

How to Start a TGC Regional Chapter

The initial step to forming a new Gospel Coalition Regional Chapter involves the interested leader or leaders contacting the TGC Director of Regional Chapters (Bill Kynes). He would send the leader(s) the TGC Regional Chapter overview document that sets out the basic vision for Regional Chapters. Connection with the Director begins a conversation and a process. That process includes the following:

I. Form a Group

- First develop a core group of people who share a vision for a TGC regional chapter that could serve their area and who affirm the TGC Foundation Documents. Contacting pastors of TGC affiliated churches in the area is one helpful way to connect with others who might be interested.
- Begin meeting informally with the group to develop relationships and a common vision. A group of eight to ten would be sufficient to begin.
- Craft a clear vision for what this group wants to accomplish and how it will function. (For example, “We will aim to be a gathering place for like-minded pastors to fellowship, pray, and think through how to see gospel growth in your area.”)
- Develop a basic leadership structure (a steering committee, with a chair and a public point of contact).
- Define your geographic parameters (a county, a metro area, or other?). This geographic area will determine the name for the chapter.
- Determine a plan for frequency and structure of meetings. Consider the goals for the group. What do you want to accomplish?

II. Begin Formal Connection with TGC

- Meet with the Director of Regional Chapters to discuss your group, its structure, its vision,

its plans, and its commitment to Foundation Documents of TGC.

- Meet with the President of TGC for further discussion.
- The President must recommend a group, and the group must be approved by the TGC Board for official recognition as a TGC Regional Chapter.

III. Going Public as a Chapter

- The new chapter may want to host some public event to help launch its ministry and gain attention in the community.
- TGC will create an internal page for the chapter as a part of the TGC website, with the chapter composing its own language setting forth its vision and activities.
- TGC will also help create social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) for the chapter to publicize itself and its activities.

IV. On-Going Support and Connection

- The Director of Regional Chapters will seek to maintain a connection with chapter leaders for encouragement and support.
- Chapter leaders from will meet together (by Zoom or, when possible, in person) to hear from TGC leaders and to share best practices and current challenges.
- The chapter leaders will be informed about new programs and other ministries of TGC and ways TGC can provide resources (including possible speakers) that will further their ministry.
- The Director will make periodic reviews of each chapter to see if they are maintaining their viability as a TGC-affiliated entity.

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT

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Regional Chapters

“The Gospel Coalition seeks to generate a unified effort among all peoples—an effort that is zealous to honor Christ and multiply his disciples, joining in a true coalition for Jesus. Such a biblically grounded and united mission is the only enduring future for the church. This reality compels us to stand with others who are stirred by the conviction that the mercy of God in Jesus Christ is our only hope of eternal salvation. We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy—gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.”

—from the Preamble to the TGC Foundation Documents

At the national level, The Gospel Coalition Council brings together pastors and other leaders with their own networks to build relationships of spiritual unity, trust, and collaboration in a coalition centered on the biblical gospel. Their goal is to renew the church with the historic gospel at the center of its teaching and preaching, seeing churches and pastors “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

The TGC Regional Chapters seek to reproduce this same unity and purpose at a smaller, local level. A chapter of The Gospel Coalition is a local group of pastors who gather regularly for prayer, fellowship, mutual encouragement, study, and mission

Under the umbrella of The Gospel Coalition and its Confessional Statement and Theological Vision for Ministry (the TGC Foundation Documents), TGC Regional Chapters serve as a “rallying point” for like-minded churches and an “outpost” for unaffiliated churches in their area. They provide a place for diverse yet gospel-centered pastors across ethnic, generational, and denominational lines to connect, find resources, and encourage one another. TGC has been used by many to help find fellowship with other Christians in their area who want to make the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their church, ministry, and personal witness. Through intentional equipping, prayerful collaboration, and regular meeting, the chapters hope to see the gospel strengthen their churches, reach the lost, and shine brightly in their communities—all to the glory of Christ.

What Do Regional Chapters Do?

Since TGC Chapters are local, they seek to adapt to the specific needs of those in

their area. This means that chapters vary in their activities. Some have hosted large regional conferences; others have simply hosted periodic pastor lunches. Some have a structured program of presentations; other discuss whatever is on the hearts of those who attend. Some form book reading groups; others host preaching seminars. There is no one plan that fits all chapters. The chapters are locally led and seek to minister in ways that fit their local context.

Chapters have the freedom to determine the meeting schedule that best works for their group. This ought to be something that is realistic and sustainable and not overbearing. Most of us are already extremely busy, and these meetings need to be a source of renewal rather than a burden.

For example, some chapters meet bimonthly, some monthly, some quarterly, some annually, and others at non-regular intervals. Some groups meet during a lunch hour at a church, others at a coffee shop, and others only for regional conferences. Again, the purpose of the meetings is to serve the people in attendance.

Here are some of the goals that various regional leaders have set for their chapter:

- to cultivate warm fellowship and encouragement among area churches, pastors, and lay people.
- to sharpen their ability to preach and teach the gospel with precision and biblical accuracy.
- to aid in the planting of other gospel-centered churches in an area.
- to work to identify the idols, challenges, and needs of a city, and to collaborate on creative ways to reach a city with the gospel.
- to give and receive advice in dealing with difficult pastoral issues.

- to pray for one another, their ministries, and their cities.
- to identify challenges and solutions unique to gospel-centered ministry in their particular area.
- to seek ways to collaborate in ministry efforts, promoting the events within their TGC church network.

In all of this, building relationships of trust, support, and encouragement among pastoral leaders committed to the gospel is at the core of the mission of local chapters.

How Do Regional Chapters Get Started?

Successful regional chapters have cropped up wherever we find enthusiastic leaders who embody TGC’s values and recognize the benefit and witness of unity in the gospel across denominational lines.

A chapter begins when relationships among pastors begin to develop, and they sense a need to make those relationships more intentional and structured. They believe that The Gospel Coalition and its Foundation Documents would provide a helpful banner under which they could attract and unify a like-minded but diverse group of pastors.¹

A leader in their budding group would contact the TGC Director of Regional Chapters about their interest in a formal relationship with TGC. From there, further exploration takes place to determine if a formal connection with TGC is a good fit with the leaders fully affirming the TGC Foundation Documents. This will involve discussions with the Director and TGC President. If things move forward, the application will be taken to the TGC Board of Directors for approval. If official recognition is granted, the chapter will have its own webpage

on the TGC website, and a formal relationship with TGC is established.

Most groups begin with a core steering committee that has a vision for the group. There is typically one or two people or churches that effectively work to lead the group—handling organization, communication, and logistics.

The On-Going TGC Relationship with Regional Chapters

We at TGC desire to build an on-going relationship with Regional Chapter leaders and to provide resources that would help the chapters to prosper. We plan to have periodic gatherings (by Zoom and, when possible, in person) of Chapter leaders with the Director of Regional Chapter and others within TGC to share ideas, raise questions, and seek advice from others. We also want to keep the Chapter leaders informed of what is happening at the national level, in terms of new programs and publications and other resources.

At the same time, TGC leaders want to hear from local chapters. What are some of the issues that pastors are facing that need to be addressed? What resources could TGC provide that would help their local pastors—including pastors and others who might be willing to join their local meetings by Zoom or to speak at seminars or conferences to share their experience and expertise?

Hosting a conference can be a strategic event that creates awareness, builds momentum, and encourages those in your surrounding community. At the same time, gathering a large group of people requires a significant investment of time and money, extensive planning, and thoroughly following through

on a range of details. If chapter wishes to host a conference, TGC can provide help. Please contact us.

Continuing the Vision of The Gospel Coalition

TGC began with informal conversations between D. A. Carson and Tim Keller in 2004. Recalling how the late 1950s and early ’60s witnessed the way Harold Ockenga, Carl F. H. Henry, and some evangelical institutions carved out a stable middle ground for robust confessional evangelicalism—a middle ground that avoided obscurantism on the right and liberalism on the left—they started wondering what it would take to re-establish that central ground in the twenty-first century.

Carson and Keller then gathered a group of pastors for a colloquium in 2005. They determined that the deepest need was to stamp a new generation of Christian pastors and leaders with a robust understanding of the gospel, along with an understanding of our times, that leads to penetrating faithfulness, not a diluted message. They wish to be a coalition that brings together pastors and churches across denominational, ethnic, and generational lines, joined by a passionate commitment to the gospel and its transforming power, as they seek to evangelize, plant and strengthen churches, and do good to the culture where God has placed them. That became the TGC vision, and that vision continues today, and it is a vision that needs local expression through Regional Chapters.

We close with a testimony by Ronnie Martin, lead pastor of Substance Church (EFCA) in Ashland, Ohio, posted on the TGC website² under the title, “Pastors, Seek Out Trustworthy Ministry Friends”:

When we first moved from the large, crowded, suburban culture of Southern California to the small, quiet town of Ashland, Ohio, it was like relocating to an alien world. . . . I was a stranger in a strange town.

Early on, I received an invitation to attend a meeting of pastors who were part of a regional chapter of The Gospel Coalition. These men gathered once a month in Columbus, Ohio. I leaped at the opportunity, but it wasn’t exactly easy to participate. Columbus was over an hour away, and by the time I drove there and back, it was an all-day commitment. Yet I went, and everything changed for me.

At this gathering, I met pastors who took an interest in my life, encouraged my heart, prayed for my situation, and offered to partner with me in any way they could. These new friends gave me the encouragement I needed to continue pastoring in the small town where I was questioning my call. I owe much of the ministry I’m doing today to the influence of these men, many of whom are still some of my closest friends.

May the Lord use the relationships formed in TGC Regional Chapters and the encouragement and strengthening in the gospel that is found in them, to further his great mission in the world.

¹All chapter leaders must subscribe to the TGC Foundation Documents. All participants should understand that the group meets under the authority of these documents.

²Posted Aug. 4, 2023. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/seek-ministry-friends/>