ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
CATHOLIC CHURCH

LIVE FAITH SMALL GROUP START-UP GUIDE

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

— Matthew 28:19–20

Table of Contents

1. What is a Live Faith Group?
2. Why Start a Live Faith Group?
3. Who to Invite to Your Live Faith Group
4. How to Invite Someone to Your Live Faith Group
5. Choosing Your Content and Format
6. Choosing Your Meeting Space
7. Requesting a Meeting Space at the Parish
8. Next Steps
9. Staff Support – What to Expect
10. Live Faith Group Leader FAQ
11. Staff Contact Info

What is a Live Faith Group?

A Live Faith Group is a parishioner-led community that meets regularly with the intentional purpose of growing in faith and deepening knowledge of the Gospels. More than just a social gathering or study session, a Live Faith Group is a place where authentic friendships are formed—rooted in love and focused on sharing Jesus with those around you.

Live Faith Groups are not limited to reaching only members of our parish; they are a living expression of your calling to share the Gospel with the wider world. While the format of each group may vary, every Live Faith Group includes Scripture, prayer, and a supportive environment where relationships flourish—both with one another and with Christ.

Why Start a Live Faith Group?

"Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others." — Pope John Paul II, Evangelii Gaudium

Our parish offers a variety of ministries dedicated to helping parishioners grow as disciples of Christ. Each ministry aims to assist you in discerning and living out God's unique call to holiness and to share the Gospel with others.

Leading a Live Faith Group is a powerful way to respond to this call. By intentionally creating space with friends, neighbors, or family, you step beyond your comfort zone and open the door for Christ to work through you in the lives of those around you—both within and beyond our parish community. If you feel God calling you to take this step, we encourage you to respond with confidence and faith. Our parish staff and leadership stand ready to support and equip you throughout this journey. This startup guide is provided as a resource to assist you as you pray, plan, and prepare to establish your

Live Faith Group.

Who to Invite to Your Live Faith Group

“Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.” – St. Teresa of Avila

The goal of a small group is to share the Gospel with the people you encounter in everyday life. Each of us moves in different circles—family, friends, neighbors, coworkers—and a small group can be a beautiful way to bring faith into those relationships more intentionally.

If you feel called to start a group but aren’t sure whom to invite, begin by taking it to prayer. Ask the Lord to place on your heart the people He wants you to reach out to. Then, consider a few possibilities:

1. **Neighbors** – Those you’ve gotten to know on your street or in your building.
2. **Fellow parents** – Other moms or dads you see at your children’s school or sports activities.
3. **Coworkers** – People you already share time and conversation with during the week.
4. **Friends or club members** – Book clubs, workout groups, or hobby circles can be natural places to start faith-centered conversations.
5. **Family members** – Relatives nearby who might appreciate time together to talk about faith and life.

You may be surprised who God places in your path—sometimes the best invitations come through simple, everyday connections.

How to Invite Someone to Your Live Faith Group

“Holiness consists simply in doing God’s will, and being just what God wants us to be.” — St. Therese of Lisieux

Once you’ve spent some time praying about who to invite, the next step is simply reaching out. Inviting someone to your Live Faith Group doesn’t have to feel intimidating. It’s really about extending friendship and creating a space where faith can grow. A kind, personal invitation can open the door for meaningful conversations and deeper community. Here are a few ideas to guide you:

1. **Pray first.** Ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts, both yours and theirs, and to give you the right words.
2. **Start with a personal connection.** Share why your faith or your Live Faith Group matters to you. A simple, genuine invitation goes a long way: “A few of us are getting together to talk about faith and life. I’d love for you to join us sometime!”
3. **Keep it simple.** Emphasize that there’s no pressure or special knowledge needed. Everyone is welcome to come as they are.
4. **Be clear and practical.** Mention when and where you meet, what to expect (for example, “we talk, pray, and support each other”), and how long the gathering lasts.
5. **Follow up with kindness.** If someone can’t make it right away, that’s okay. Continue to show care and interest in their life — invitations often take time to grow.
6. **Respond graciously if they say no.** Thank them for listening, and let them know the invitation is always open. Even if they’re not ready now, your kindness and consistency can plant a seed that bears fruit later.

Remember, every invitation, whether accepted or not, is an act of love and witness. Trust that God is at work in both the asking and the waiting.

Choosing Your Content and Meeting Format

Selecting the right content and meeting format is key to creating a Live Faith Group experience that is

engaging, meaningful, and sustainable. Here are some considerations to help you get started:

- **Explore Parish Resources:** Start by reviewing the list of materials and study guides available on the parish website. These resources are carefully chosen to support faith growth and can provide a solid framework for your meetings.
- **Know Your Group:** Think about the needs, backgrounds, and interests of your group members. Are they new to faith or more experienced? Do they prefer discussion-based meetings, videos, or guided Scripture study? Tailor your content and style to best support their faith journey.
- **Keep It Simple:** Choose a format that is easy to follow and flexible enough to fit into people's busy lives. Starting with simple, clear sessions encourages commitment and helps the group stay consistent.
- **Be Attentive and Adapt:** Pay attention to how your members respond to the content and meeting style. If something isn't working, don't hesitate to adjust. The goal is to foster a welcoming environment where everyone feels comfortable and inspired to grow.

Remember, the focus is on building relationships and deepening faith — not perfection. Your openness to adapt and respond to your group's needs will help create a thriving community centered on Christ.

Choosing Your Meeting Space

Live Faith Groups are a wonderful way for us to share the Gospel with those we encounter in everyday life. When deciding where your group will meet, here are a few things to keep in mind to help your gatherings go well:

1. **Location:** Pick a spot that's convenient for everyone. If members live or work in different parts of town, try to find a central meeting place to make it easier for all to attend.
2. **Noise and Privacy:** Choose a space that's quiet enough for good conversation but not so silent that people feel uncomfortable sharing personal thoughts.
3. **Warmth and Welcome:** Whether you're hosting at home or in a public space, make sure it feels inviting. A simple greeting or clear directions can help everyone feel comfortable and find you easily.
4. **Accessibility:** Be sure the space works for everyone in your group, including those who might have mobility or transportation challenges.
5. **Amenities:** Think about what you'll need during your meeting—enough seating, good lighting, or a place for coffee or snacks.

Requesting a Meeting Space at the Parish

SVdP is blessed with many active ministries, which means meeting space is often limited, even with the addition of the Parish Center in 2019. Because of this, we may not be able to accommodate all groups on-site. We encourage parishioner-led Live Faith Groups to consider meeting in homes, coffee shops, or other public spaces when possible.

If you'd like to request a room for your group, please contact Kathy Wilhelm at wilhelmk@svdpomaha.org. Be sure to include your group size, preferred days, and meeting times, and Kathy will let you know if space is available.

Next Steps

"All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity."— Lumen Gentium, Second Vatican Council, quoting St. Pope Paul VI

After prayerfully reflecting on this guide and discerning your call, it's time to move forward with confidence and purpose. Here are some next steps to help you get started:

- **Take the first step by inviting others.** Reach out to friends, neighbors, or family members to join your Live Faith Group. Remember, your invitation is an act of hospitality and faith—simple and sincere is often best.
- **Pray continually.** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your planning, conversations, and leadership as your group begins to form and grow.
- **Plan your first meeting.** Consider the format, location, and timing that will best serve your group's needs. Keep it welcoming and flexible as you start.
- **Engage with parish staff.** You are not alone on this journey. Parish staff are available to offer ongoing support, guidance, and resources at every stage—from planning to launching and beyond. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions, for encouragement, or to access training opportunities.
- **Stay open and adaptable.** These groups often evolve over time. Be patient and attentive to the needs of your members and the movement of the Spirit.

Taking that initial step to lead a Live Faith Group can have a profound impact, not only on those you invite but on your own faith journey as well. Trust that God will use your willingness to lead to transform your community in unexpected and beautiful ways.

Staff Support: What to Expect

At SVdP, our parish staff are committed to supporting Live Faith Group leaders as they live out their faith. We offer training workshops to help you develop your leadership skills, as well as regular gatherings where you can connect with fellow leaders for prayer, encouragement, and community, keeping you closely connected to the parish.

While we are here to support and equip you, the leadership of your group remains your responsibility. You will plan meetings, invite participants, and guide the group's growth. This approach is intentional, empowering you to faithfully follow God's call with ownership and personal commitment.

Live Faith Group Leader FAQ

Q: What kind of support can I expect from parish staff?
A: We offer training workshops, leader gatherings for prayer and encouragement, and ongoing resources to help you grow as a leader. Parish staff are also available to answer questions and provide guidance throughout your Live Faith Group journey.

Q: Will parish staff help lead or manage my Live Faith Group?
A: The leadership and day-to-day management of your group are your responsibility. This ensures you maintain ownership of your calling while we support you through resources and encouragement.

Q: Does the parish provide study materials, photocopies, or other resources for my group?
A: While the parish offers guidance and recommendations for group materials, the responsibility for obtaining study resources rests with the group leaders. This approach encourages creativity and personal investment, allowing your group to choose resources that best fit your unique needs and goals.

Q: How do I request meeting space at the parish?
A: Contact Kathy Wilhelm at the parish office via email at wilhelmk@svdpomaha.org with your group size and preferred dates and times. She will inform you about available spaces.

Q: What if I can't find a meeting space at the parish?
A: Many groups meet in homes, coffee shops, or other public places. We encourage you to consider convenient, welcoming locations that support open and meaningful conversation.

Q: How do I invite people to join my Live Faith Group?
A: Begin with prayer and a simple, personal invitation. Share why the group matters to you, explain

what to expect, and emphasize that everyone is welcome. Remember to be patient and kind if someone declines—they may be open in the future.

Q: Can my Live Faith Group include non-parishioners?
A: Absolutely! Live Faith Groups are an opportunity to share the Gospel beyond our parish community. Everyone is welcome to join and grow in faith together.

Q: Will parish provide childcare for my Live Faith Group?
A: While the parish does offer free childcare for many parish wide programs, SVdP is unable to provide this for each individual Live Faith Group. Groups who have lots of young children are encouraged to find their own babysitting if it is needed.

Staff Contact

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"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."—Genesis 12:2-3