

Te Awamutu Bible Chapel (TABC)

Connect Group Policy & Procedure

Connect Group ministry is an important area of church life by Loving the Church and Loving the Lost. Most rely on the generosity of people opening their homes for gatherings. However, any time a group of people gathers for fellowship, food, and fun, there is an element of risk involved.

Due to the risks involved, although low risk, it's also important for churches to develop a process to distinguish Connect Groups working under the authority of church (church approved) from those that are independent of church oversight.

For Church Approved Connect Groups

It's a good idea to have policies/procedures in place that require ministry leaders to regularly monitor them to ensure best practices, as referenced below.

Connect Group ministry leaders should be aware that the church, as well as the Connect Group leader or host, might be the target of an investigation if someone were injured during a church approved home group activity which they lead or host.

This does not need to be an over the top process, rather a commonsense approach and at regular training nights for home group leaders, make sure you mention health and safety in the home.

For Independent Groups

Ministry leaders might decide to offer training, support, and oversight to the hosts/leaders. If such an offer is accepted, such a group might then be recognised as a church approved group. If, on the other hand, the group refuses such assistance, its leaders should be politely advised that they are not formally approved by the church and are "on their own" from a liability perspective.

So to assist your Connect Group ministry here are some important things to consider when conducting Connect Group meetings:

Home Safety

Are there defects or dangers in the home where the group meets that participants should be made aware of (i.e. frayed carpet; loose handrails on stairs; uneven pathways; bad lighting)?

Is there any work being done on the house, which could propose a hazard? (i.e. scaffolding from painting, holes dug in the ground)

Is the entrance way free from clutter so that people can enter and exit easily?

Do you have any pets? Are large dogs restrained?

Are there any special risks like swimming pools or trampolines? What are the guidelines for use of these?

Are appropriate safety measures taken in rooms where small children will play (i.e., outlet covers, gates to block stairs, etc.)?

Childcare

Parents are ultimately responsible for the safety of their children. Are the parents participating in the Connect Group comfortable with childcare arrangements, including the individual(s) who will be supervising?

Does the Connect Group leader need a copy of the church's child supervision policy? This can help communicate the church's commitment to child safety and guide the Connect Group leader in making appropriate childcare arrangements for small group activities.

Food

Do any Connect Group participants (including children) have food allergies? If so, what are they? Does the Connect Group host know what measures must be taken in the event of an allergic reaction?

Should an accident/incident happen during a Connect Group provide your Connect Group leaders with an Accident Investigation form, and instructions on who they need to notify.

Privacy

TABC privacy policies and procedures will always be adhered to. A copy is available from the H&S officer or on the website.

Guidelines

For more detailed information on operation of Connect Groups contact the convenor for a copy of the Connect Group Guidelines

I/we have read the above guidelines and as Connect Group leaders we will do our utmost to abide by these guidelines and abide by the churches Health & safety policy.

Connect Group Leader

Date