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## Alternative Gatherings Vision Doc

### The purpose of Alternative Gatherings

The purpose of *Alternative Gatherings* is to foster creativity and mission; ‘a *Technicolor church to connect with a Technicolor culture*’ that takes church to people who would never come to a service in a church building on a Sunday morning service. To learn how to facilitate exploration of faith and growth in discipleship with those who are interested to know more of Jesus but either don’t relate to traditional (or contemporary) church services or to whom coming to a church building is a barrier.

### What is an Alternative Gathering?

One Sunday per month any given group will meet to engage in an alternative kind of gathering with some form of spiritual content. Though the time of these gatherings may vary on the Sunday, those involved will be intentionally released from being expected to engage with the Hub morning service on that Sunday (their gathering might be very early morning, or over lunchtime or coinciding with the morning service, whatever suits the needs of the people the group are trying to engage with).

But there are two main reasons for intentionally ‘replacing’ a Sunday gathering rather than setting up a gathering on a different day of the week as an ‘additional’ activity.

- 1) *Credibility*: by putting these events as part of the Sunday calendar, it gives them a credibility that says ‘we believe in this event as an important part of the life of the church’. To put on a service at another time might create a ‘bolt on’ activity rather than part of the core life of the church.
- 2) *Time and Energy*: In our busy world people only have so much time. For Christians, Sunday morning is a regular slot of time that is cordoned off in the diary. To release this space one morning a month for them to engage in an alternative form of gathering creates the ability for members to commit without the additional ask of more time to be part of the central structures of church life. Linked to this is the recognition that there are some people who serve incredibly faithfully in church and would probably want to be involved in an alternative gathering process regardless of when it was on. In this case such people would likely to feel obligated to do both the alternative-gathering-at-another-time *and* the Sunday services, which over time would begin to stretch them and deplete their energy which would be poor stewardship of them as committed volunteers.

### Principles of Alternative Gatherings

- 1) *Organic & Light weight*. All admin & finance is run centrally.
- 2) *Corridor of Grace (permission to not engage)*. Not everyone has to engage, if people only want to come to central ‘hub’ services that’s okay. This is there for those who want to engage. We will start small and see what happens.
- 3) *Lots of other attractational things happen (“COME”) and as well as our alternative gatherings (“GO”)* Think of church less as *come-to-us-only* ‘Cruise Liner’ model to more of a ‘Life Boat Station’ *come-AND-go* model of thinking.

4) *Its okay to fail*

The set up process is a trellis to grow new things on, not a brick wall that will tumble at the first failure. If at first you don't succeed, try and try again!

5) *Don't ask 'is it church?' Ask 'is it good news'?*

All expressions will have something within them that will be good news to someone (i.e. it doesn't have to have singing, a sermon and all the other 'traditional' elements of church to be a service. It just has to be good news to people.)

6) *Frequency of running each alternative gathering?* Only run each AG once a month (at most twice, if there is good reason). Note that as different alternative gatherings multiply they might be on different Sundays –we will honour these gatherings from the Hub service and mention that they are happening, when they happen.

**Process for Setting up alternative gatherings**

- 1) If you have an area that you are passionate about that could function as an Alternative Gathering, pray for God to reveal others who have a similar passion who you could partner with in developing this idea.
- 2) Recruit/gather at least 3 people who will function as the initial leaders of this Alternative Gathering and share your passion with one another so you have a sense of whether there is a unity of vision in general between you.
- 3) Speak to our Community and Discipleship Pastor and they will help you with the following steps.
- 4) Put together Mission Statement, description of example gathering, name the gathering and a relevant create logo
- 5) Plan for how to begin. There will be a checklist including questions about training needs, first aid, safeguarding, risk assessment, equipment needs, storage, budget etc. that one of the leaders will go through with you.
- 6) Once steps 1-5 are in place we will hold a 'commissioning' within a Sunday morning service and officially launch the new AG.