
The Edge

VISION 2020



The Edge Home Church Network



Introduction

The Edge family of “House Churches” or “Home Churches” (HCs) and intentional communities didn’t start with the concept of House Church at all. It began with a desire for more. More of what Jesus taught. More of what the disciples saw and heard and couldn’t stop talking about. More relationship and less corporation. More exploration and less risk management. More experience and less talk. More power and less excuses. In short, I guess we just wanted more of what Jesus promised and modeled for us.

Many people within the Edge come from either a disappointing, sometimes hurtful experience with conventional churches, or no prior church experience at all. Regardless, we desire to be the church Jesus had in mind when He first called the disciples.

Through the last 13 years, we have desired to be a movement of spiritual growth and expression, embracing a culture of discipleship and investing in people. From the beginning our top 3 values have been love God, love people, and give life, and then help others do the same, which is making disciples. This is what we have heard from Jesus from the first time He called us, and His voice still calls us.

Knowing His word and hearing His voice will always be “the way” of the Edge, because it was the way of Jesus. John 10:4 says, “When He has brought out all His own sheep, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice.” We believe Jesus is leading us out again. There are new fields and new ways that Jesus is calling us to, and He is going before us. We will follow Him because we know His voice.

The following pages contain some of the thoughts and instructions that we believe are from Him. Some of the content will be familiar, but some will be highlighted as “new initiatives”. Please join us in discerning the voice and will of Jesus as we look forward to 2020 and beyond. In some ways we are redefining ourselves, and in other ways we are simply refocusing on what the Lord has always intended us to be within His Kingdom.

“Following Jesus into people’s lives”

Affirming Our Identity

Our Mission: Following Jesus into people's lives.

We simply want to follow Jesus. Straight up. That's all. This single ambition guides us, sets our "boundaries", and brings us together. Following Jesus will always lead us to other people.

Our Essential Belief:

Although not exhaustive, the following statement reflects the essential faith and motivation for our existence:

To Live is Christ (Phil. 1:21). Jesus, the Son of God and member of the Triune God-head (Father, Son, and Spirit), revealed to us through God's Word written (the Bible, John 5:39) and spoken (God's voice, John 10:27), is the Alpha & Omega of life, and the centre of everything (Rev 1:8). He is our Way, our Truth, and our Life (John 14:6). He died on a cross and arose from the dead to free mankind from sin and evil. There is no other name by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12) and experience full life (John 10:10). Everything is from Him, through Him, and for Him (Rom 11:36). He gives us purpose. Therefore, we will imitate His life and obey his commands to love God, love people, and make disciples by freely offering the life He lives within us through His Spirit (Matt 28:18-20, Gal. 2:20).

Our Values:

Love God - We will love God by enjoying our relationship with Him in prayer, worship, and everyday life (John 15:9-11). We will listen to Him, know Him, and know His Word to us, written and spoken. The Holy Spirit will help us understand and believe what He has revealed (John 16:13). We will love God by believing and acting in obedience to whatever the Holy Spirit in us reveals (John 14:21). We will respond with confession and repentance when we have not listened, and disobeyed (Acts 3:19, 1 John 1:9).

Love People - Whether children, prophets or prostitutes, Jesus changed lives because He loved them (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus always noticed the people around Him and watched for people in need (Mark 10:46-51). He often loved people by engaging and serving them, whether or not they deserved it (Mark 10:45). This was His Gospel and everyone was invited to be a part of it (John 1:12-13). Every person has value, and we want to be a people who are free to explore and pursue the unique identity God has given each person.

Give Life - Jesus showed us how to engage the lives of people, and invite them into our lives, where they can hear and see Him (Luke 10:1-9). Through relationship and community, we affirm people's identity, validate their potential, and unite them in community (Mark 4:33-34), so they can go out and do the same (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 17:25-28), which is making disciples. We want to be generous people, giving life to the world around us – make our village a better place – taking care of poor and marginalized.

Empower Growth - We do not want to stay the same. We desire growth inside and out. We value development in people in whatever stage they are at in their walk with God. We assume responsibility for the gifts and empowerment we receive. In following Jesus example, we volunteer our talents, time, and resources to strengthen the network of HCs. Every person has a role and a part. The network (big picture) and HC (small picture) helps people identify their part and equips them to fulfill it – through this the whole body is knit together and strengthened (Eph 4).

Inspire Simplicity - This means being very focused on following Jesus. We need to regularly evaluate our likeness to Jesus and our alignment with what He said and did, as apposed to being persuaded by the religious status-quo. We want to create an environment where people are free to simply follow Jesus, without the addition of traditional church activities or expectations.

Build Trust - We believe in the “priesthood of believers”, meaning that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone about anything at any time We validate and celebrate different giftings and abilities, and depend on each other as a Body of Christ. When we send out leaders, we trust them. We extend trust by inviting people into our homes and doing life with them. This is the level of trust we value. (See our “Leader Covenant” document)

Our Culture:

We are a family. We love and support each other in our pursuit of Jesus. We choose to trust each other, but most of all, we trust the Spirit of Jesus in each other. Love and trust is the nature of our accountability, our approach to new ideas, and the way we develop and send out leaders. As a family, we want to give life and grow people.

We are a body. We receive our life from Jesus and His Spirit. We desire and expect to experience fullness and maturity as we remain in Him, and as each person does their part. God is stirring and moving His body into the places where people live every day. With the presence of Jesus in us, we will be present in people's lives, and impact the world around us. What does this usually look like? Loving God, loving people, and giving life.

We are a network. A "web" of house churches (or home churches) that support and resource one another. Loving God, loving people, and giving life is best done within the context of relationships and community, and the best environment for that to happen is the home. Much of the activity of the early followers of Jesus happened from "house to house" and within community. We believe this strategy was specifically taught by Jesus and modeled by His church.

We are a movement. The Lord is calling people back to small, simple, but powerful ways, and we are a part of the changing culture. We are advancing under the Lordship of Jesus. We resist buildings, programs, professional staff, and events as our identity, and choose to identify ourselves as people who are being lead out into the world by the voice of Jesus who goes on ahead of them. "following Jesus into people's lives".

NEW INITIATIVE: VISION REFOCUSING TIMES

We will coordinate times of refocus twice a year, in order to maintain simplicity and alignment with our calling. For example: online messaging in the Fall, and a session at the Edge retreat. We will keep coming back to the following questions:

- What did Jesus do that we aren't doing?
 - What are we doing that Jesus never did?
 - What did Jesus have in mind when He started the Edge? Are we close?
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Focusing Our Strengths

We are re-establishing ourselves as followers of Jesus that believe that the example of Christ's life as documented in the Bible is still our example of life for today. We believe that Jesus had time to live in community with others who were willing to follow God and that they did so from house to house. Our home church network desires to refocus our resources and to equip people to be like Jesus, intentionally in small community but making big impact. No matter their previous experience, beliefs, denomination, province, or country.

Our strength is helping people come together in a relational context where they simply know and follow Jesus. We believe the best environment for this to take place is in a person's home. While there may be a variety of places for relationships to begin, we believe this is where the deepest expression of community takes place. An invitation into our home is an invitation into our life. Therefore, the focus of our energy and support will be on developing healthy Home Churches.

A community may not start as a home church, and many do not. They often begin in the context of relationships and friendships. We encourage such beginnings. However, there is often a point in the natural life of the group when those a part of it want "more". Conversations about purpose and value arise, and there is a sense the group needs to take "another step" or "get deeper". This is the point where we can come alongside and help them move towards becoming a HC, with a new sense of mission, vision, belonging, and culture. (See "Why We Meet In Homes" at theedgehc.com)

We will focus our strengths on helping people and HCs take the next steps towards fullness and maturity (ie. Eph 4). Our ambition is to help people and groups identify where they are in their development, and what they need to move forward.

"The focus of our energy and support will be on developing healthy Home Churches."

NEW INITIATIVE: HOUSE CHURCH LIFELINE

The following is the path or process we will use to help people and groups move towards becoming a healthy HC.

NOTE: This is not intended to be a “report card” or discouraging in any way, but rather to be a path to growth, so leaders and HCs can assess what their next steps might be.

Craft your Idea

- What do you want to do, and why do you want to do it?
 - What did Jesus do that typical churches/small groups aren't doing?
 - What are typical churches/small groups doing that Jesus never did?
- Have you asked God what to do with this idea?
 - Develop prayer / advisory team
- Have you prepared your heart and mind?
 - Learning how to hear God's voice
 - Bible Courses (ie. Bible 101 through RMC)
- In what ways will you address the ACTS 2 activity of the early church?
 - Teaching
 - Fellowship
 - Worship (Communion)
 - Prayer
 - Evangelism
- Warnings
 - Don't have to figure everything out to start
 - Don't spend too much time thinking and talking without doing

Cultivate your Invitation

- Seek God in prayer before you invite people
 - Who will you do it with?
 - Be aware of APEST gifting and pursue it
- Build relationships
 - Be aware of people's “baggage” from life or church
- Plant seeds of purpose - answering the questions above
- Watch and adjust as you go
- Point to a deeper level of community - ask for a commitment

Begin your Journey

- Schedule a Greenhouse equipping experience with the Edge Lead Team
 - The purpose of the Edge Greenhouse is to grow your capacity to build life-giving community
- Cast vision to people of peace
 - values & mission
- Discern framework together
 - Location & Timing
- Make the launch memorable
 - Fun, Simple, & Meaningful

Grow your Community

- Early (Young) phase
 - affirm who we are and why we are doing this > on going
 - consistently connect
 - care for people in pain - from life or previous church experiences
- Adult (Mature) phase
 - growing full capacity of internal and external mission
 - developing the spiritual gifts in each member - APEST
 - living out Ephesians 4
- Pre-Multiply phase
 - discover through giftings different forms of leadership
 - specifically grow those giftings and hand off forms of leadership to others
 - challenge towards leadership - lead towards multiplication
 - develop new co-leaders, hosts and support roles
 - assist new leadership with processing beginning stages of House Church Lifeline
- Multiply phase
 - consistently guide HC towards mission
 - determine new host location
 - pray into neighbourhood - praying with authority
 - plan launch party and blessing
- Warnings
 - Reproduce your LIFE, not your structure or program

Resourcing Our Leaders

We want our resourcing to be from God – He builds His church. Without Him we can do nothing. Our desire is to always point people to Jesus for their inspiration and empowering. For each member we believe it is important that their faith is truly their own. This means that we want everyone to grow and develop their unique relationship with God himself. This also means that we want people to lose dependency on staff and programs and really spend the time drawing near to God themselves and with their community for their own answer. That being said, we can see biblical examples of apprenticeship like Timothy and Paul, and examples where a developed leader was sent in order to help for a given period of time, but then left once maturation had occurred.

When a leader is looking for resourcing, we want to ask them, “Have you prayed about it?” “What is Holy Spirit saying?” “What does His word say about it?” “What is your church saying about it?” What God says to us is important and we want to be obedient to that. Which is all aimed to help them develop the skills to hear God’s voice for themselves and their community and to remain dependent on God. Remember He builds His church, we are His followers.

This may sound like we don't plan on having time or resources for leaders, but that is not the case. We simply believe that it's God's plan first and then we ask, “How can we help from there?” Our desire is to be an armour bearer for each of our leaders and to help propel them forward to give life and to truly grow. We also will continue to develop tools that may help equip and enable people.
(see list below)

NEW INITIATIVE: LEADER MULTIPLICATION PLAN

Our intention is that our new HCs would primarily be started and lead by people equipped within an existing HC and then sent out by that HC with the support of the network. Multiplication of leaders and HCs will most often take place within the HC, supported by the network through resourcing (ie. Greenhouse workshop, APEST experience, etc). We will begin intentional messaging and resourcing in this regard, if appropriate considering where the HC is on the Lifeline.

Network & People Resources

Edge HC Leaders – we will coordinate peer support and encouragement between the HCs and their leadership

The Edge Charity Board – a small board that receives and distributes donations and provides financial and legal accountability

NEW INITIATIVE: EDGE NETWORK LEAD TEAM

We want to resist dependency on professional leaders and decentralize responsibility throughout the network. Therefore, the position of “Regional Leaders” will transition into The Edge Network “Lead Team”. The members of the Lead Team are voluntary “Elders” of the network. They will serve as the “inner part of the web” and direct support, consultation, resources, encouragement, and vision. New members of the Lead Team are invited and appointed by the present Lead Team members and affirmed by the greater body.

Tools & Funding Resources

Online Courses – In-depth, topically specific courses designed to build skillsets

Workshops - Knowledge and practical equipping nights or weekends together

Worksheets – Designed to guide leaders through a process, or provide suggestions

Teaching Videos – Offered by various people or various topics, posted on our website

Blogs / Vlogs – Periodic, short writings or videos that address specific topics

CONTINUED INITIATIVE: EDGE GREENHOUSE EXPERIENCES

A group experience where we journey together in our understanding of who God create us to be. We are each members of the body and are needed for the church to grow properly. We will adapt our Greenhouse Experience as a way to inspire and empower the start of new HCs, as well as for the growth of existing HCs.

CONTINUED INITIATIVE: HC “APEST” ASSESSMENTS

HCs should be a place (incubator) for the growth of every person in their capacity and calling and gifting. Eph 4: God gave roles to everyone to build His church. We will encourage each HC to assess and validate their potential through the “APEST Assessment” and provide coaching afterwards to implement outcomes. We will approach this initiative with encouragement, as a way to affirm the people and the Leadership gifting already present.

NEW INITIATIVE: EDGE FUNDING PLAN

Imagine a church where they spent no money on buildings or staff...what could a church like that do? How much would that impact their community? In 2020 we are going to find out! We will have no staff as of Dec 31 2019 and will start to give all (minus legal fees, accounting etc) of its donations towards building God’s kingdom. We will catalyze initiatives in local communities to help home churches reach out to neighbours, to help people heal, grow in their faith, and to help provide opportunities for more missions. (Join us in Cuba sometime and experience a different kind of house church network)

Conclusion

We are very excited about the days ahead. We see a door in our culture that is opening more and more each day – one that invites people to consider different ways of being the church. An invitation to be more authentic and have more impact through a grassroots movement rather than a traditional institution that many feel is irrelevant. We are grieved that much of our society considers the Body of Christ, the church, irrelevant. We want to change that perception.

It will take a brave and courageous and devoted group of people to change the church in our culture. It will mean paying attention to the ways of Jesus and listening to His voice more than ever before. He will lead us out, and He will go on ahead of us, and then we will follow Him, because we know His voice. We will follow Him into people’s lives where He gives life abundantly and eternally.

May The Edge be a network of those kind of people.