

HARMONY CHURCH

starting a home group

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home groups

what is a home group?

The Home Group is the primary method through which Harmony Church leads people into Gospel-centered, Missional Community. They are small groups of people (6-12) that apply Scripture together, eat together, pray together, and hang out with one another. They are led by individuals who buy fully into the method and vision of Harmony Church to lead people to be Gospel-centered, in Community and on Mission in order to change Greenville, NC.

goals for a home group

- Have a deeper understanding of the Gospel.
- Grow into a tight-knit (but not exclusive) community of people chasing after Christ and His Cross.
- Regularly do something missional as a group (service project, outreach, work with other Home Groups for a larger event, etc)
- Seek to plant at least 1 new Home Group every year.

expectations for a home group leader

- Prepare or organize a community meal and hang out with one another. Be sure to welcome and include any visitors, obtaining their contact information (organically).
- Communicate to every individual in your Home Group the goals for a Home Group.
- Study through any provided curricula, and be prepared to facilitate discussion. Every week, ask the question: how does the message from the Gathering work itself out in our lives?
- Pray for one another specifically, by name, need, and according to the topic discussed, allowing for the Spirit to move in and through the group.
- Constantly encourage people in your Home Group to invite others to join you, both at Home Group and the Sunday morning gatherings. Also, invite others yourself! You are responsible for facilitating the growth of the group.
- You must report back to the eldership how your group went. For those of you with computer access, you can find this at HarmonyGreenville.com. Scroll to the bottom, and click on "Home Group Report", under "Interact". The password is "acts24247" (without the quotes). The form should be self-explanatory. If you do not have ready access to a computer, call the office at 252-364-1638 and leave a message regarding how many people attended, what you discussed, and if anything of great importance came out of the discussion (salvation decisions, baptisms, people wanting to partner, etc.)

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starting a new home group

There are five steps in starting a new Home Group:

1. pray

Do not spend forever “praying about” the decision to plant a Home Group, however, you should pray, evaluate your life situation, read your bible, seek Godly counsel from others around you, then act accordingly.

2. establish a core

Its best to have 2-4 people (couples count as one) who will agree to plant this group with you. These are the people who are willing to say “Sink or swim, I will be with it. And at the end of 6 weeks, if it tanks, the three of us will go to Winslow’s and have some laughs over it.” You and your core group, once established, are now on a mission to recruit the rest of the members of your group.

3. grow

List 10-20 people you know that live in your area and do not have a church or Home Group that you know of. Have your core group do the same! That’s anywhere from 20 to 100 people. Don’t limit yourself to those in your church. Reach out to your neighbors!

There are also areas of the Sunday morning gatherings where you can encourage people to get in Community. Greeters & Kids’ Ministry are probably the two most obvious spots. In these ministries you are weekly around people who are not yet in a Home Group. It’s possible to see a new group quickly fill up through the core group members serving as greeters or kids teachers and simply inviting people to their group.

It’s also important *how* you talk to people. If you walk up to someone on your list of 20 and say “I want you to be in a very intimate life-changing small group with me that will meet weekly for the next year and we will share life together” you likely get a restraining order put out on you. Sure, you hope your group will develop some great friendships, even life-long ones, but you have the responsibility to meet people where they are. So instead of asking someone to commit to a year-long small group the first time you speak with them, just measure their potential interest. I’ve often asked someone “I’m thinking about starting a Home Group at my home and was wondering if you’d be interested?” That’s it. No commitment required yet. It allows people the opportunity to respond. Whatever you say or do to measure interest, remember that people are not as excited (yet) about this new Home Group as you are. Meet them where they are.

4. soft launch (3 substeps)

a. gather socially

Once you have a good group to gather regularly, it is time to soft launch the group. The soft launch is a way for you to gather the people together who are interested in a social setting. The goal here is establishing who is actually interested in participating in your group versus those who may have indicated interest but cannot participate at this time.

b. **be concise and clear**

The “programming” of a soft launch should not be more than 5 minutes and should simply involve you addressing everyone (briefly) acknowledging you are hoping to begin a Home Group at your home soon and hope those present will consider joining you. You should give brief details and a clear reason why you want them to be a part and then stop talking. Remember, you are more excited than they are and you are bringing them along but they probably aren’t at your excitement level yet. So be excited, but don’t preach.

c. **the details**

Of course if you are going to give details, you will need those details firmed up. Establish a regular meeting day and time. Important: While you need to set your Home Group meeting on a night available to you, acknowledge that you are open (if you are) to hearing from everyone what day will work best in their schedules. Also, let them know you are not looking for an indefinite commitment. Give them a short-term timetable (6-8 weeks) for them to think through.

5. **plant the group**

It takes a small group anywhere up to 9 months to really gel relationally so don’t expect fireworks the first time you meet. However, even after the recruiting and soft launch you still have not formally asked for a long term commitment. Invite those present to commit to that short-term time frame you gave them at the soft launch. Ask them to stick it out for 6 to 8 weeks, as noted above in step 4. This gives people a respectable “out” if for some reason they do not want to continue with the group after that. Don’t worry though, almost always a small group that makes it to 6 weeks is going to want to continue meeting regularly for the next year or so.

One of the most dangerous things is to not ask for a long-term commitment to being a Home Group. 6 weeks in, things are going well and you in lieu of rocking the boat the leader does not formally acknowledge the purposes and goals of the group for its future. So the group continues to meet but without a goal in mind. This doesn’t seem like significant to the young excited group, but slowly the group will drift away from being a Gospel-centered, Missional Community and will become an amorphous collection of friends detached from church life. This is where the Harmony Church Home Group Covenant comes into play. Read over it with the group, and commit to the purposes and goals set out in it.

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home group covenant

Our goal at Harmony Church is to lead people to be Gospel-centered, in Community, and on Mission in order to change Greenville, NC. Therefore, in a healthy Home Group, we should see people agreeing to do the following:

GOSPEL

Love God and others because Jesus has loved me. (1 John 4:19)

Keep the God of the Scriptures the focus of the group at all costs.

Look at the world and people around me through the lens of the Christ and His Cross.

COMMUNITY

Live humbly by grace with others while being transformed into the likeness of Jesus together with the local church. (Ephesians 4:13)

Prioritize group attendance and participation, contacting the host if I cannot attend or know I will be late.

Prepare for group discussion apply the biblical principles to my life.

Pray for and encourage other group members in their Christian walk.

Share meals and fellowship.

MISSION

Show the blessings of Jesus in my life to others. (Genesis 12:3)

Invite others into a relationship with Jesus and into community with a Home Group and Harmony Church.

Serve other group members and our neighbors.

Intentionally interact with the culture around me, praying and working that it would come to glorify Jesus.