of communication going
- Able to manage negative responses (self and others)
- Is able to deal with conflict and inappropriate behaviour
- Able to set boundaries
- Sensitivity to verbal and non – verbal signals

Facilitation Skills - Do's & Don'ts

Apply good listening skills- pick up non verbal signs as well as verbal

- Active listening - holding eye contact, summarising and reflecting back speakers words, nodding, affirming
- Empathetic listening - listening for feelings, meanings and behaviour

E Encourage
A Ask questions
R Reflect
S Summarise

Think about who is in the group

- DON'T allow subjects to get too complicated for those for whom that wouldn't be appropriate
- DON'T allow Christian jargon that would make it difficult for newer Christians
- Ensure subjects are easily understandable

Consider use of appropriate body language and eye contact to encourage discussion and get people to open up

Responding – making sure people's questions are answered or contribution acknowledged

It may sound obvious, but using someone's name is important, especially for someone new; this can help to overcome shyness

Check understanding by asking questions

Value people by acknowledging their contribution

Be aware if others ridicule another's comments – reaffirm the person

It is not your job to answer everyone's question – DON'T DOMINATE

DON'T seek recognition

DON'T openly disapprove or allow others to do so, especially when person is new Christian or non believer – consider how it is appropriate to respond

DO think about how to manage someone who may talk too much and monopolise the group

- Do not ask them anything else, direct questions at others
- Acknowledge their contribution and say, for example “we need to hear from X about what they think”, as a facilitator, you need to be assertive
- You may need to set ground rules early on
- Take them aside privately and lovingly address the issue

DO make sure, particularly when you start a new group that everyone understands what it's all about