

GAC House Gathering Cheat Sheet

So you have decided to start or become a part of a House Gathering. Awesome! While we are intentionally not trying to be too structured - because we want the groups to feel organic and focus on people engaging with each other as opposed to a curriculum or program - it is important to have some structure and boundaries.

These groups are our attempt at putting some teeth to the **Transformation Declaration** found in Appendix 3. It is a purely human document, but it is our attempt at boiling down some direction that God is giving us. While it does not hit every point head on, we feel it gives us a direction forward and we humbly believe that it is God leading us in this direction.

Basic Group Guidelines (read these to the group as often as necessary):

- Confidentiality is essential - don't talk about stuff outside the group without permission.
- No gossip - if it's not yours to share, don't.
- Respect others - sometimes people need to process things out loud. Give advice when asked and trust people's journey with God.
- Watch the time - we will meet regularly and so conversations can always continue and some people have kids to get to bed or have work tomorrow. Try to end in a timely fashion.
- Ask permission lots - don't assume everyone is comfortable with everything
- Nobody has to talk and share - some people will be uncomfortable sharing for a while. That's fine. Don't force them.
- Give space for feedback - no group or idea is perfect so create an atmosphere of growth and openness to new ideas.

What do we do for content?

We really don't want to give everyone a one size fits all for your group. If you need a place to start we would recommend the Realignment Series which can be found on our website. It's a fairly easy place to start and hopefully get the ball rolling. If you've done that then it's really open to you and what might fit your group, just don't do something that is really content heavy and curriculum feeling. You want something that facilitates discussion and ideas and connection between people in your group - and depending on your group, it might really depend on who is in your group.

You actually don't need any program or curriculum! In fact this is the path that I would recommend for those willing to give it a try.. You'd be surprised at how much discussion can happen simply by reading a passage of scripture and talking about it and how it speaks to you. A good model for this kind of discussion is using the SOAP method as a framework (Appendix 1).

That being said some groups will need a good solid program at least at the start and there are lots of options. Myself or pastor Mike would love to discuss some ideas with you.

What else do we do?

When I look at Acts 2:42-47, which I think gives us a model for church life, there are six major things that I see happening (see the Realignment Series videos on Sanctification for more description):

- **Bible reading**
- Gathering
- Giving
- **Prayer**
- **Communion**
- Praise

At the very least I would like groups to try to incorporate three things in their meetings out of these six. Of these I would like to see small groups incorporate ***bible reading, prayer and communion*** (occasionally, say once a month) in their groups. I think the other ones will continue to be practiced in our corporate gatherings for now. I have attached a “How to Do Communion” page as Appendix 2. Of course you could do more things, but this is bare minimum.

Discussing the scripture reading you do is a great idea and is a great way for people to grow. Be open to questions and ask how it applies to our life today. No matter what scripture you read, try to think and talk about how it points to Christ. Every scripture in the bible points to Christ in some way.

How big should the group get?

I think you could begin meeting with as little as 6 adults. More than 12 might become a little too big. If you get to 12, it might be time to appoint another leader and split your group.

What does a facilitator or leader need to do?

- Facilitate the group :)
- Pray for their members
- Trust the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Ask yourself the question regularly: do I see the Transformation Declaration being played out in my group?

Appendix 1:

SOAP Bible Study Method

This is a system that is mostly promoted for individual bible study but I have found that it also works as a framework for group discussion.

S– The S stands for Scripture- you physically write out the scripture.....you'll be amazed that what God will reveal to you just by taking the time to slow down and actually write out what you are reading! In a small group setting I usually ask people to read the passage to themselves and then get someone to read it out loud after.

O– The O stands for observation- what do you see in the verses that you're reading? Who is the audience? Is there a repetition of words? What words stand out to you?

A– The A stands for Application- this is when God's Word becomes personal. What is God saying to me today? How can I apply what I just read to my own personal life? What changes do I need to make? Is there an action that I need to take?

P– And finally P stands for Prayer. Pray God's Word back to Him. If He has revealed something to you during this time in His Word, pray about it. Confess if He has revealed some sin that is in your life.

Appendix 2:

Doing Communion:

This should be a regular part of our life (Acts 2:42-47).

- 1) Look backward: think and talk about Christ's sacrifice (Romans 5:8).
- 2) Look inward: What's robbing you from the sweet presence of Jesus? (1 Cor. 11:27-28).
- 3) Look Forward: Christ's work means eternity in heaven (1 John 5:11-12).
- 4) Read 1 Cor. 11:23-26 then take the bread together, then take the juice together.
- 5) Sing a worship song together or listen to one.
- 6) Pray together.

Appendix 3:

Transformation Declaration:

At Grenfell Apostolic we will:

- **Focus on Christ not Christian Living**
 - Knowing the person of Christ and being transformed from the inside out will take focus over rules and guidelines for good christian living.
 - House Church: We think house church creates a space where people can be themselves and are not as bound by the “keep a good image” rule. We also think house church lets people be Christ’s hands and feet to each other - experiencing Him!
- **Focus on Discipleship not Leadership**
 - Disciplers are likely good leaders and disciples need leadership but leaders don't necessarily disciple and leadership principles are not synonymous with discipleship ones.
 - House Church: We feel that discipleship is more likely to happen in a small group then it is on a Sunday morning and our group leaders/facilitators will learn how to disciple as they lead their groups.
- **Focus on Spirit not Smarts**
 - We need the Holy Spirit and a move of God more than we need a great program or really good ideas to usher in God's kingdom (these ideas included!).
 - House Church: We believe house church is a place where people can more readily and practically “practice” their spiritual gifts and to grow in their giftings. We also feel like house church is an opportunity to simplify church life and get away from the big program. At their heart it's just people being together.
- **Focus on Intimacy not Impact**
 - For too long we have looked at numbers and how many people we got in the door instead of how deep and meaningful our relationships are.
 - House Church: I think this one is pretty self explanatory. Intimacy is not easy in a big group.
- **Focus on Gospel not Growth**
 - Our job is to plant the seed, not make it grow!
 - House Church: Smaller gatherings get us away from the “fill the pews” mentality and focus on connecting with people and building relationships where we can genuinely share the gospel.