"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, church leaders, and their networks to build relationships of spiritual unity, trust, and collaboration in a coalition centered on the biblical gospel. Our 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 regional 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’s Confessional Statement and Theological Vision for Ministry, TGC regional chapters serve as a rallying point for like-minded churches and an outpost for unaffiliated churches in their region. They provide a place for gospel-centered pastors to connect across ethnic, generational, and denominational lines, to find resources, and to encourage one another. TGC’s regional chapters have helped many to find fellowship with other church leaders 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 meetings, 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 adapt to the specific needs of those in their area. This means chapters vary in their activities. Some have hosted large regional conferences; others simply hosted regular pastor lunches. Some have a structured presentations; others discuss whatever is on the hearts of those who attend. Some form reading groups; others host preaching seminars. There is no one plan that fits all chapters, because they are locally led and seek to minister in ways that fit each local context.

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

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 church leaders in attendance.

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

- to cultivate warm fellowship and encouragement among area churches, pastors, and lay people.
- to sharpen participants’ ability to preach and teach the gospel with precision and biblical accuracy.
- to aid in planting gospel-centered churches in the region.
- 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 members, their ministries, and their cities.
• to identify challenges unique to gospel-centered ministry in the region.
• to collaborate in ministry efforts, promoting the events within the 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 Are Regional Chapters Started?**

Successful regional chapters crop 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 develop, and they sense a need to make those relationships more intentional and structured. Potential chapter leaders believe that The Gospel Coalition and its Foundation Documents provide a helpful banner under which a diverse group of pastors can work in unity.¹

So, a leader in the budding group contacts the TGC director of regional chapters about the group’s 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. This will involve discussions with the director and TGC president. If things move forward, an application is 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. Typically, pastors from one or two churches work to lead the group—handling organization, communication, and logistics.

**TGC’s Ongoing Relationship with Its Regional Chapters**

TGC maintains an on-going relationship with regional chapter leaders and provides resources to help the chapters to prosper. The director of regional chapters hosts periodic gatherings with chapter leaders (by Zoom and, when possible, in person) where participants can share ideas, raise questions, and seek advice from others. We also want to keep the Chapter leaders informed of what is happening with TGC at the national level, in terms of new programs, publications, and other resources.

National TGC leaders also want to hear from local chapters. What are the issues pastors are facing that need to be addressed? What resources could TGC provide to help local pastors?

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 follow 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 1960s, Harold Ockenga, Carl F. H. Henry, and several 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 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 both the gospel and our times, one that would lead to penetrating faithfulness, not a diluted message. They birthed 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. It is a vision that needs local expression through regional chapters.

Ronnie Martin, lead pastor of Substance Church (EFCA) in Ashland, Ohio, recently shared this testimony about TGC regional chapters on the TGC website:

> 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. ²

May the Lord use the relationships formed in TGC regional chapters to encourage and strengthen in the gospel, and through them further his great mission in the world.

How to Start a TGC Regional Chapter

Interested leaders should contact the TGC Director of Regional Chapters, Bill Kynes. He will send the leader(s) a TGC regional chapter overview document that sets out the basic vision for Regional Chapters. Connection with the Director begins a conversation and process that includes the following:

I. Forming a Group

- First develop a core group of people who share your vision for a TGC chapter that could serve your region. This group must 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 is 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 our 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, etc.). This geographic area will determine the name for the chapter.

- Determine a plan for frequency and structure of meetings that align with the goals for your group.

II. Beginning a Formal Connection with TGC

- Meet with the director of regional chapters to discuss your group, its structure, vision, plans, and commitment to TGC’s foundation documents.

- Meet with TGC’s president. 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 on the TGC website.

- TGC will also help to create social media accounts where the chapter can 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 periodically review each chapter to see it is maintaining its viability as a TGC-affiliated entity.
TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT

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