



GCI CHURCH HACKS

PLANNING & LAUNCHING CONNECT GROUPS



Why Connect Groups?

The key to Healthy Church is vibrancy in the three avenues where, by the power of the Spirit, disciple-making ministry occurs. The Faith Avenue (discipleship) includes: church life, connect groups, and cross-generational care.



A healthy church is always creating spaces where multiplication takes place. Back to school season, when families are developing new rhythms, is a strategic time to launch new connect groups. Check out an excerpt of our Faith Avenue toolkit for some ideas and next steps in launching connect groups and planning your church's Faith Avenue life cycle.

Session 2 will guide you through the planning and launching process while Session 5 provides debrief questions and an opportunity to review your congregation's needs, discussing what worked and what didn't work.

Check out our full [Growing a Healthy Faith Avenue toolkit](#) for the additional sessions, or visit [resources.gci.org/faith](#) for more Faith Avenue resources.



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GROWING A HEALTHY
FAITH AVENUE



SESSION 2

THE ANNUAL FLOW OF
YOUR FAITH AVENUE



GROWING A HEALTHY FAITH AVENUE



HOW TO USE THIS TOOL:

This is a sample cycle of connect groups. Use the reflection questions below to develop a tool that will meet the needs of your neighborhood and congregation.

Faith Avenue Champions keep in mind:

- As relationships deepen, people gravitate to each other. This can lead to becoming a closed group, caution and balance is warranted
 - » How do you gauge when a group is becoming a closed community? How do you bring challenge to this group?
- Work closely with the Pastor as groups begin and end, to discern the types of groups that are needed in the body.
- Develop an intentional process to multiply facilitators, hosts, and groups.
- Create markers that will allow facilitators and hosts to gauge when a group has run its course.

Reflection Questions:

1. What percentage of the congregation will participate in connect groups?
2. Of those who will participate during what months of the year will they be most available?
3. In your local area what is the best time for outdoor and cross generational relational gathering?
4. How do you determine if all age groups are being attended to?

The Life Cycle of the Faith Avenue...

Jan-Feb start group and run through mid-May

- Run 2-3 groups consecutively to give different options with time, location, and interests.
- Split the time into two quarters. Q1 will be the first 6-8 weeks and Q2 will be the second 6-8 weeks.
- Keep the same facilitators, but allow for the focus and members to change out each quarter.

June-mid-August

- Let Connect Groups take a summer break, **but the Faith Avenue is still alive and active.**
- Plan beach days, picnics, a family camping weekend, etc.
- Think of creative ways for Cross-generational relationship building to occur.

Late August-mid-November

- Run 2-3 groups consecutively to give different options with time, location, and interests.
- Split the time into two quarters. Q1 will be the first 6-8 weeks and Q2 will be the second 6-8 weeks.
- Keep the same facilitators, but allow for the focus and members to change out each quarter.



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SESSION 5

FOLLOW UP SESSION:
REFLECTING ON YOUR FIRST
CYCLE OF SMALL GROUPS.



GROWING A HEALTHY FAITH AVENUE



Follow Up Session: Reflecting on your first cycle of small groups.

Take time as a team to discuss the first cycle:

1. What wins are you celebrating?
2. How can you make shifts to refine the process and improve the experience?
 - a. Is there something you need to stop doing?
 - a. Is there a new practice that can be implemented?
3. To be a Healthy Church no Avenue can work in isolation. In reworking your next cycle for your Faith Avenue think about the connection points below:

What are the markers of a Healthy Faith Avenue...

- There are connection points with the other Avenues
 - » A connect group can become a missional community (love avenue). An intentional group of Christian brothers and sisters willing to journey together not just with each other but with others who are invited to be a part of the community. The group can become a missional space to connect new believers.
 - » A connect group can become a connecting point for Sunday guests (hope avenue). As new people connect to our church expressions on Sunday morning, it is key to bridge them into smaller gatherings where life happens. Connect groups can become that space for deeper relationships.
 - » A connect group can become the entry way to the greater body (hope avenue). As new people engage a small group, they are eventually invited to participate in the greater body finding their best fit within the Faith, Hope and Love Avenues.