



HOME GROUPS

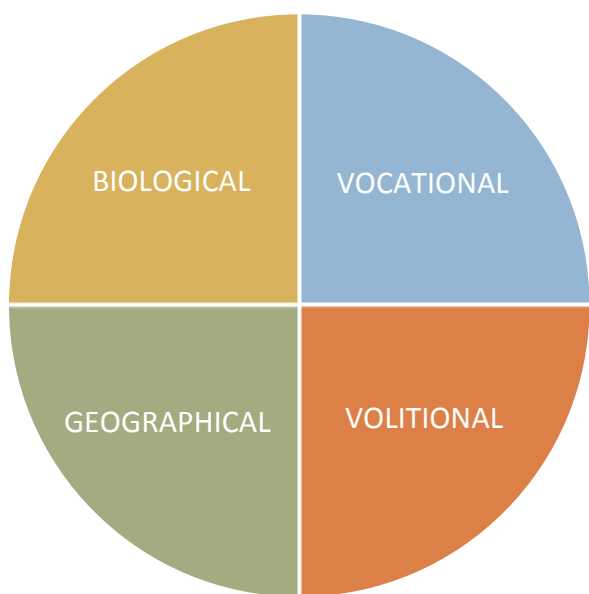
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CHURCH

How do we form home groups at Ballardsville?

Oikos Based Approach

Home Groups only work when they are formed organically or through “**oikos**”. This is another way of saying that groups only work when they are “**your people**” rather than an institutional approach that tries to put everyone together from the same part of town or every one of the same exact age; or even worse - with no intentionality at all!

The ideal way for groups to form is through the **multiplication of already existing relationships**. If a group of four to six people **already in relationship** want to form a group, we encourage them to invite others from their **oikos** or “**circles of influence**” to join the group to fill out the remaining spots.



There are **four primary areas where oikos already exists in your life**.

- **Biological:** consisting of people related to you by blood or marriage—siblings, mothers, father, in-laws, etc.
- **Vocational:** co-workers and business associates in one’s community
- **Geographical:** includes immediate community, such as neighbors
- **Volitional:** a world of your choice—that is, leisurely activities, sports, hobbies, etc.

Realistically, there will **always** be people who are **new to town**, new to our **church**, or new to **faith** that don’t **yet know other Christ followers** in their “oikos” or haven’t yet multiplied other Christ followers. In that case, we will **attempt to help** them find a group that will be oikos based for them. This can be found by looking for people who share . . .

- **Similar life stage.** This doesn’t just mean the same age and marital status. Sometimes it doesn’t mean that at all! For example, a 40-year-old couple having their first baby may have more connection with a 25-year-old couple also having their first baby. Or a 35-year-old single mom with a teenager may have greater “oikos” with older families than with a group of young, single women.
- **Common interests and experiences.** A question to identify this easily is, “Will we want to hang out when the group isn’t meeting?” Sometimes people from completely different stages of life form excellent “oikos” through shared experience and interests.
- **Existing relationship with someone in the group.** Even if it is merely an acquaintance from a volunteer team or a friend of a friend, having some level of familiarity can help build oikos more quickly.

In all these areas of life, you likely have 4-6 people you know and enjoy being around. They are people whose company and relationship you already enjoy or would enjoy if you took time to know them better. That is your “oikos”. Those people are prime candidates to invite to your home group.

Launching New Groups

New groups are launched twice each year, in August and January. Rather than asking people who don't yet know each other well to show up at a stranger's house for the first group, groups get a jump start at what we call Groups Launch. Groups Launch will be a time where groups form, and the content will be facilitated by a pastor or seasoned groups leader.

The goal of Groups Launch is for the group to begin getting to know each other on neutral ground. By the end of the second meeting, the group will have decided what night the group will meet, where the group will meet, and how the group will handle childcare.

When groups still have openings after Groups Launch, new group members may be added to the group until the group is full. In this case, it is very important that the group leader meet the new group member - usually after a Sunday morning service - to help the group member feel more comfortable about attending their first group meeting. Oftentimes there are not openings in existing home groups so we will encourage the interested group member to join a short-term group or volunteer team until the next Groups Launch in August or January.

Group Commitment

Once the group is formed, each member of the group signs the Group Commitment so that expectations are made extremely clear. The commitment helps group members understand their role in accountability, confidentiality, and multiplication.

Starting Well

The first few months of a new group will need to be very intentional. Not everyone will be willing to open up and share the deepest secrets of their heart right away! The first few group meetings might need to focus more on the group getting to know each other than it does on the sermon discussion guide. Ideas to help with this might be:

- Having a cookout on the first night after Groups Launch
- Inviting the group to lunch after church at least once per month in the first few months
- It is strongly encouraged that, if possible, groups have an overnight retreat within the first six months of the group. This can help gel the group and develop oikos very quickly!

Multiplying the Group

Healthy organisms multiply! We believe that is true of our home groups as well. Additionally, if our home groups do not multiply, we will be putting a lid on how many people our church can reach! It is important that the group understands from the outset that our goal is for their group to multiply within 24 months.

While we will not intentionally split up a group if the leader feels that the group would be best served to stay together, in most situations the group should at the very least be training up an apprentice leader that could and would start a new group within 24 months. But ideally, that apprentice would have four to six members of the current group help start the new group.

Group Leaders at Ballardsville Baptist Church

Who can lead a group?

Group leaders must be growing spiritually, actively involved at Ballardsville Baptist Church, and have been part of a Ballardsville Home Group in the past. Ideally, new group leaders will have been an apprentice leader for at least a semester in an existing home group.

Interested group leaders will fill out a **Group Leader Assessment** and then meet with the pastor or groups director to determine if leading a Ballardsville Home Group is the best fit.

The Role of Group Leaders

The “win” of home groups at Ballardsville is that people are not “doing” life alone - especially their spiritual life! The primary goal of a home group leader is simply to care for the members of their group. Additionally, we often say that group leaders don’t need to have all the answers but can be people of resources to find the right answers! Basic responsibilities that will help the group leader do that are listed below. See the **Group Leader Commitment** for more details.

- Protect the unity of the group and the church – Top priority!
- Communicate weekly with group members
- Identify potential group host who have the gift of hospitality
- Identify an apprentice leader and begin to develop the apprentice to lead a new group
- Facilitate group discussions and prayer
- Oversee care for the members of the group
- Communicate with church leadership about needs in the group
- Manage attendance in the church’s Realm system
- Commit to being involved in group leader development

Group Leader Development

The group will only be as strong as the leaders who lead it – speed of the leader, speed of the team! As a group leader, I understand it is important for me to be continually developing.

I commit to making the following a priority and understand it will be required of me to continue leading a group:

- Annual Leadership Retreat
- Leadership Roundtable one per semester on a Sunday
- Monthly check-in phone call with pastor or groups director
- Using suggested teaching format and resources as provided
- Communicating with my pastor or groups director any questions or concerns
- Having read the Home Groups Handbook and fully understanding the expectations of Home Group Leaders, I commit to leading a Home Group for the next 12 months.

Leading the Group Discussion

Leading the group discussion time can be one of the most intimidating aspects of leadership! We've put together an outline called the **Home Groups Discussion Guide**. The guide is designed to help you facilitate the group's discussion based on the previous week's sermon.

We ask our groups to use our Home Groups Discussion Guide and the previous week's sermon as the content of their home group meetings' teaching. The discussion guide is a strategic tool to encourage the personal application of Sunday's message, to promote personal multiplication of member, and to advance the spiritual formation of our church. If a group leader or group wants to temporarily do something different because it meets a specific need the group is facing, this should be approved by the pastor or groups director first to assure the content used lines up theologically with Ballardsville's teachings.

Tips, ideas, and video training for successfully leading the group discussion are available on the www.groupleaders.org website.

Where Do Groups Meet?

The name Home Group says it all! We want groups meeting in homes rather than the church so that the group can take ownership, give someone in the group an opportunity to serve as host, and get the group outside the four walls of the church building. Plan to meet in someone's home.

Caring for the Group

Group leaders are on the front lines of pastoral care. You will often be the first - and sometimes only - to hear of special needs in your group ranging from medical needs, relationship struggles, spiritual issues and more. You do not have to do it alone! Your deacons, pastors, and elders will help you. With that in mind, remember the following:

- *Hospital visits* - Home Groups serve in this role for our church. However, if it is a serious medical issue and you think church leadership should be aware, let one of your deacons, pastors, or elders know!
- *Baby and wedding showers* - Home Groups host showers when needed.
- *Funerals* - These are a great opportunity for home groups to show pastoral care to each other.
- *Get-togethers* – Use the off months to schedule some get-togethers for your group.
- *Counseling* - Group leaders are not counselors! Your pastors should be consulted when needed and they can make a referral to Christian Counselors in the area if someone in your group needs advanced help. Contact one of your pastors for more information.
- *Conflict management* - We take Matthew 18 very seriously and ask you to do the same. If someone in your group is at odds with someone else in the group or at the church, encourage them to follow the Matthew 18 example. Go one on one and address it, then go again with another believer, then go a final time with your group or church leadership. Again, one of your pastors can be a resource to help you through this.

Stepping Down from Group Leadership

Group leaders are held to a higher standard, as taught by scripture (James 3:1). As such, we take very seriously your commitment to lead and protect the unity of the group and the church. Group leaders commit to a one-

year leadership cycle of their group. If the leader needs to step down at the end of that year, they are asked to meet with the pastor or groups director as soon as possible to determine next steps for the group. The group leader will be expected to help hand the group off to the apprentice leader and in doing so, continue to protect the growth of those in the group.

Using Realm to Oversee Your Group

Connecting and Growing Together in Groups

Realm is a ministry solution our church uses to serve the administrative needs of its staff and leaders and provides you with convenient tools to support the way groups connect and grow together. Realm is our online database that helps us track the growth of our church and each individual person. As a group leader, this is an invaluable tool for your group.

Download the Mobile App

Stay connected to your group wherever you go with Realm's mobile app named Connect – Our Church Community. It is available for iPhone and Android devices. This free app enables leaders to communicate with members in a timely manner, and it keeps members engaged throughout the week. Although people are not required to use the app to participate in your group, it sure makes it a lot easier.

Download "Connect-Our Church Community" today:

On your iPhone or Android device, go to: <http://onelink.to/connectapp>

Realm Features

Chat with the Group

Have real-time conversations with your entire group or select individuals! If chat is enabled for a group, the group leaders can send a chat to everyone in a group, or just specific people. This chat will notify group members based on their preferred notification settings. It will also create a new conversation on the Chat tab.

Email Your Group

Send your entire group, or select individuals, an email. The inbox is where you can send email messages to everyone in your group. If you enable replies for your message, you can also view comments written by your group members and respond to them. When you send an email to your group, each member receives a notification for that message based on their inbox notifications for your group.

Share a Post

A post is any message you want to share with the group and open up for comments. When a member of a group creates a post, it appears in a newsfeed for that group. Other group members can respond to this post with a comment or support it by clicking the heart icon. It's a good idea to create a few posts in your group so that people have content to interact with when you open the newsfeed to them.

Comment to a Post

Comments are direct responses to a post, event, or other comments.

Share Photos

Capture your moments together and then share them with your group. A member can share a single image or a group of images in a photo gallery. Like Posts, photos also appear on the group's newsfeed. Other members can respond with a comment and support photos by clicking the heart icon.

Share Files

Group participants can share files with their group by attaching a file to a post, like Sunday school lessons, rehearsal music, prayer lists, study material, and more. When someone adds a file to a post, it will appear in the Files tab of your group. Shared files can be downloaded by members of the group. Files may not exceed 20MB.

Create an Event

See events details, submit your RSVP, or sign up to bring something in events. Church groups often get together at regularly scheduled times, but they also like to gather for parties, picnics, prayer, outings, or other special events. Fortunately, you don't have to be the only one to organize and enter these events. Members may post events for the group, too. As a group leader, you always have oversight of your group's calendar and can make any edits as needed. Events can also be exported as an .ics file to be used with your preferred calendar program, like Microsoft Outlook.

Manage Group Participants

See names and basic profile details for the people in your group, based on what their privacy preferences. Group leaders can be given specific permissions to be able to maintain group rosters. Group rosters include leaders, members, and guests who have profiles on Realm.

Permissions	Leader	Member	Guest
View names on roster	✓	✓	–
View members' contact information	up to the member	up to the member	up to the member
View list of group events	✓	✓	✓
View and download resources	✓	✓	–
Read and create posts	✓	✓	–
Add Events	✓	✓	–
Post resources (files and photos)	✓	✓	–
Send a message to the group	✓	✓	–
Mark attendance	✓	–	–
Set Meeting Times and Locations	✓	–	–
Add, delete, edit group members <i>(if permitted by church to do so)</i>	✓	–	–

Check Notification Settings

Manage your preferences for group notifications and emails in settings. You can view notification settings for each member in a group, and whether the member has a login to Realm. You can also see if a group member

doesn't have a login or a method of communication. This helps you know how members receive notifications for messages and posts.



- Member has a Realm login



- Member receives email notifications from this group



- Member uses the mobile app and receives app notifications for this group



- Member does not receive communication from this group

Mark Attendance

Keeping track of your group members' attendance gives your church staff insight into how people are involved in the church. Thankfully, Realm makes it very simple for leaders to record attendance. All you need to do is go to your Group's Attendance tab and then click on a past event to mark attendance for it.

- **Member Attendance**—You can mark member attendance by selecting the checkbox for each person who attended the meeting. The total number of marked attendances is calculated at the top of the screen.
- **Head Counts**—If you do not mark individual member attendance for the event, you can simply enter a whole number in the Total column. If you record a head count and later decide to mark individual members' attendance, the head count and individual member attendance are combined in the total. You will need to go back and adjust the number down for each selected profile to keep your total number consistent.
- **Printed Sheets**—Sometimes it makes sense to use a printed attendance-marking sheet so you can take roll on paper prior to entering it online. Attendance sheets are printed for a group's entire month of events. If attendance has already been entered for a past event, it will print pre-marked on the sheet. The printable attendance-marking sheet is exported from Realm as a PDF.
- **Attendance Profiles**—If you are the leader of multiple groups, ask your Realm administrator to set up an Attendance Profile containing all your groups. Then you can use the Attendance option to mark attendance for one group at a time without needing to go to each group's past event list.
- **Reviewing an Individual's Attendance**—While looking at your group's roster online, you can hover over the ellipsis icon next to the attendance percentage to see a snapshot of the person's attendance history.