

HOUSE CHURCH

Frequently asked questions about House Churches.

1. What is a “House Church?”

Our emphasis on House Churches comes from a core conviction that “church” is not a place, a building, a gathering, or a service. It is people who can take many expressions and hold to the organic traits exemplified by the first century church which we changed when the followers of The Way were adopted into the institution forms of ecclesiology. Ideally, we want to empower our House Churches to be our main front for pastoral care and mission! The formative values of our House Churches are:

- We revolve around ALL Pillars of Engagement:
 1. Devotion - Teaching one another, through the Word and Spirit, the dynamic truth of Jesus and challenging one another to be accountable and obedient to becoming more like Him.
 2. Community - Building strong, dependable relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ through close, personal accountability, prayer, and the many “one another” expressions of community mentioned in the New Testament.
 3. Mission - Encouraging one another to live outwardly (together and as individuals), obeying the commands of Jesus and the prompting of the Spirit, to share the gospel and do good works to advance the Kingdom of God.
- We are a family (OIKOS) on mission.
- We are a priesthood of believers gifted for the purpose of ministry which is not the responsibility of “paid professionals.”
- We all have gifts that are expressed in devotion, community, and on mission together.
- We are committed to listening to God when it’s time to reproduce a new House Church for the sake of advancing the Gospel and community strong.

2. Practically, what does a “House Church” do?

Keeping in mind that not all house churches are the same, the House Churches meet together weekly and live in a rhythm of study, outreach, and communal care (revolving around the 3 Pillars of Engagement). They

“do life” together organically by eating meals, hanging out together outside of the meeting times, and engaging in life important moments, and building on another up. We see an example of orderly worship (in the context of a House Church) in 1 Cor. 14 “...When you come together, everyone has a psalm or a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All of these must be done to build up the church.” Keeping this in mind, a HC may take communion one week, study the scripture, or serve the homeless as group the next week.

3. How is that different than a typical small group?

Often small groups are relegated to becoming awkward bible studies (that simply affirm christian beliefs to people who already follow Jesus), social clubs, or hideouts for christians, we believe they were meant for more!

4. What makes a “House Church” healthy?

Gauging health can be difficult when you are evaluating communal life, spiritual growth, and Kingdom movement. Knowing this, it’s helpful to have tangible ideas for the understanding what a healthy House Church looks like. We believe HC’s can self-evaluate through “stories” and “stats.”

- Stories. Our lives are telling stories. As you meet together, begin to tell stories of what God is doing in and through your HC. How are you growing spiritually, how are you growing together, and how are you growing the Kingdom? If you have no stories, you probably need to make some adjustments.
- Stats. We provide a diagnostic for self-evaluation and ask the House Church Leaders to see how closely they are living out our three pillars: Devotion, Community, and Mission. This gives them a way to see their own growth and deficits as a House Church.

5. This sounds great! How do I join a House Church?

Since the House Church paradigm is new for many, it takes time to deprogram and re-engage in a way that sticks. Anyone who comes to CGNE through our Sunday Gathering and want to join a HC starts by going through the “House Church Launch.” This process takes place quarterly and works through 3 phases:

- Establish - the group walks through a 10 week, experience-based discussion hosted by a facilitator and designed to incubate a House Church and set the culture within in your group for thriving in a life that revolves around the 3 Pillars of Engagement.

- Equip - The group takes one class that organizes your group into Rhythms and Roles to better function as a House Church.
- Engage - Once you have launched, the Formation Team will check in monthly with leaders, resource them, and continue to care for the HC.

6. Why do I have to do the House Church Launch to join?

Most “churched” folks have been conditioned by the typical institutional model of small groups (defined above). Just like most people, we tend to default to our typical/familiar ways of engaging God when things get difficult, when we are sure how to move forward, and when schedules get busy. We want to set the HC’s on a trajectory for success with a new paradigm!

7. What does it look like for a House Church to “reproduce?”

House Churches are meant to have strong community and to be compelled towards the great commission by advancing the Kingdom of God. This tension is difficult and we see Paul “longing” to be with the communities that he established but, in order for the gospel to be perpetuated, healthy reproduction had to take place. With this in mind, we DON’T encourage HC’s splitting but we DO want to encourage groups to be “sending” communities. When your HC gets big (which will happen if you take Mission seriously), then pray over 2-4 people who will go into a new neighborhood, affinity group, or missional focus to seek after new believers. The “sending” community should pray for, care for, resource enable, and empower this group to accomplish their mission just like we see in the New Testament!