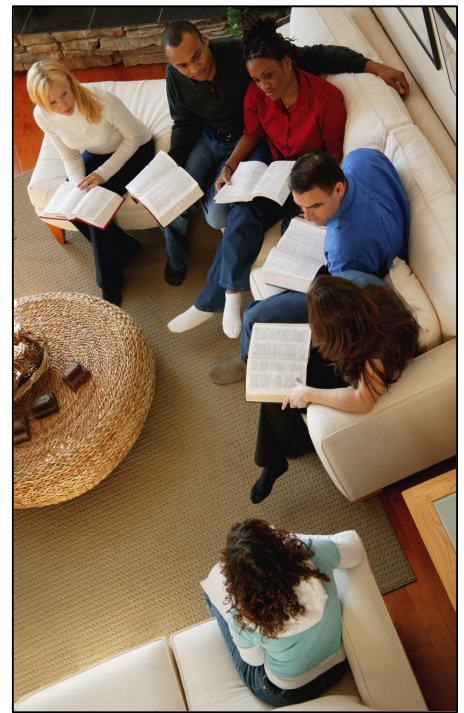


Small Groups Plan for 2010 (Draft Version 6.0)

In order to accomplish our mission to *develop growing disciples of Jesus Christ*, we must discover new ways of making disciples and at the same time be good stewards of the resources God has given us. Methods will change, but the message never will...

The Vision

1. **Grow Groups** – Effective August, 2010, Westwood plans to transition to a new name and a new unified strategy for adult small groups which will involve meeting off-campus and/or off Sunday morning, with a strong preference for in-home groups. The new strategy will be determined by the Small Groups Team under the leadership of the Small Groups Pastor.
2. **Age-Groups** - Preschool, Children, and Students, birth through High School will continue to meet on campus:
 - a. **Preschool** will do only Preschool Bible Study. ETC and Wee Worship will no longer exist. Preschoolers who are present for multiple hours will attend multiple sessions. Rotating positions for will still be available through Preschool Bible Study.
 - b. **Children** will attend a worship and small group event (Celebration and Journey) during the same "hour". Older children who attend multiple hours will have service opportunities while younger children will attend a "Second Hour Room".
 - c. **Middle school and high school** will attend Life Groups on Sunday morning and be encouraged to attend Sunday morning worship as well. Service opportunities for students will also be encouraged, so long as they do not interfere with attendance of a Life Group.
 - d. **Adult Specialty Groups** will remain on campus in the immediate future. These include singles, college, senior adults, and possibly empty nesters. Space needs may require these to be off-campus at a later date.



The Reasons

1. **For those who aren't here yet** – For Westwood to be able to continue to reach people and impact a lost world, we have to do something different as we look to the future, because of...
2. **Resource limitations** - Parking and buildings cannot be brought on line fast enough to keep up with the growth. This plan will delay any additional education space needs for a few years.
3. **Children** – Adults will be moving off campus to create space for preschoolers, children and students.

Other Benefits

1. **Volunteer Base** – The transition will encourage more adults to serve on Sunday morning. As we saw on Easter Sunday, when adults are freed up to serve on Sunday morning, ministry needs are more readily met by people willing and able to serve.
2. **Biblical Community** – We believe that Home Groups are effective models to build Biblical community that includes a vital connection with other adults, spiritual encouragement, and life-on-life discipleship.
3. **Simplicity and Excellence** – A person or organization can do a mediocre job of everything or choose a few things and do them with excellence. We believe having a simple model with a primary mode will help us be more effective at helping members experience Biblical community through group life.

Transitioning for Success

1. **E-Groups** – Classes will form e-groups during this year to experience small group community in advance of the change in 2010. If e-Groups are running by the end of this year, the transition will be extremely seamless. E-Groups are small groups that meet in homes but are formed out of an ABS Class.
2. **Fellowship** – Classes will be encouraged to have a monthly fellowship in order to maintain current relationships. This may be done by bringing the groups together once a month instead of the regular meeting.

3. **Worship as a group.** This will not only allow for continued fellowship but also help balance services if your group is flexible about when you attend.
4. **Coaching** – Existing teachers will maintain relationships with all groups formed out of their ABS class. He or she will coach and relate to the leaders in order to provide continuing leadership and support.

Connecting Adults to Groups

1. **Connection Events** – Connection Events allow adults to come together to form new Home Groups beginning with an eight-week “test drive”. We have been doing these for three years and they will continue to be offered four times a year (August, October, January and April). People wishing to be placed between Connection Events will be placed in a group which has space available. The recommended maximum Home Group size is 15.
2. **Connection Class** – An eight-week, Sunday morning class will be offered in the fall and spring that will establish Home Groups by the end of the session.
3. **Connection Groups** – A possible plan calls for the development of online communities to serve as a first step to Home Groups. New members will be automatically placed in a homogenous group and given an online forum for building community that will include sharing prayer request, discussing the sermon, posting hobbies & interests, etc. The group will be assigned a coach who will gather the Connection Group once a month with the purpose of ultimately forming a Home Group that meets weekly. Guests will also be offered the opportunity to join a Connection Group.
4. **Connections Pastor** – Westwood now has a Connections Pastor who will help people move all the way from first time guest to member of a group.
5. **Rotating Back on Campus** - We may facilitate some groups on campus Sunday morning once a month to allow for entry points of new people as well as continued fellowship of ABS Classes mentioned above.

Concerns Answered

1. **Children will receive less time** – While this is true in the quantity of time, the time they are on-campus will be used much more efficiently. Also, if Home Groups are successful at helping parents grow spiritually, what better gift can the church give to families than parents who love God wholeheartedly. We also plan to better equip parents to lead their children spiritually in the home.
2. **Fewer people will take part in Home Group** – Evidence shows this to be true. We will seek to have many entry points as possible and to create a culture in which “Grow with Believers” is the expectation.
3. **This just doesn’t seem right!** People are always more comfortable with the familiar, but God’s word is the standard for His church. Many passages talk about believers meeting in homes (Acts 2:46, Acts 20:20).
4. **What about child care for Home Groups?** We currently have two options and are looking at more. Current options include child care at church and a voucher plan. Most groups meet on Sunday nights, but we also offer child care on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The voucher system reimburses families for a portion of their individual expenses to hire a baby sitter for their home. Another option would be to host children at a nearby house.

The Leadership Challenge

1. **Lead positively through change.** There are many reasons people can find for this change to be frustrating. Every family has to make sacrifices to accomplish what needs to happen. Church family is no different. In order to accomplish our mission, some things have to change in light of where we are and the current situation. Our actions, reactions and opinions carry great weight and can help people move forward through change.
2. **Participate by leading a Home Group and being a coach.** Your active participation in this transition will speak volumes and will empower others to stay connected to the group.
3. **Recognize the need for unity in the church and in your class.** Feelings are real and are okay to share so long as it is in a constructive context. From a leadership and unity perspective, disagreement should be handled privately first. John 17:23 makes the point that our unity among believers bears witness of Christ.