

House Church Philosophy

"I am cast upon a horrible, desolate island, void of all hope of recovery. I am singled out and separated, as it were from all the world, to be miserable. I am divided from mankind, a solitary; one banished from human society. I have no soul to speak to or to relieve me."

- Robinson Crusoe (lone survivor of a ship wreck)

The Purpose:

To intentionally develop a biblical community where people can experience meaningful relationships that are conducive to spiritual growth, mutual encouragement, accountability and personal support.

Home based get-togethers were an integral part of the early church. Paul went "from house to house" with his teaching (Acts 20:20). Priscilla and Aquila hosted a house church (Romans 16:3-5), and so did Philemon (1:1-2).

The Philosophy:

Small groups are not another "program". Rather the concept of the small group ministry needs to be incorporated into the very heart, the intrinsic fabric of the church. It will become THE vehicle through which life change and pastoral care occurs.

The Benefits:

- 1) The bible is better understood and personally applied in a small community, leading to spiritual growth and life change.
- 2) Authentic Christian community and fellowship are experienced.
- 3) Prayer requests become more personal and meaningful.
- 4) Personal support is immediately available during times of stress and pressure.
- 5) Leaders are developed – small groups become a fertile ground to grow leaders.
- 6) Spiritual gifts are unleashed – there is a limitless and natural opportunity for people to serve.
- 7) Worship can take on new and deeper meaning through a more intimate context.
- 8) Outreach becomes a shared burden – small groups are an effective means of evangelism.

The Model:

- The method of this ministry is not as paramount as is the purpose. However, with the desire to be intentional and pragmatic, we would like to embrace the House Church Model, versus the more traditional small group model.

What is the House Church Model?

- The name "House Church" defines more than a style; it defines an actual philosophy of what we are going to do, and why we are going to do it.
- We do not want this ministry to be perceived as just another program or a bible study for a select group of people. Rather, it is our goal that the House Churches become as fundamental and important in a person's spiritual life as Sunday morning services. We want the House Churches to become an extension of the church, a living, growing and dynamic extension.
- The House Churches will begin to function like the "large church" as we know it, with the same driving biblical purpose, yet in smaller groups, and all coming together for corporate worship and teaching on Sunday mornings. (ie. Worship, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, evangelism)

What are the Benefits of the House Church Model?

- Because groups are always incorporating new people, groups do not become ingrown
- The "uncommitted" or those with "restrictive schedules" are not eliminated from participating (ie. Individuals who work on shifts and may only be able to make every second week, or people who travel a lot for business and are out of town)
- Larger group numbers – group doesn't fall apart because of absenteeism – which is a fact of life (weather, illness, conflicts in schedules)
- Provides opportunity to invite nonbelievers to a group – the group format facilitates this
- Meaningful ordinances such as communion and baptism could be undertaken and shared as a House Church
- Need fewer leaders to oversee more people
- Sunday morning becomes a collection of churches that come to unify together and celebrate – have a sense that much more is happening in people's lives than what you experience on a Sunday morning. This leads to a sense of expectation and anticipation, to a passionate spirituality - spiritual vitality.

The Structure:

A) Size - large groups of 15 to 20 people

B) The Schedule – 2 Hour Meetings

7:00 Hang out time
7:15 Welcome/opening prayer
7:20 Announcements
7:30 Worship
7:45 Review of teaching in large group
8:00 Small groups
8:25 Prayer in small groups
8:45 Reconvene and plenary session/closing announcements
8:55 Close in prayer

Meet as large group for one hour – welcome, review

Meet as small group for 45 minutes – study, prayer

Childcare would be provided in certain groups

C) Calendar

Weekly Meeting (September – June)

3 out of 4 weeks – regular meeting

1 out of 4 weeks – community service/social event

5th week – have a week off

D) Curriculum

Each group finds a curriculum that is suitable to the age and stage of their group.

E) Leadership

- House Church Leader
- Assistant Leader
- Host
- Prayer and Care Co-ordinator
- Worship Leader
- Communications Co-ordinator

F) Social Component

G) Community Service Component

- helping with Operation Child shoe boxes
- helping with the Sudanese – settlement
- car wash
- neighbourhood BBQ
- raking leaves, home repairs, seniors service