

Chilliwack House Churches
- Guiding Principles -
Version 1.6 – May 2015

1. Our values are what under gird all of our principles. By following these values, anyone would be able to make a decision that should be acceptable to the rest of us. The values are:
 - a. Action – Working off of the Great Commandment, we envision action that is focused on bringing God’s Kingdom to earth, and involving the practical nature of Acts 2:42-47. In our minds, action also includes an expectation of participation by all who are part of the communal body. In addition, action is us taking seriously our call to be Jesus’ representatives in our spheres of influence.
 - b. Authenticity – We envision a community where authenticity, transparency and honesty are felt, experienced, and acknowledged within relationships frequently. We also envision creating atmosphere that allows people to drop their guard, and where there is unity with diversity.
 - c. Simplicity – We envision a movement marked by a simplicity that is pervasive to all areas. This includes programming, relationships, infrastructure, and our relationship with God.
 - d. Generosity – We envision a community that is characterized by its sacrifice for each other and the world around it. We also envision generosity that is all encompassing and includes money, but also other areas such as time, patience, care, and encouragement.
 - e. Humility/Servant leadership – We envision a movement of people imitating Christ (Phil 2:1-5); exhibiting humility (Eph 4:1-2); and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

2. The principles outlined below are not meant as law, but as guiding thoughts. No principles can foresee all possible situations or scenarios, and so trust must be placed in those who have to make decisions in those moments.

1. Leadership Structure

a. Leadership

We envision a leadership structure that is simple, flat, flexible, nimble, and communal. We believe that the priesthood of believers has the gifting and ability to walk in unity and to pursue God’s voice for us. We believe that decisions should be made with input from the whole body, a body that participates in listening prayer and employs our value of humility/servant leadership.

We also realize that a team based model has many benefits. As there are many decisions to be made within any organization starting, we will have a guiding team oversee the church plant for at least the first year. This team will be the Leadership Team that helped create the model and culture that will initially define this church plant. This team will help to continue to culture, make key decisions, and act as a stabilizing force until such a time that the church plant can begin to discuss and decide on the appropriate leadership

model. If those on the Leadership Team decide they do not want to, or are not able to continue in this role, an appropriate decision will be made as to if or how to replace them.

b. Lead Role - Job Description

Below is the job description of the lead role:

- i. To see the chief component of this role to be serving, supporting and empowering the priesthood to be using their spiritual gifts for God.
- ii. To help the House Churches to become functional expressions of The Body of Christ. This will include meeting and training with House Church Leaders to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their House Church, to identify areas that need to be addressed, to train in bringing out the spiritual gifts from the House Church members.
- iii. To refrain from becoming the driving force of the Church, but to ensure the Church operates as a priesthood of believers. To ensure the Church is becoming self-sufficient, and less reliant on the Apostle.
- iv. To refrain from taking on jobs or roles that should or can be done by the priesthood of believers. For those roles that must be done by the Apostle at the inception of the church plant, they must be quickly passed off (deadline of 1 year).
- v. To survey the broader needs of all the House Churches and to help address these issues (personally, or through training of House Church leaders, or the whole Church body).
- vi. To be very careful to avoid working in a way that would place too much responsibility on one person, not the priesthood of believers.
- vii. To help facilitate the organization of key meetings (monthly meeting of leadership team, individual meetings with House Church leaders, quarterly meetings of all House Church leaders, and church “business” meetings for the church body [to comply with governmental regulations]).
- viii. A yearly review will be conducted to ensure the job description is being adhered to.
- ix. A review will take place after 1.5 years to discern if this role still needs to exist as a paid role. If this role is no longer needed, 6 months notice will be given before the role officially ends as a paid role. This review will take place every 6 months after the initial 1.5 years.

2. House Churches

a. Vision

We envision groups of believers meeting throughout Chilliwack teaching, encouraging, shepherding, worshipping, praying, and engaging with the world around them. We envision groups of believers who are actively participating in their house church by knowing and using their giftedness to strengthen the whole. We envision a leadership structure that is flat, meetings that are highly participatory, and an atmosphere that is caring, disarming, and expectant. We envision believers anticipating their group gatherings because they are excited about hearing about how God is working in the lives of their brothers and sisters. We envision believers who attend these meetings prepared

to use their gifts and share with those around them both how God has worked in their lives, and how God has worked through their lives to bring hope to a hopeless world. We envision empowered house churches to creating models that work best for them. We envision meetings that do not become stagnant or stale because we continue to reveal more of who we are and support each other in doing life together.

b. Meetings

There are key elements that we believe must be part of each house church. These items are: teaching, caring, worship, and prayer. Freedoms are given in areas such as meeting location, meeting length, meeting frequency, meeting style. We believe that each believer (and attendee) has a responsibility to the church to come prepared to share how God is working in their lives, and how God is working through them to impact the world around them. We believe the meetings should be orderly, but that does not mean they have to be well planned and slick. We believe that all people need to participate regularly. Those who talk easy should make effort to listen. Those who struggle to talk should make effort to speak into the life of the community.

c. Teaching

We believe the teaching of the Bible is a non-negotiable component for each house church and that time should regularly be set aside in group gatherings for teaching. We believe the Scriptures are the main text those following Jesus should study. We believe teaching is a gift given to people, but learning is a communal pursuit. We envision teaching that is participatory, humble and simple. While we believe that each group should be using the Bible primarily as their text, allowance should be made for groups to use other books for topical studies, or create their own topical study.

d. Kids

We believe that each house church should first accept that engaging children in the house church model is different than the traditional model. It is because of this allowance that effort must be made to integrate children well into the house church community. Working to ensure the house church is a meaningful experience for children means that we must work hard to change our thinking on what group learning looks like, and that we must push ourselves to have a big-picture view of the role God's community plays in shaping these lives. At the same time we believe that each house church should be given freedom to be creative and find a method that works well for their group. We believe that the parents (first), and the community of God's people (second), have been called to teach and equip children how to live for Christ. It is because of this we will not pursue ministries for children or youth outside of individual House Churches.

We encourage each house church to find a method of integrating kids that:

- i. Places a high value on children, especially as part of God's community
- ii. Places children in a place that they can develop relationships with the rest of those in the house church.
- iii. Places children in a place where they are a part of life of the house church for as long as possible and appropriate. We believe that their involvement in spiritual conversations, prayer, relationship building,

sharing and teaching will set the stage for their own authentic spirituality later in life.

e. Roles

We believe that each house church should be a reflection of the Body of Christ, with each member intentionally, joyfully, and frequently using their gifting for the benefit of the whole. Therefore, one person or couple should not be responsible to do all of the teaching, shepherding, discerning, planning, counseling, and evangelizing. Time must be spent in each House Church to discover and recognize the gifting of each member so these gifts can be encouraged and drawn out by the entire house church. There will be a leadership couple that helps facilitate each group.

f. Communion

We believe that communion was initially given as a meal that believers shared together, and that this is a tradition that we would like to maintain when possible. Each House Church should be given freedom in how often they participate together in communion, and in what method that looks like. It is suggested that each group participate in communion together frequently.

g. Baptism

We believe that Baptism is an important part of the life of believers, and that House Churches should be given freedom on the best way to incorporate baptism into their House Church.

h. Living the Great Commission

We believe that Jesus has called all believers to be sharing and proactively carrying His message to the world. The result of this, as in the Bible, is that people will come to faith and need to join The Body. First, we believe that it is not acceptable for Christ followers to not be fully engaged in this calling. To ensure that each care group is actively working towards its calling, accountability meetings will be conducted every 6 months. The purpose, heart and feel behind these accountability meetings is to caringly hold each group accountable to living out the great commission. These evaluations will help ensure each care group is functioning with health, members are participating, members are coming prepared to participate, and that the group is engaging in the world around them as well as intentionally using the House Church to be more than a care group. We also envision House Churches that joyfully birth new House Churches when they reach a size of approximately 12 people, sending leaders who have been apprenticed and called to lead with a new group.

i. The Culture we Create

We envision groups of Christians that will wrestle with how to effectively bridge their faith community (House Churches), with the community that they are being Christ to. We believe the tension of creating space in our House Churches for those that are journeying towards Christ in relationship with us will not be easily solved, and it is a tension that we should continually be forced to deal with. We have spoken about our vision of House Churches (above), and we also envision House Churches that continue in

their depth and authenticity, being real about life and sharing it in the safety of the House Church, as others are invited into this community of believers. We acknowledge the risk involved in this degree of transparency, but believe deeply in the value of authentic community (see our core values). For this reason, as we are frequently inviting those outside of the community of God to join with us in community, we must fight against attempting to “circle our wagons” and put on a nice show for those who are new.

j. Meeting Places

We envision groups of Christians that will meet in a variety of locations throughout Chilliwack. Some meeting in houses, some in third locations such as coffee shops, restaurants, and other common interest places.

k. Training

We envision leaders who are confident and capable of serving the house churches they work within. These leaders want to work in a culture that:

- i. Helps to develop and empower other leaders in the House Church that have the gifting and ability to one day facilitate a House Church on their own.
- ii. Helps to create a House Church atmosphere that allows each believer to understand and use their specific gifting in the House Church.
- iii. Meets periodically for group training and encouragement with other House Church Leaders (3 or 4 times per year)
- iv. Meets frequently with the Apostle for micro-training (every month or two).
- v. Spends time in listening prayer with their House Church to discern who God is calling for leadership development and apprenticeship in order to take leadership of a new House Church.

The training these leaders receive will change in content and method over time, depending on the needs of the specific House Church leader and the needs of the House Church.

3. Group Gatherings

a. Vision

We envision House Churches gathering together on a monthly basis to encourage, worship, teach, and commune together. We envision a meeting where stories are shared about how God is using this movement to make a difference in the world and where those gathering can be reminded that they are a part of something bigger – we as a community are part of God’s unfolding story. We envision meetings that are simple and participatory. We also envision a meeting that is full of joy and where our unity and oneness in Christ is celebrated.

b. Planning

We believe that each House Church has the ability to lead these group gatherings, so a rotation will be set up so that each House Church will participate in this aspect of our communal life. The role of the Apostle is to help support each group in their planning and execution of these Large Group Gatherings. Each House Church will be given freedom to plan this time together. While each House Church will have the freedom to

plan this time together, we believe some key aspects of worship must always be present in some form. They are:

- i. Stories – sharing authentic stories of how God is working in our personal lives, and through our lives to impact the world around us will be a staple of these meetings. We believe that these stories will both encourage us and help us build community.
- ii. Music, prayer, singing and meditation could all be examples of various ways worship will be integrated into our meetings.
- iii. Prayer – groups praying, prayer led by 1 person, praying for the needs of our community, and listening prayer are examples of various ways prayer will be integrated into our meetings.
- iv. Teaching/Preaching – team teaching, narrative, group discussion and traditional preaching are examples of how teaching/preaching will be integrated into our meetings.

c. Meeting Place

We envision a meeting place that is considered neutral ground, yet has atmosphere. We envision a room that is set up in a way that fosters participation and engagement with both those who are speaking as well as with those who are sitting close by.

d. Kids

We envision a community that deeply values all ages of kids, and works hard to incorporate them into the group life of the church. We envision the children participating in leading when their parent's House Church leads by telling stories, praying, and sharing. We also envision a community that works hard to respond to the needs of the children and finds an appropriate way to channel their energy and attention for an appropriate amount of time. The House Church that will be leading a specific meeting will be responsible for caring for the children.

e. Communion

The original context of Communion identifies Communion as a meal for believers to remember the sacrifice of Christ, while also celebrating what His death means for us as believers. In addition to participating in communion with the House Churches, we believe it is also important to participate as a large group, but do not want to mandate exactly when and how this might happen. We envision various House Church groups adding communion to the Group Gathering they lead when it is appropriate. We also envision House Church groups adding communion in creative ways that may be traditional to church culture, or more historically accurate to church history depending on the broader picture of how communion fits into their entire "service".

f. Worship

We envision a group of believers that, with word and action, live out that worship is more than an act of singing. We believe that worship has a variety of methods that include teaching, singing, praying, sharing God-stories, encouraging, and listening to God.

g. Meeting Day and Time

There is no universal time all people are available, and the primary driver of this Church Plant is not the Group Gatherings. We envision a group of believers that are flexible and driven by the bigger picture of God and Community. Group Gatherings will be held on Sunday's for no other reason that it seems most appropriate to the scheduling of the age we live in. There will be two main Group Gathering times, and a variety of factors will determine which is chosen on a monthly basis (what the House Church in charge is planning, time of year, meeting location, etc). The meeting times will be around 9:30am or around 4:00pm. The majority of the Group Gatherings will be held on the second Sunday of each month.

4. Children and Teens

We acknowledge that we will need to create a plan for how to effectively address the issue of children and teens. We realize their needs are different, especially during the highly social teenage years. Our desire is to create a philosophy and model to identify how we can best work with children and teens in this model with those who have key ownership and insight. It also must be said that we desire to create a plan that is congruent with our values and beliefs.

5. Money

We believe that God calls his people to live generously in every area of life. We believe this includes using our money to impact where we live, as well as the world we live on. We believe it also includes using our time and skills to be generously invested both near and far. As a community, to function there are costs associated with what we do. We believe that these costs should be kept as simple and minimal as possible, while as an organization we strive to be generous.

6. Programs

We envision a model of church that is simple, flat, flexible and is driven more by relationships than programs. We believe a select few simple, effective, and intentional programming ideas will be helpful in achieving our vision, but that we should be very careful to not become program driven.

7. Living the Great Commission

We envision a group of believers being full integrated into the world we live in. We envision believers understanding their passions and skills, and then using them to be Jesus to the world around them. We see the need for believers to both have a community of other believers who will support and encourage them in their faith walk, and also a community of those who do not know Christ. We believe that if people from our personal communities of those who do not know Christ were to attend a House Church, that they would feel comfortable because they have, in essence, already experience house church through their relationship with us.

8. Community Life

We envision a community that is tied together through relationship. We believe that community will be primarily created and experienced through the individual House

Churches. We also see benefit in the House Churches being connected as a larger body. It is because of this value that we have our monthly large group meetings. We also envision periodic events that will help strengthen the community life. Some of these events will be social in nature, while others will help to build into the spiritual life of our community.

9. Dealing with Transfer Growth

We envision a community that is effective and active in helping those who are not connected to Jesus understand who He is and walk in relationship and obedience to Him. We also envision that the growth we see would come primarily and heavily from this group of people. We also acknowledge that because our culture and philosophy are different than the organization of church that most people know, some who are currently having difficulty in their current church may find our approach and philosophy attractive. Our expressed desire is to not grow significantly by transfer growth, or to skim the best leaders from other churches, thereby weakening God's work elsewhere while strengthening our own.