



Metrolina Church – A Path to Move Forward

The Metrolina Church Structure – House Church Driven

(*a house church model eliminates the need for traditional Sunday music, youth and children ministries)

Metrolina House Church (House2House Church?) – One Church, Many Houses

Metrolina House Church is a group of Jesus followers who, TOGETHER, are committed to loving God, loving others, and making disciples. Our House Churches exist to praise God together, study and proclaim His Word together, disciple one another, love one another, share meals and life with one another, and care for the poor, elderly, vulnerable, sick, and dying together. We laugh together, cry together, and serve God together in our community and around the world. We forgive one another, are patient with one another, and challenge one another to love Jesus with all our hearts.

House Church is not a “one-day-per-week” church meeting, but a LIFESTYLE of following Jesus together. The Book of Acts describes church like this: “believers met together constantly,” “shared their meals with great joy and generosity,” “the building where they were meeting shook,” “many miraculous signs and wonders,” “believers greatly increased.” What Christian wouldn’t want to experience that?!

Does “going” to a house church “guarantee” this? Not at all! BUT House Church life IS about pursuing what God intended the church to be: which is not a **PLACE** or a one hour per week feel-good experience, but a loving-God-and-others **LIFESTYLE**.

- Weekly House Church Gatherings (8-16 people)
“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Messiah is Jesus.” (Acts 5:42)
House Church is driven by worship gatherings in homes that have a simple focus on prayer, worship, scripture, discipleship, and a fellowship meal.
 - o Praying Together (Acts 1:14) *They all met together and were constantly united in prayer*. Praying for one another and over one another is a primary focus of the church. We get to know one another and disciple one another more deeply when we pray for one another in community.
 - o Worshipping Together (Acts 2:46-47) *They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.* The House Church model allows everyone to participate in worship, not just a few people on stage. For example, you could:
 - Express appreciation & gratitude for what God has/is doing in your life
 - Confess our sins, our lack, and our need of Christ Jesus
 - Declare His attributes
 - Declare His promises

- Speak words of praise and worship toward God
- Speak words of love and affection toward God
- Read a psalm
- Sing a worship song or hymn

The power of house church is that **each one** can bring something to contribute, not just a worship leader or pastor. As each one looks for something that leads others to worship, the whole body of Christ is greatly built up.

- Learning Together (Acts 2:42) *All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.* House Church allows you to move from a "presentation" teaching format where only one person does all the teaching/talking to a "participatory" format in which every person engages in the process of digging into Scripture and drawing out truth from God's Word. House Church participants will recognize that they are fully capable of going to Scripture, encountering God and truth, and sharing that truth with others. This can be encouraged by having a daily Bible reading plan for everyone to follow during the week and then discussing at our House Church gatherings how God spoke to us through our daily scripture reading.
- Sharing Meals Together (Acts 2:42) *All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

"The Greek word used for fellowship, koinonia, appears here for the first time in the Bible and then is used 18 times throughout the New Testament.

Koinonia, which also can be translated as "partnership," is a supernatural grace that causes Christians to love one another deeply. It was not possible before Pentecost because it is a manifestation of the indwelling Holy Spirit. His koinonia knits our hearts and binds us together.

After the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2, koinonia caused the early disciples to share their possessions unselfishly (vv. 44–45) and to share meals often (v. 46). Many people decided to become Christians when they witnessed this loving community (v. 47).

Koinonia was an essential ingredient in the New Testament church. It is what connected Paul, Timothy, Luke, Titus, and Priscilla and Aquila as a team. It is what held the early Christians together in the face of persecution and caused them to lay down their lives for one another.

We must return to koinonia—but you can't download it or fake it. We will have to scrap artificial, event-driven programs if we want to have the relational Christianity of the Book of Acts. And we will have to invite the Holy Spirit to do His work of connecting us with our brothers and sisters in Christ with His supernatural bond." *(Borrowed from The 7 Roles of the Holy Spirit by Lee Grady)*

One way in which we will pursue deepening fellowship is by enjoying a simple shared meal every week in which we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Jesus designed the Lord's Supper to be an intimate act of remembering His broken body and shed blood. But Communion is not just about intimacy with Jesus; it's also about intimacy with one another. Jesus gave this command to the church right after He had washed the disciples' feet and commanded them to love one another *just as* He loved them. It was immediately after this that He told them to remember His broken body and blood as a reminder of HOW He loved them. As we share

Communion together and look around the room, we should be asking ourselves, “Am I willing to love the people in this room to that extent?” Our love for Jesus and for one another should make us willing to literally go to the cross for one another.

GOALS

- To have multiple weekly house church gatherings. These house churches can meet any day/time of the week they decide. Pastor Dean will establish a training module for new house church leaders and ongoing training/encouragement for established leaders. (*The Pastor’s eventual role would not be to lead any of the individual House Churches, but to train, equip, reproduce and support House Church leaders.*) Every House Church would teach/discuss the same topics each week to maintain unity in the church.

- o Year One schedule

- January 2023 – 1 House Church
- July 1, 2023 – 2 House Churches
- January 1, 2024 – 3 House Churches

After year one, every House Church should have as it’s goal to reproduce once EVERY year. This should be built into every HC’s DNA. Observe the growth/multiplication potential with this approach in just 5 years (each HC reproducing only one new HC per year):

- January 1, 2025 – 6 House Churches
- January 1, 2026 – 12 House Churches
- January 1, 2027 – 24 House Churches
- January 1, 2028 – 48 House Churches

- Monthly Combined Worship Celebration

Once two or more house churches are started, begin having Combined Worship celebrations once per month. This corporate gathering of all the House Churches is for the purpose of worship, baptisms, communion, testimonies/reports, and Family Fellowship Meal.

- Metrolina Mobile Ministry

This is a mobile unit that allows us to take the Gospel and the church TO the community (Mark 16:15).

This mobile unit/trailer would be a self-contained ministry tool that can be taken on-site to a vast variety of locations/events/communities to serve/care and share the Gospel with others. It would contain it’s own audio/visual resources, power source, chairs, tables, awning/Pop-Up tents, Kids Ministry resources, Youth Ministry resources, etc. It could be used to bring “church” to senior adult communities, trailer park communities, apartment communities, sporting events, festivals, fairs, etc. It could be used to feed the hungry, serve the poor, respond to disasters and more.

All House Churches would be encouraged to utilize the various ways this unit could be used. This provides another opportunity for everyone to serve together, for everyone to form and use their spiritual gifts to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). It can also be utilized for larger events where all the house churches serve together to proclaim the Gospel to the community. This unit would be used any day of the week for

ministry to bring the gospel of Jesus to unchurched people. Those who respond to the Gospel and are saved would be provided with follow-up by the House Church and invited to be baptized by a member of the House Church on the next Worship Celebration Sunday. These new believers would be disciplined, equipped, and encouraged to take their place in a House Church and continue the multiplication process.

- Compassion Metrolina – continue our ministry of feeding the most vulnerable people in our community.

A Long-term Plan/Goal to build Youth and Children Ministries

- Partner with 2-3 other small churches in our community to develop Trail Life USA and American Heritage Girls Chapters.
 - o American Heritage Girls is a Christ-centered character and leadership development program for girls 5 to 18 years of age. AHG is dedicated to the mission of building women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country. American Heritage Girls (AHG) was founded by a group of parents wanting a faith-based, scout-type character development program for their daughters in 1995. The AHG Program is dedicated to the mission of building women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country. AHG girls across the nation and the globe participate in badge programs, service projects, leadership opportunities, and outdoor experiences, all with an emphasis on Christian values and family involvement.
 - o Trail Life USA is a Church-Based, Christ-Centered, Boy-Focused mentoring and discipleship journey that speaks to the heart of a boy. Established on timeless values derived from the Bible and set in the context of outdoor adventure, boys from Kindergarten through 12th grade are engaged in a Troop setting by male mentors where they are challenged to grow in character, understand their purpose, serve their community, and develop practical leadership skills to carry out the mission for which they were created.

Online Ministry Plan

Our Online ministry is a valid and necessary tool for both present and future ministry. God has graciously given us the honor to minister the Word of God to others around the country and even the world. It also allows those who are battling illness and other issues that take them away from our gatherings to stay connected with the church family. This ministry must grow, improve, and have a plan to give our online members a taste of House Church. Since cameras in a meeting change the dynamic of the gathering, we need a plan that feeds Online members without intruding and altering the intimate dynamic of house church.

FAQ'S

“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Messiah is Jesus.” Acts 5:42

According to the repeated teaching of the New Testament, community/ fellowship/relationship is not optional; it is vital to the Christian life and walk. It is the heart of the church. Meeting in an auditorium, sitting in rows and listening to a few people sing and speak to you doesn't promote very well the intimacy and relationships necessary for deep spiritual development. But when we meet in one another's home, where everyone shares a meal, worships, disciples, prays and cares for one another, deep life change takes place. That is the purpose of Metrolina House Church. We want to rethink church, to move closer to its original design. To move from being an institution and a corporation, back to being a family, a community of people who love Jesus and one another.

"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-47

Each house church meeting will include the following components: worship, prayer, lesson/discussion, communion, and a meal. Inviting, engaging and reaching new people will be a priority strategy for each HC.

What is a house church?

Metrolina House Church is a group of Jesus followers who, TOGETHER, are committed to loving God, loving others, and making disciples. Our House Churches exist to praise God together, study and proclaim His Word together, disciple one another, love one another, share meals and life with one another, and care for the poor, elderly, vulnerable, sick, and dying together. We laugh together, cry together, and serve God together in our community and around the world. We forgive one another, are patient with one another, and challenge one another to love Jesus with all our hearts.

Why should I be a part of a house church?

We believe that house churches are part of God's design for the life and mission of the whole church. Being smaller, HC's allow disciples of Christ to be the church in ways that you simply cannot in a large gathering. The New Testament lists more than 50 "one another's" in which the church ought to be active. Love one another. Encourage one another. Serve one another. We simply cannot live life together as the church without opportunity to do these things... and these things simply do not happen well when the church remains a gathering of anonymous people. House Churches are not small groups. Small groups are just a ministry of the church, House churches ARE the church.

Who are the house churches for?

Everyone! Since house churches are organized by geography, they are not intentionally geared toward specific ages, life stages, etc. Does that mean that a house church may have singles, parents, and children all together? Yes, it does! They can really become a family environment,

teaching one another and sharing life together. It will often be much more like “Family Thanksgiving” than “Small Group Bible Study.” And yes, that can make things interesting at times... but you will most likely grow to love it if you give it a chance!

What makes a house church different from a traditional Bible study?

A Bible Study or Small Group is a ministry OF the church. House Church IS the church. Keeping in mind that every house church is unique, they will generally have the common elements of a shared meal, communion, worship, prayer, and time in Scripture. They seek to establish transparency and accountability. They encourage their members to minister to one another and be on mission to all those around them.

It would not be unusual to hear about house churches baptizing, participating in house church mission trips and local service projects together. We look forward to hearing reports of people coming to know their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in living rooms and backyards.

House Church is different from the traditional church setting in that it allows you to move from a "presentation" teaching format where only one person does all the teaching/talking to a "participatory" format in which every person engages in the process of digging into Scripture and drawing out truth from God's Word.

What is the typical “format” of a house church gathering?

While every house church is unique, the common biblical structure is worship, prayer, Bible discussion, communion and sharing a meal.

How many people are usually in a house church?

The “average” size house church is 8 to 20.

How long does a house church gathering last?

This also depends on the house church you are in. They typically go anywhere from two to three hours.

Is everyone going to be my age?

No. There are certain house churches that may have more people who are XYZ age than ABC age. We understand the importance of fellowshiping with others who are in the same stage of life as you, but we really want to diversify our house churches! We have so much to learn from one another! You will find people from all stages of life within the house churches. Remember, the purpose of a house church is to grow together and be on mission with people in your community.

Is childcare provided?

This is usually the first question asked when it comes to house churches.

The implication, of course, is that children are going to lose out if there is not an array of formal children's programs to teach and take care of the children.

The assumption is that the Children's program provided by traditional church is the best way to raise up spiritual kids. The unfortunate fact is, however, the majority of children raised in these

programs exit youth group after high school (if they have lasted that long) and cease to become regular church-goers or even abandon their faith altogether. This is not to say that something of value didn't take place, but it does point out that we are not getting the lasting impact we hoped for.

So instead of asking the question: "What do you do WITH the children?", we should be asking "What do you do FOR the children?"

Although the Scriptures don't say anything directly concerning children at the gatherings of believers, there are glimpses. For example, children are explicitly stated to have been present at the feeding of the five thousand, and the feeding of the four thousand (Mt 14:21, 14:38.). On a missionary journey, "all the disciples and their wives and children" accompanied the apostles, as they left, to pray on the beach (Ac 21:5b). Finally, when Paul's letter was read to the Ephesians, it addresses the children directly: "children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ep 6:1-2). How could the children hear those instructions read in church, unless the children were in the church gathering?

In a house church, children will spend more time with their families in worship and see their family members involved in spiritual activities. Children need to experience families who are modeling their own spiritual life. This is more important than 1,000 classroom teaching lessons on faith in Christ.

A Third Day article says: "If they [children] see parents with faith, they have faith. If they see parents with adoration of all God has created, they get adoration of God's creation. If they see parents who truly believe God will provide what they need, they believe God provides."

House church provides far more opportunity for this to happen as children are integrated into the life of "real" church. They will see their parents actively participating in worship, fellowship, communion, and the word—not as spectators but as participants.

In house church, children will experience what it means to be brought up within the context of a family. The importance of this cannot be overstressed. Faith is caught through quality relationships not quality programs! This is essential to grasp!

It is far more important that our children experience real koinonia fellowship among believers rather than the bells and whistles of a slick children's program.

Now, if these points are grasped, it becomes much easier and less frightening to begin to talk about the practical issues of doing house church with children.

No, it's not simple, and yes, it's sometimes messy. It requires ongoing discussion within the church and between the parents.

Let's not underestimate our children. They are part of the church; they, if believers, are filled with the same Spirit as the adults. They are able to adapt and they are able to participate as members of the Body of Christ.

As a Third Day article says: "When children are viewed as part of the group, part of the family, they will make the necessary adjustments to be a part. Children will adapt. The adults are the one's who need to check their view on including children in their church life. Parents should be helping their children make the adjustments but the whole group participates in their attitude toward children."

So be prepared to see and hear some wonderful things from the kids!