

UNION POINT CHURCH

18

COMMUNITY GROUPS



18-19' COMMUNITY GROUPS

PREVIOUS FORMAT-

Unlike previous years Community Groups will not be based on gender. Each group will be co-ed, focused on bringing together a multiplicity of peoples to truly build and live out what true community is.

Why the change?

- Although gender based community groups did provide us with an avenue to further dig into Scripture and have points of connection to step further into discipleship, with the growth of the cumulative body over the last two years, and especially the last year, there has been a clear need for more interaction.

THE GOOD

-When we began the gender based groups it was not with the intent for this system to be a once for all approach. Simply put, Lenee and Aaron were the group leaders and were transitioning out of their home. Gender based groups was the answer to not bringing just one group back into their residence. All in all, it was seen as an effort to multiply and have two groups going as soon as possible with a limited amount of people a part of the early days at Union Point.

-This multiplication continued over the next three years growing from two groups led by Lenee' and Aaron, to a total of 12 groups lead by a host of willing leaders. The system's strengths were found in helping identify new leaders and providing room for them to step into that calling. So the groups, as structured, provided some form of discipleship and, even greater, a pipeline for developing and identifying new leaders to press forward the efforts of multiplication.

-Gender based helped provide an avenue for some more pertinent discussions based around challenges experienced that would be less accommodating to discuss with the opposite gender present.

THE BAD

- Each group met at various times and locations. While this is good, for those that had families with kids, it only complicated issues and, more often than not, resulted in the family being separated two separate nights of the week. As a church that does not exalt the family over everything else, but encourages unity within the building of the family, this only brought more segmentation within an already much separated family throughout the week.

-Although individuals connected through the study of scripture, our resistance against simply developing another social gatherings without any serious

conversation, blinded us to the truth that community has as much to do with socialization as it does studying the word, praying and seeking Jesus together. This means we should be unified around Jesus, learning and being stretched by His word together, and seek to know each other on levels that are beyond the surface norms.

-Under the instruction of Paul he told the early church to not forsake the gathering of themselves together. These gatherings were to include all people. All genders, ages, social statuses, and complexities. While having times of gender separation, we have found for the greater unity that we are called to in Jesus we must be together more than we are apart.

-While many saw it a benefit for children to not be present and the groups as times away from "distractions" (sadly this is how we view children in our age, and in many ways how demeaning is this? No wonder they grow to stray from the church), we provide no means or avenue to demonstrate what Spirit lead community looks like.

"Community is where the person you least want to live with always lives."

Henri Nouwen

ALL IN ALL

Deliberating on this transition was one that came with great difficulty and calculation. This due to the reality that the current way we were structured and systematized was not at all bad, nor a detriment to future growth. In many ways the decision was labored over because letting go of something good to pursue something better can be a difficult journey to make. We look over the last years and see them not as a loss but tremendous means by which growth happened. They provided us with opportunity to grow in the word and to share with what Jesus was doing in our lives. We look back at these years with great fondness at what Jesus has done.

THE NEXT STEP

NEW FORMAT

Based around our values: relationship, community and mission, the new group format will be constructed in a manner that provides us with ways to engage one another within our church community and the greater community of New Bern that we are also a part of.

- **GROUPS WILL BE CO-ED**. This does not mean they are married groups, single groups or any of the like. It simply means groups will contain young, old, middle aged, single, married, married with children and all the like. They are meant to

reflect what our corporate weekly gathering looks like only more focused around a smaller more intimate setting.

-GROUPS WILL BE HOME BASED. The leaders of each group will host the group at their residence on the same night each week. This will provide consistency in the location as well as bring some comfort with a normal location.

-GROUP STUDY WILL REMAIN SERIES FOCUSED. Like our previous group studies we will continue to dive in further where we are walking through at the corporate weekly Gathering on Sundays. This has provided a great deal of congruency and focus on the scriptures.

-GROUPS WILL PRAY. We define community as "counter cultural humility." The old saying goes, "show me a persons prayers and you will show me their heart." When we engage in communal prayer with other believers we open ourselves up to share our burdens and assist one another in the carrying of them. When we pray together we build unity around our need for Jesus.

-GROUPS WILL EAT Whether lite meals, crafted themes, or simply dessert, groups will be required to share the table. Why? Community, more than not, happens over the sharing of food. Look at Jesus and the disciples and you will find good, deep conversation happening over a shared meal.

-GROUPS WILL SERVE. Serving is a part of mission. Mission is defined as "overflowing Glory." If we never step out to serve our neighbor, those around us, are we really living on mission? Are we really overflowing God's glory? Each group will be required to find some area to serve the community at minimum twice each semester. This area of service will be lead by the Spirits moving within the group and in the ways they feel Jesus is asking of them.

-GROUPS WILL BE ON A 2 SEMESTER SCHEDULE Like our previous group system we will continue meeting in a 2 semester schedule. There will be a fall and spring semester. The fall will begin after labor day and run into the second week of December. The spring semester will begin the first week of February and end the first week of June. This will provide each group with times of rest, and as well give the leaders times of refreshing, retooling and a chance to reclaim their home :).

-GROUPS WILL HAVE A ATTENDANCE CAP Each group will only consist of a maximum of 12 adults (excluding children). This will make sure that no group becomes more lopsided in the size and will help in keeping an environment that is intimate enough to be connecting, but large enough it can still feel welcoming and inclusive.

-GROUPS ARE FREE RANGE The roles of each group will be determined by the attendee. This means you will be free to choose the group that best suits you location and schedule. However, keep in mind that we are seeking each group to be diverse, so we encourage you to be intentional in choosing a group that may not all look like you. This is not a holy huddle of like positions of life. Rather it is a holy

gathering of saints being made more in the likeness of Jesus, needing one another on that journey.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT | MULTIPLICATION

One of the key focuses that will be maintained within this new structure will be the seeking, developing, training and sending of new leaders. We are ever pursuing a pattern of multiplication. One that seeks to see the body equipped, those who are called trained and then released to further the kingdom. Each group leader will be assessing possible candidates with perceived calls and abilities that could be a match for future Community leadership. This will be something each candidate will be made known about and given opportunity to further venture into with the support of other community group leaders, the eldership team, and then they will be provided with means of assistance and equipping to move them forward in the next steps.

CHURCH PLANTING

It is no secret, we are a church that desires to plant other churches in surrounding areas of eastern North Carolina. We believe that Union Point and New Bern can be the launching pad for big moves of the kingdom in other local communities. We feel that we are a Port leveraging, loading and launching others into, both their individual lives and as well eventually other communities purposed with the mission to Lift Jesus and Others.

Through the Community Group format and system the ultimate goal and hope is that some CG leaders may be called to rise and plant other churches, and that these groups could be the teams that make inroads into surrounding communities.

We do not view these groups as dead end gatherings were we just become comfortable with just meeting together. But as vehicles of mission, a people set ablaze by the grace of Jesus and commissioned in His power to GO and Lift him before all people. Union Point is a movement, one that began at pentecost and we pray continues on well beyond what can be simply harnessed by one individual, one group of people, and one little name.

LOOKING FORWARD

Established early in our DNA as a church has been the truth and reality that many of the things we will use to see effective ministry happen will be served by various systems, facilities or programs that are simply tools. These tools all serve the greater mission and movement of the kingdom. What these tools are not, and should not be, the affections of our worship. Jesus is the only One worthy of our full allegiance, focus and worship. Rather, these tools are resources applied and used for a time and purpose until the tool no longer suits the work required. This is a change for our current time and situation. It is not eternal. It is not everlasting. But what it will fuel will carry both if we maintain laser focus on our mission to Lift Jesus and Others, Make much of His name and see lives saved, transformed and sent purposed with he Gospel.

Knowing all of this here is what we ask of you, will you do what so many in our day refuse to do and become intentional in seeking out true community with others? Will you take this tool that is now available and faithfully commit to building relationship with others? Rest assured, if we seek true Jesus centered, grace filled community with others, growth, connection, purpose, and family are only the beginnings of what we will find. Will it cost you? YES. Will there be challenges? YES. Will you have to continually walk in humility thinking more of others than yourself? YES. All these things accompany a pursuit of community, but what they cost pale in comparison to what we will gain together.