

HIGHEST PRAISE APOSTOLIC CHURCH
SMALL GROUPS



EVANGELISM



BUILDING
COMMUNITY



MULTIPLICATION



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OVERVIEW

The Vision of HPAC is to be a distinctly apostolic, multicultural, and multigenerational church that passionately loves God and loves people. We fulfill this vision through our Purpose – Connect (Sunday), Grow (Small Groups), Serve (Dream Team) and Share (Invite). Small Groups is deeply woven into the fabric of our purpose by helping us focus on Growth and Sharing with others. This is the DNA of our church.

We believe life change happens in the context of relationships. Meaningful relationships can be hard to find, and Small Groups exist to make life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to our church members. We do not want to be just a friendly church – we want to have friends at church. People in this generation will open up to the Gospel more readily when there is a foundation of friendship. That is our goal with Small Groups.

Highest Praise is a church of Small Groups – not a church with Small Groups. In other words, Small Groups is not just another ministry in the church. It makes up who we are as a church. Most everything we do as a church, will flow through Small Groups.

We base our Small Group model on the early church, as described in the Bible in the Book of Acts. In Acts, you can read about the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem, where small group meetings, in homes, helped lay the foundation. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah” – Acts 5:42 (NIV).

SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVES

Small Groups serve to fulfill three main objectives: 1) Evangelism; 2) Building Community; 3) Multiplication of Groups.

EVANGELISM



BUILDING COMMUNITY



MULTIPLICATION



Evangelism – We believe that the most effective way to share the Gospel is through the development of friendships. Small Groups is the way for this to happen. Therefore, the main objective of Small Groups is to bring new people into our community in order to help them receive salvation. Additionally, we are not interested in only making believers, but making disciples.

Building Community – While gathering for corporate worship on Sundays is essential, it is difficult to form meaningful relationships in a crowd. Small Groups provides the environment where meaningful relationships are developed. By focusing on developing meaningful relationships with each other, and those whom we invite, we will build a strong church community.

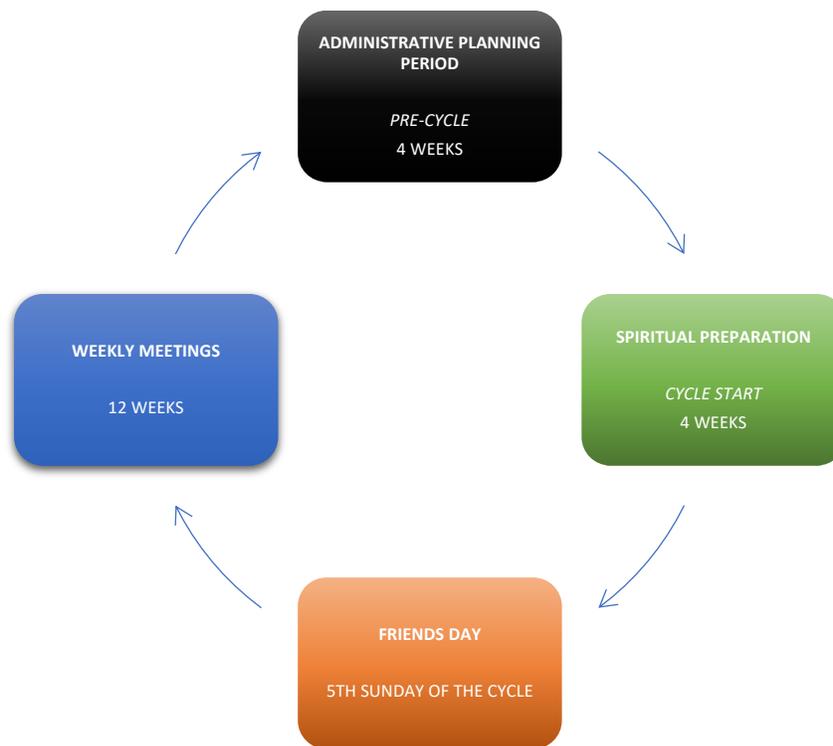
Multiplication of Groups – At Highest Praise we believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time. In order to facilitate continued growth, every Small Group should produce new Small Groups. This multiplication will enable evangelism and the building of community to continue.

SMALL GROUPS SUMMARY

The following outlines the key structural components of HPAC Small Groups:

- Each Small Group will meet once a week on any day except for Sundays, Mondays, and Thursdays (with the exception of Youth & Junior Small Groups, who will meet on Thursdays).
- Each Small Group will be led by a team which consists of the Small Group Leaders and the Small Group Assistants. Small Group Leaders are the assigned leaders of each group. The Assistants are those who are in training to become Small Group Leaders when their group multiplies.
- Each Small Group Leader will be assigned to a region, and report to a Regional Leader.
- Small Groups will function in two 16-week cycles and one 8-week cycle per year.
- Each cycle will be launched with a four-week spiritual prep period which will be culminated by a Friends Day, on a Sunday.
- For the 16-week cycles, Small Groups will function as general-themed groups which focus on spiritual growth and development. For the 8-week cycle, Small Groups will function as free-market, interest-based groups.
- Curriculum will be selected and chosen before the beginning of each cycle. Once it is selected, the curriculum will be formatted to cover the duration of the cycle.
- Groups will be approved for one cycle at a time. The determination if a group will continue will be based upon an evaluation of the group at the end of each cycle.
- New members, or those interested in becoming a member, will be enrolled in First Steps classes and have the opportunity to be baptized during the cycle.

THE SMALL GROUPS CYCLE (16 Week Cycle)



CYCLES

Small Groups functions in cycles. During the cycle, each Small Group will meet on a weekly basis for the duration of the cycle. Meeting days, times and locations will be established before the start of each cycle. There will be three total cycles of Small Groups in the year of 2022 which will include two 16-week cycles and one 8-week cycle.

- **Cycle 1:** January 9th – May 1st (16 Weeks)
- **Cycle 2:** May 29th – July 24th (8 Weeks)
- **Cycle 3:** August 28th – December 11th (16 Weeks)

Each 16-week cycle will consist of the following structural elements:

- The first **4 Weeks** will be a time for spiritual focus and preparation for evangelism.
- The **5th Week** will consist of a Friends Day activity where we introduce our friends to the church.
- The next **12 Weeks** will focus on spiritual growth which cultivates continued evangelism, building community, and ultimately, multiplication.

The 8-week cycle will consist of the following structural elements:

- All **8 Weeks** will focus on one simple purpose: to bring people together.
- Groups may not have a specific curriculum, but instead will meet weekly based upon mutual interests. This means that we want people to gather together based upon the things that they enjoy and are important to them.
- All groups topics and interests will be reviewed for approval before the launch of the cycle.
- Each meeting should consist of four things:
 - **Casual fellowship** – laid back time for group members to talk and get to know each other.
 - **Activity or discussion** – this will vary based on what kind of group. It can be any type of social activity (playing basketball, outreach, discussion about a book, etc.)
 - **Prayer** – ask for prayer requests from group members and pray at the beginning and ending of each meeting.
 - **Spiritual component** – this is what differentiates your Small Group from any other social club. Whether it is through activities or discussions always find a way to include the Word of God. This can be as simple as sharing something God is teaching you, or talking about a verse you read that week.
- Interest-based Small Groups **are not a place for:**
 - Business
 - Offerings
 - Unapproved materials or speakers
 - Controversial topics

At the conclusion of each cycle, there will be a 3 to 4 week administrative planning and training period that will focus on the preparation for the next cycle. This will include:

- The evaluation of the previous cycle's Small Groups.
- The implementation of new Small Groups into regions.
- The selection and review of curriculum.
- The creation of the Small Groups Cycle Schedule.
- The training of all Small Group Leaders.

PREP FOR FRIENDS DAY

The first four weeks of each 16-week cycle will focus on spiritual preparation and build up to Friends Day. This is vital to the effectiveness of the cycle.

Each week will focus on a different area of preparation for Friends Day. On Sundays, the sermons will be focused on the current week's theme. On Meet Mondays, all Small Group Leaders will discuss how to implement the week's necessary activities and preparation.

Then, during the weekly Small Group meeting, the Small Group Leader will coach, encourage and motivate the members to participate in the spiritual preparation taking place.

The 4-week prep for Friends Day will include the following:

- **Week 1: Identify** – In the first week begin identifying at least 5 friends that you can invite to Friends Day. Begin praying for each person that you are trying to evangelize during these four weeks. Include a day of fasting, weekly, for God to free them from the chains that they are enslaved by.
- **Week 2: Contact**– In the second week, write down the names of the 5 friends you plan to invite and contact them via phone. During the call, let your friends know that you are praying and fasting for them. Also inquire about their needs, so that you and the church can pray specifically for those needs.
- **Week 3: Visit & Invite** – In the third week, you will invite your friends to attend Friends Day by visiting them in person and giving them an invitation.
- **Week 4: Commit** – In the fourth week, you will follow up with your friends and commit them to coming on Friends Day. Ensure that you get a commitment so adequate preparations can be made.

THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS

IDENTIFY

• *Think of 5 friends and begin to pray for them.*

CONTACT

• *Write down the names and call your friends.*

VISIT & INVITE

• *Visit your friends and give them an invitation for Friends Day.*

COMMIT

• *Follow up and commit them to coming to Friends Day.*

FRIENDS DAY

Friends Day is a church-wide celebration event that focuses on getting our unsaved friends connected to our Small Groups and introduces them to our church. This celebration will take place during a Sunday Celebration Service. Even though we are accustomed to offering our guests an amazing Dream Team experience every Sunday, on this particular day, all Small Group Leaders will work together to prepare an extraordinary event for our friends who attend Friends Day.

Friends Day will include festive decorations, free beverages, and a special service that creates an atmosphere that is warm and welcoming. The songs and preaching will focus on general biblical themes such as, God's love, belonging, etc. On this day, no guest should be left unattended – a great spirit of hospitality and service must exude from every church member. And during this time, friends should enjoy the company and interaction with other Small Group members, Small Group Leaders and church members. At the end of the service, a special prayer will be made for all guests who attend.

INTEGRATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

FIRST STEPS

One of the objectives of Small Groups is to make disciples by first introducing people to the plan of salvation, helping them discover God's purpose in their life, and introducing them to who we are as a church. Once a foundation of friendship is established, new friends should be encouraged to attend the First Steps courses. First Steps happens every month, in four consecutive Sundays, starting with Step One on the first Sunday of the month.

New members and friends can join the First Steps course at any point in the month, regardless of which lesson is being taught in the First Steps monthly course rotation. However, before a new member can begin serving, they must complete all four steps.

ADVANCE

Once a new member has completed First Steps and has been baptized, they will be encouraged to continue their journey of growth by attending Advance courses. These lessons are designed to teach essential principles of Christian living which will help the believer become a mature disciple. Advance classes will take place every Sunday, in an 8-week cycle. As with First Steps, new members can join Advance at any point during the duration of the cycle. Advance is required for anyone who desires to serve in platform or teaching ministries, as well as being eligible for leadership positions.

MULTIPLICATION

One of the objectives of Small Groups is multiplication. At the conclusion of each cycle the hope is that the Small Group that has grown to at least 20 members is now ready to multiply. As a result of this multiplication, there becomes an opportunity for a new Small Group to be formed from the original group. Throughout the cycle, the goal of multiplication should be regularly emphasized and communicated to the Small Group.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In order to facilitate the growth that comes with multiplication, new Small Group Leaders must be developed. The goal for leadership development is that the Small Group Assistant becomes a Small Group Leader after one, or two, cycles. By sharing a passion for Small Groups and utilizing them for support, the Small Group Leaders will work to prepare and train the Small Group Assistants for the next step of becoming a Small Group Leader.

Additionally, all Small Group Leaders and Assistants will collectively participate in leadership training and development courses which will be offered during the Meet Monday meetings. Leadership training provided by the Pastor, Small Group Directors, and guest speakers will help to provide the resources needed to build a stronger, well-equipped leadership team.

As we continue to grow and expand, leadership development will remain a focal point of our vision for the church and our Small Groups.

See **Leadership and Roles for more specific information about the development of Small Group Assistants.*

MEET MONDAYS

In order to facilitate effective communication, momentum, and leadership development, it is vital that Small Group Leaders meet on a weekly basis. Small Group leadership meetings – *Meet Mondays* – will be held every Monday evening. Meet Mondays will include the following elements:

- **Prayer** – Prayer is essential to the power of God being manifested over our lives. As Small Group leaders we must pray together and over our Small Groups.

- **Leadership Training** – Leadership training courses will be taught by the Pastor, Small Groups Directors, and occasionally guest speakers. The topics will focus on church leadership disciplines and resources that every leader in the church should develop.
- **Regional Breakout Sessions** – At the conclusion of each meeting, Small Group Leaders will meet with their Regional Leader to make preparations for the coming week, review the Weekly Reports, share announcements, and have collaborative discussions for continuous improvement.

Every 3rd week of the cycle, all Small Group Assistants will also be required to attend Meet Mondays. The purpose is to prepare the Small Group Assistants for the weeks that they will be leading the Small Group on their own.

See **Leadership and Roles for more specific information about the development of Small Group Assistants.*

LEADERSHIP & ROLES

Small Groups is structured in a tiered hierarchy of leadership in order to maintain accountability and ensure that each group is meeting the goals. The leadership structure is there as a support to each small group. The following are the roles and hierarchical structure.

- A. Pastor** – Ultimately, everything from the vision to the implementation of Small Groups flows through the Pastor, as he is the one who has been given the highest level of responsibility and accountability by God to lead the local church. Although, the Pastor may participate in various roles, such as a Small Group Leader or Regional Leader, he is still the one with the final authority on the direction, vision, and operation of Small Groups.
- B. Small Groups Director(s)** – This person is directly responsible to oversee the entire Small Groups operation at HPAC. They report directly to the Pastor. Their role functions as both administrative oversight and spiritual accountability.

Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitate Small Groups training.
- Maintain the Small Groups Master Schedule.
- Assist with curriculum provision/review/approval.
- Provide group support as needed (teaching, co-hosting, conflict resolution, reassigning, etc.)
- Assess the progress of each Small Group – this includes participation, spiritual growth, numerical growth, leadership development, etc.
- Co-host the weekly Small Group meetings.
- Maintain a Small Group of your own.

- a. **Reports To:** Pastor
- b. **Oversees:** Regional Leaders & Small Group Leaders
- c. **Qualification:** Level 3 (Core Leadership)

C. Regional Leaders – These persons are directly responsible to oversee their assigned regions. They report directly to the Small Groups Director. They will focus on connecting with each Small Group Leader on a weekly basis to determine how the small group is doing. This person acts as a “coach” to help each group accomplish the three Small Group objectives – evangelism, building community, and multiplication of their groups. The persons in these roles need to be very positive and provide motivational support.

Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure Small Group Leaders in your region turn in their Weekly Reports to the Small Groups Administrator each week.
- Provide spiritual encouragement and motivation to help your Small Group Leaders be successful in their leadership.
- Visit each group in your region at least once in a cycle, in an observatory capacity to gain a good feel for the projection of the Small Group. If possible, work with your Small Group Leaders to schedule groups on different days.
- Attend the Weekly Small Group Meetings and provide reports of the Small Groups in your region. Also pass on information and motivate the Small Group Leaders in your region.
- Maintain a Small Group of your own.

- a. **Reports To:** Small Groups Director
- b. **Oversees:** Small Group Leaders
- c. **Qualifications:** Level 2 (Church Leadership – Directors and Ministry)

D. Small Group Leaders – These persons are the direct leaders of one individual Small Group. They are directly responsible to lead and maintain their Small Group on a weekly basis, for the duration of the cycle. This person reports directly to their Regional Leader. This person must ensure that the weekly operation of their group is maintained, and that they are meeting the three objectives of the Small Group – evangelism, building community within their group, and the multiplication of their group. **Additionally, it is the responsibility of the Small Group Leader to prepare their Small Group Assistants to become leaders in the next cycle.**

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Organizing the time, location and set up of the meeting place.
- Studying and preparing for the weekly curriculum that is being taught.
- Contacting your Small Group members on a weekly basis to remind them of the meeting times, or any special circumstances/requests for meetings.
- Organize the activities that the group will be performing.

- Ensuring that evangelism is a key component of your group, by bringing others to your small group and encouraging your members to do the same.
 - Listen to, pray for, and encourage your Small Groups members with anything they may be going through.
 - Be actively engaged in “doing life together” with your Small Group members by striving to interact with members outside of the weekly meeting. Examples of this include things like invitations to lunch or dinner, hosting fellowships, spending one-on-one time with members of the group, birthday parties, etc.
 - Organize special meals and visitations following a major change of life event, such as loss of a loved one, new baby, hospitalization, etc.
 - Turning in your Weekly Report to the Small Groups Administrator.
 - Reporting major issues, or concerns, that may arise when dealing with people to your Regional Leader.
 - Actively utilize and train your Small Groups Assistant to prepare them to become Small Group Leaders. **Follow the teaching schedule provided.*
- a. Reports To: Assigned Regional Leader
 - b. Oversees/Direct Reports From: Small Group Assistant and Small Group Host
 - c. Qualifications: Level 2 (Approved by Pastor)

E. Small Group Assistants – These persons are the assigned assistants to a single Small Group for the duration of one cycle. **Additionally, they are Small Group Leaders *in-training*.** They report directly to the Small Group Leader. The Small Group Assistant also shares the passion for the Small Group and will help the Small Group strive to meet the three objectives.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Arrive 15 minutes early to each weekly session to greet and welcome Small Group members and guests.
- Be present at every weekly session to assist in any way requested by the Small Group Leader.
- Initiate personal connections with the Small Group members throughout the week to help in building community.
- When instructed by the Small Group leader, send texts, or phone calls, reminding members about the meeting, or any special occasions outside of the weekly meeting.
- Work with the Small Group Leader to organize the weekly meeting participation by assisting with and arranging the weekly icebreaker, the snacks/meals, and preparing the lesson materials for distribution.
- Following the teaching schedule, prepare to teach the weekly lesson every 3rd week of the cycle.
- Maintain a *Resource Binder* of your own, which includes tracking the weekly attendance for the meeting.
- Help the Small Group Leader(s) complete and submit the Weekly Meeting Report on time.

- a. Reports To: Small Group Leader
- b. Oversees/Direct Reports From: None
- c. Qualifications: Level 1

F. Small Group Hosts – These persons offer their home as a physical meeting space for the duration of the cycle. A host is responsible to prepare the home and make it available at the same time each week to host the Small Group meeting.

Responsibilities include:

- Prepare the home and meeting area by cleaning and making it presentable each week before the meeting.
 - Providing at least 1 clean restroom for public use during the duration of the meeting.
 - Ensuring that adequate seating is provided in the meeting space. If necessary, the church can provide chairs for the duration of the cycle.
- a. Reports To: Small Group Leader
 - b. Oversees/Direct Reports From: None
 - c. Qualifications: Level 1

WEEKLY MEETING REPORTS

Each week the Small Group Leaders will be responsible to complete a Weekly Meeting Report and the Attendance Sheet. The reports are due to the Small Groups Administrator by Friday of each week. Reports should be completed digitally online. When completing the reports, take the time to give elaborative answers – “yes”, “no”, and “N/A” are not acceptable responses.

ATTENDANCE TRACKING

Each week Small Groups will be responsible to track the group attendance by updating the Attendance Sheet. Write down the names of each person in the group (including children) and track their attendance weekly. If a new member, or guest, attends your group throughout the cycle, add them to the sheet. Each week, you will submit the updated Attendance Sheet to the Small Groups Administrator.

CURRICULUM

The Small Group Leader will not have to write any of their own lessons or prepare any additional curriculum. Curriculum will be provided along with a formatted *Curriculum Guide* which will provide you with the lesson materials for each week of the cycle. A *Teaching Schedule* will be included in the Curriculum Guide which will indicate who will be responsible for teaching that week.

COMMUNICATION

All group communication for Small Groups Leaders will flow through the Small Groups *GroupMe* app. Communication amongst the Small Group Leaders, Regional Leaders and Director is essential. If you are having challenges with your group, or concerns that need to be addressed please reach out to your respective leader. Specific things that should be communicated and requested in advance are:

- Vacations and days that you know you will be absent/need coverage for teaching
- Venue and host home changes
- Variances in your scheduled meeting day
- Other concerns that may arise with your group

SMALL GROUP LEADERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION

◇ SMALL GROUPS DIRECTOR

GABE GONZALEZ
909.992.9866
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◇ SMALL GROUPS ADMINISTRATOR

LISA RIOS
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SMALL GROUP SESSION FORMAT

The following outline is how your weekly Small Group sessions should be structured.

6:30pm-7pm – Receiving (30 minutes before official start time)

- > Make sure home is ready and we are receiving members and guests. This is a time of small talk and light fellowship while members are showing up and getting settled.

7:00pm – 7:05pm – Welcome & Prayer (5 minutes)

- > Open with a general prayer and welcome everyone to the meeting.
 - Acknowledge new guests who have shown up to attend your small group.
 - Go over 3 goals: Evangelism, Building Community, Multiplication
 - Celebrate the wins!

7:05pm – 7:15pm – Icebreaker (10 minutes)

- > Have an assistant, or anyone in the group, prepare a fun and short icebreaker to get the group motivated and ready to receive the word. This should be light and fun.

7:15pm – 7:45pm – Teaching/Lesson (30 minutes)

- > During this time, you are teaching and instructing on this week's lesson plan. This time can be interactive, but you want the main focus to be on the teaching of the Word. Do not exceed 30 minutes of teaching.

7:45pm – 7:55pm – Discussion & Interaction (10 minutes)

- > After each lesson give time to have an open discussion with the group that reflects on what was just taught. The tone of this interaction should be positive and encouraging.

7:55pm – 8pm – Closing/Final Prayer (5 minutes)

- > In the last few minutes, close out on some positive notes!
 - Thank new guests for coming and encourage them to continue to come and get involved in First Steps.
 - Make yourself available to them throughout the week
 - Ask for specific prayer requests.
 - Give announcements (share any pertinent information from Meet Mondays, invite all to attend church)
 - Encourage members to continue to bring new friends to the Small Group.
 - Close with prayer

8pm – Fellowship (At least 30 minutes)

- > Once the session is officially closed, you may snacks/refreshments and allow as much time as the host is comfortable with for fellowship and "goodbyes." If you are having Small Group at someone else's house, be sure, as the Small Group Leader, **not to leave** before all of your Small Group – you want to be one of the last ones out the door (doing life together).

SMALL GROUPS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

