

HC

Harvest Church



GROUPS



Objective:

The goal of the small group ministry of Harvest Church (HC), is to **CREATE** a relational environment and atmosphere in which members “do life” together. The small group ministry is facilitated by its leader to **ENABLE** its members to draw close to each other through bible study, prayer, outreach, missions and fellowship. Also, the small group ministry will **FOLLOW** after the small groups main ministry goal which is to deepen the members relationship with Christ and members of the community. Finally, this ministry builds indigenous leadership within the body of Harvest Church.

Small Group Ministry Focus- OPEN SMALL GROUPS

Open small groups have space available for visitors and new members. Most of these groups generally remain "open" all the time, meaning there is no limit to the amount of new people who can join. Some will begin a birthing process for a new group once a specific number of regular attendees is reached. Other models "close" their groups once they reach a certain size—often between 10 and 16 regular adult members.

Open groups often symbolize their desire for visitors and new members by keeping an "empty chair" present in the gathering, and then praying for the person who will soon occupy that chair.

Strength 1: Open groups are outreach friendly and a proven tool for multiplication.

Strength 2: They help group members stay focused on evangelism and encourage regular prayer for unbelievers.

Strength 3: They allow for greater flexibility within a small-groups ministry.

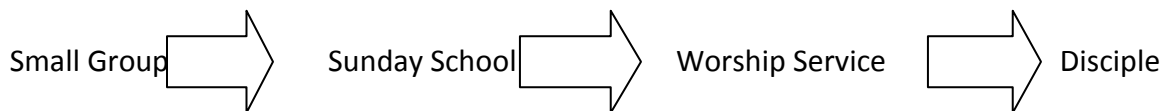
So why create a small group ministry?

It is the desire of the leadership of HARVEST CHURCH to create the culture of a small group ministry in the city of Northport and surrounding areas of Tuscaloosa to minister to the needs of the church family and the church family’s neighbors. Many years ago people built front porches to communicate and fellowship. Rocking chairs and sweet tea was the norm on summer evenings. Now we have a small entrance to the home and we put up fences. We are isolated. Small groups allow us to break out of isolation and begin to “do life” again with each other sharing our concerns, holding each other accountable and breaking down the walls of traditional religion, to grow closer to Christ and each other. In Acts 2 this idea of small groups is explained in the word of God.

The Fellowship of the Believers Acts 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Small groups are indeed a culture. A ministry needed to strengthen the Body of Christ at HARVEST CHURCH. However, the Body of Christ at HARVEST CHURCH is not the only people that will benefit. There are many that will never just come to church on Sunday. They will come to someone's home. Many feel shame, condemnation from past experiences; the small group ministry allows these people to try again. Here is the process the leadership of HARVEST CHURCH has for small group ministry.



Come, Connect, Commit

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A threefold approach to ministry by having people come to a small group, then connect to the small group, finally commit to the weekly meeting of the small group. Then move to a Sunday school class, then to a church worship service then become a disciple of Christ.

Main Components of the Small Group Ministry

- Bible Study/Devotion
- Prayer
- Discussion
- Mission Projects** Ministry within the community
- Fellowship- ***Please no full course meals, focus on Bible study, prayer and discussion. Please limit the fellowship time to time allotted in the schedule provided below in the handbook

What about the Children?

One of the biggest concerns of the Leadership of HARVEST CHURCH both Elders and Staff is the question of how to best minister to the needs of the children within the small group. Sunday mornings through Sunday school and Children’s church, the children of HARVEST CHURCH interact with each other and learn tremendous truths from the Word of God. On Wednesday nights, the children will participate in AWANA, memorizing and learning the Word of God. These are 3 facets of ministry that are invaluable. However, through these ministries we have not strengthened the family unit of the church. The small group is designed for the children to spend time with adults to develop relationships and the small group will also offer a time for the children to have a separate time of ministry at the home by the Children’s Leader designated by the Facilitator of the small group.

How Will the Small Group Ministry Be Organized?

- Geographically by the City of Northport and Tuscaloosa County
- Small Groups will be divided into four main groups North, South, East and West
- The four main groups will then be subdivided by elementary school zones as follows

North	South	East	West
Huntington Place	Englewood	Cottondale	Buhl
Northport Elementary	Taylorville Primary	Tuscaloosa Christian	Westwood
Walker Elementary	Skyland	Verner	Crestmont
Vestavia	Woodland Forest	Alberta City	Matthews

Organization of the Small Group and Responsibilities

Host

- The host of the small group provides a home for the small group to meet in.

Facilitator

- Conducts the bible study/devotion for the meeting, usually about 10minutes.
- Maintains the flow of the small group to start and end on time, and guards against gossip that may be in the group.
- Maintains the full support of HARVEST CHURCH and its leadership.
- Takes up the offering at each meeting

Prayer Warrior

- Maintains the small group prayer journal
- Takes requests/ updates of the member’s progress as their needs improves or worsens.

Small Group Care Leader

- Works with the Deacon Family ministry plan notifies deacons of any needs within the group
- Alerts the Senior Pastor and Staff of HARVEST CHURCH of upcoming surgeries, funerals, ect of the group’s members
- Calls and/or emails members about upcoming meetings, fellowships, ministry opportunitites

Children’s Leader

- Has an activity for the children.
- Shares a bible story, craft or game for the children present at the meeting

Fellowship

- Organizes the drinks and snacks for the meeting\
- The goal is to build strong relationship through a communal family.

Example of Small Group Hosts

North	South	East	West

Facilitators Requirements

- Members, including staff, already serving as a Sunday School, Harvest U teachers are to be encouraged to participate only in the small group ministry
- Active member of HARVEST CHURCH
- Complete Harvest Connection Class

- Complete Small Group Ministry Training Class
- Complete interview with Senior Pastor and Biblical Education Minister
- Agree to a semester's worth of ministry

Duration of the Small Group Ministry by Semesters

- January- April (Spring Semester)
- September- December (Fall Semester)
- Summer will be optional

Curriculum for the Small Group Ministry

- Devotion that correlates with morning message that will be DVD driven.

Advertisement

- Church Web-Site
- Brochures for Small Group Ministry
- Maps to homes
- Shaker signs in the Host Homes Yard, provided by HARVEST CHURCH
- Church Bulletin

Offering

- Will be taken up at each home for every meeting
- Collected by the finance team of HARVEST CHURCH

Duration of Small Group

- 5:00pm-6:30pm (suggested, times may also be set by host and facilitator)

Schedule for Small Group Ministry (Example)

5:00 Fellowship Time/Announcements

5:10 Prayer Journal

5:20 Prayer Time

5:30 Bible Study

5:50 Discussion

6:15 Encouragement, Closing Prayer

6:30 Dismiss

Who can come to your small group?

- Anyone in your community/neighborhood, along with the HARVEST CHURCH members in the designated areas
- As a small group ministry invite your neighbors
- Knock doors, place sign in host home yard, Co-workers, family

Success of this ministry

The success of this ministry is measured simply by the number of people in your community being reached, and by the deepening of relationships within the small group. Laughing, crying and sharing together the hardships and joys of the Christian walk are all marks of success. Building relationships is what Christ has called us to. First a relationship with Jesus, then a relationship with other believers in which Christ has called us to bear each other's burdens. Along with Jesus, and the support of our Christian brothers and sisters we can make an impact on the local church and the Kingdom of God. This ministry will not be successful if HARVEST CHURCH members just stay at home and do not get involved. Again, as in the beginning of this handbook, this is a new facet of ministry and it does have the power to break us out of the current isolation so many people find themselves in. The leadership of HARVEST CHURCH encourages you to give this a try. Build relationships, minister to your neighbors. To love God and Love others and turn north in your pursuit of God and go deep in your relationship with Christ and learn from other believers.