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FOR CHURCHES · FIVE

The leadership team guide

For the people you have to convince.

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> You've read the founding document and the pastor's letter, and something in you said *this might be it*. Now comes the part nobody writes materials for: the room where it actually gets decided. This guide is that meeting, planned for you — what to send beforehand, how to run the conversation, the objections that will come up and the honest answers, and a decision framework that treats "not yet" as a legitimate outcome. Because it is.

One conviction before you start: **don't sell this to your board.** You've all sat through pitches; your team can smell one. Put the thing on the table, let them poke it hard, and trust it. If this can't survive your leadership team's honest scrutiny, it won't survive your congregation's living rooms either — better to find out in the meeting.

Before the meeting

Two weeks out: send each member two documents — the founding document and the pastor's letter — with one sentence: "Read these before our next meeting — I want your honest read, especially what worries you." Nothing else. No enthusiasm essay on top. The documents do their own work, and asking for worries up front turns your skeptics into contributors instead of opponents.

One week out: your most theologically careful elder will want the biblical basis before the meeting, not a scramble during it. Send the passages themselves — Acts 2:42–47, Romans 16:3–5, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1–2 — and let them do what careful elders do. The pattern's grounding is the text, not a paper about the text.

Don't send: the whole kit. Drowning a board in documents reads as either overwhelm or snow job. Two documents, one question.

The meeting itself (plan 60–75 minutes)

1. Open with what it isn't (5 minutes). Say it yourself, out loud: this will not grow Sunday attendance this year, will not run itself, and is not a program we're buying — it's free, and it's a change in how our people are the church between Sundays.

Starting with the disclaimers does two things: it disarms the burned, and it signals you're not pitching.

2. Everyone's honest read (15–20 minutes). Around the room, two questions each: *what landed, and what worries you*? Write the worries on a board, verbatim, without answering any of them yet. A worry that gets written down gets considered; a worry that gets rebutted on arrival goes underground and votes no later.

3. Work the worry list (20–30 minutes). Take them one at a time. The objections section below covers the ones that come up in almost every room — but let your team answer each other before you answer them. The moment an elder answers another elder's objection, this stopped being your idea.

4. The scale question (5 minutes). Make sure everyone hears this clearly, because it lowers the stakes as far as they go: **the proposal is two tables.** Not a restructure, not a new ministry, not a line item. Two hosts, two living rooms, a quiet ninety days, and this same room looks at what actually happened. Nobody is being asked to bet the church tonight.

5. Decide (10 minutes). Use the framework at the end of this guide.

What it sounds like when it works

Don't argue the point. Read these to the room and stop talking. They're from real tables, no names, and they are the only evidence anyone in that meeting will remember a week later.

> *"Decades in church. Nobody at this table cared about my title or what I know. For the first time in years I wasn't leading anything. I was just growing."*

> *"I expected another Bible study. I got friends. We laugh way more than I expected. We cry more than I planned on, too."*

> *"Nobody tried to fix me. Nobody argued with me. They just made room."*

The first one is a church person. Some of your leaders are that person and haven't said so.

The objections, and the honest answers

"We've tried small groups. They died." So did ours, in the old shape. The question worth asking is *why* they died — usually: curriculum-dependence, leader exhaustion, and existing to feed Sunday. This model removes all three by design: the stories are the content, hosts guide rather than teach, and the table is the point rather than the funnel. But don't take that as a promise — take it as the specific hypothesis two tables will test.

"Where's the biblical basis?" House to house is not a strategy borrowed from a business book — it's Acts 2:42–47, Romans 16:3–5, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 1–2. They're short; read them together in the meeting if you want. We're not innovating. We're returning.

"Anyone can sit at a table without believing what we believe? That sounds like doctrinal drift." It's the same policy we already run on Sunday morning: anyone can attend; not anyone can lead. Doctrine governs hosts and teaching; the chair stays open. And the content of every gathering is a gospel story with four questions that keep pulling the room back to the text — a table built on the stories of Jesus is a hard place to drift *away* from Jesus. Anything that genuinely needs settling routes to the pastor; that's written into the host guide.

"What does this cost us?" Money: nothing, ever — everything is free and stays free, and if we ever want paid human help, it exists outside the project under the founder's own name, and choosing it is entirely ours. Pastor's time: about an hour a week. Risk: two living rooms and ninety days. The real cost is patience — this grows at the speed of relationship, and a board that needs a dashboard by Easter should say so now.

"Who's liable if something happens in someone's home?" One phone call answers it before launch — the kit includes the two questions for our insurer. And the child-safety requirements are stricter than most of what we currently run: two screened adults at any gathering with minors, no exceptions, under our existing policy.

"Is this a franchise? What do they get out of it?" It's given away — the model, the stories, the guides, all of it, free forever, under a license that keeps anyone from ever fencing it off and selling it back. The founder earns his living from his own profession, outside the project; the money page links to it and the project never sells from within. Donations fund the work. No license, no membership, no data harvesting, no revenue share. If any of that ever changes, we walk, owing nothing.

"What happens to our existing groups and programs?" Nothing, yet. Two new tables start alongside everything we run. If tables prove healthier than what we have, that becomes a good problem for a future meeting — and the transition happens by attraction, not decree.

"Why haven't we heard of this?" Because it isn't marketed, doesn't collect endorsements, and doesn't need churches to use its name. That's either a red flag or the most refreshing thing on the table — and the ninety-day pilot is how we find out which.

The decision framework

Put three options on the table — all three are wins over an ambiguous "sure, whatever":

Yes — pilot. Two hosts, two tables, ninety days, then this room reviews against the three signs of health (tables still meeting without being chased, stories retold outside the table, one act completed). Name the pastor's contact-person role and confirm the insurance call happens before the first gathering.

Not yet. Legitimate. A church mid-crisis, mid-transition, or mid-conflict shouldn't add anything — even something light. Name what would need to be true, and put a date on when this room looks again. "Not yet" with a date is a decision; "not yet" without one is a pocket veto.

No. Also legitimate, and better said plainly. If this room can't bless an open chair, or needs measurable Sunday impact inside a year, this isn't the tool — and discovering that in a meeting costs nothing, while discovering it in month six costs two hosts their morale.

What not to decide tonight: anything past the pilot. No restructuring conversations, no budget lines, no announcements. Two tables, ninety days, and this room again. The best decisions about this are made by leadership teams looking at their own tables — not at our materials.

> *One page to bring with you: the First 90 Days card — it's what "yes" commits everyone to, on a single sheet.*

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