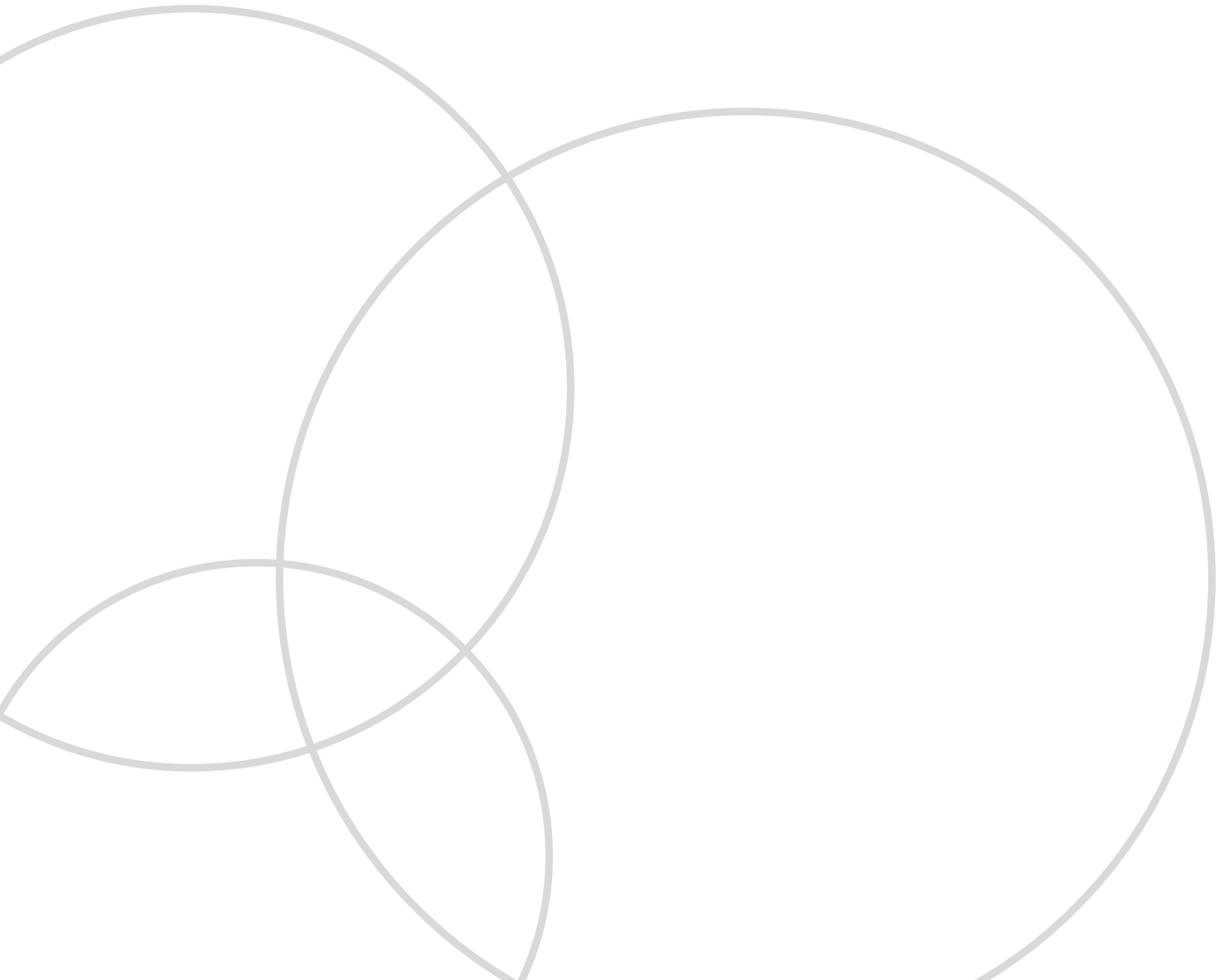


CHURCH COMMUNITY BUILDER

Churches Improve Small Groups Ministry With Church Community Builder

A Case Study by Ben Stroup



Summary

Three churches reported increased use by volunteer leaders, improved communications, and more informed ministry decision-making as a result of using *Church Community Builder* to support and grow their small groups ministries.

Participating Churches

Rivertown Community Church (Blountstown, FL) www.rivertown.cc

Manassas Assembly of God (Bristow, VA) www.magchurch.org

River of Praise Church (Tomball, TX) www.riverofpraisechurch.org

As a church grows bigger, it must also grow smaller. This is a common rule of thumb shared among church leaders. People actively involved in small groups ministry are more likely to be financially generous, willing to volunteer, and consistent in participation than those who aren't actively participating in a small group.

The value of small groups is uncontested in most ministry circles. In fact, some leaders suggest the health of a church hinges upon the health of its small groups ministry. Whatever role small groups play, it is certainly one which affects many other dimensions of local church ministry.

Recently, Church Community Builder spoke with three churches about their small groups ministries. The goal was to determine what impact church management software had on managing small groups within their respective churches. The dialogue revealed a direct relationship between the use of the Church Community Builder software and a healthy, growing small groups ministry.

Increased Use By Volunteer Leaders

"We are building our church for growth, not for control," says Kevin Yoder, campus pastor at Rivertown Community Church in Blountstown, Florida. Yoder believes the key to growth is found in empowering volunteer leaders. Church Community Builder provides a common tool that can be shared among staff and volunteer leaders.

"Church leadership is responsible for good leaders who are trained, empowered, and released," Yoder says. He affirms that Church Community Builder helps his volunteer leaders know what, when, and how to do

what they need to do in order to lead their small groups without depending on the staff to respond to emails, phone calls, or in-person requests. Yoder believes this efficiency translates into a better ministry experience for everyone involved.

Gary West, operations pastor at Manassas Assembly of God in Bristow, Virginia, agrees. In addition to being on staff, he a small groups leader himself. “The training needs for the small groups leader is minimal,” says West, “which means they are up and running on Church Community Builder quickly.”

“Our leaders engage with their small groups and church staff exclusively through Church Community Builder,” asserts Victor Pena, administrative pastor at River of Praise Church in Tomball, Texas. He says committing to only a small number of paid staff means that volunteers are even more important to getting ministry done. “Church Community Builder has become part of our DNA, especially among those who lead our small groups ministry.”

Improved Communications

“Because Church Community Builder is web-based, it means our leaders can communicate with their groups with only an internet connection,” says Yoder. Most of Rivertown’s small groups meet off campus, so Yoder anticipated the move to a more decentralized small groups model early on. With Church Community Builder, Yoder believes he has the right infrastructure to continue to support growth in off-campus small groups.

According to West, “[t]he most commonly used feature within Church Community Builder is the events function.” He sees this function as an easy way to make sure small group members are up to date on regular meeting times and special events. “It’s much more efficient than printing out reminders and handing them out during the next group meeting time.”

Over at River of Praise Church, Pena says that “[e]very small group [they] have is in Church Community Builder.” He reports that most of his leaders are in and out of My River Connection (the church-branded name they use for Church Community Builder) every day. “We are so pleased with the improved communications that we are fully integrating Church Community Builder into the design of our new website,” says Pena.

More Informed Ministry Decision-Making

“Since using Church Community Builder, we’ve been able to grow our small groups participation from 75 percent to 90 percent of normal weekend attendance,” says Yoder. He is pleased that almost all the small

groups leaders — young and old — use Church Community Builder on a regular basis to communicate and interact. Doing this within Church Community Builder allows the staff to monitor interactions and measure activity levels. “Better decisions come from better information,” Yoder affirms.

West knows that one advantage Manassas has because of Church Community Builder is “a total picture” of what is taking place within their small groups ministry. While still new to managing this area, West knows the information collected within Church Community Builder is vital for making good ministry decisions. According to him, “We have to have a tool like this.”

One important decision made recently at Manassas has been to expand the church by adding an additional campus. Thus, Manassas will soon be a multi-site church. Church Community Builder will provide West with the ability to “manage the small groups specifically tied to the new campus.”

“Church Community Builder has allowed us to see things about our small groups ministry that we had never seen before,” says Pena. He is excited to report that since using Church Community Builder, River of Praise has seen an 18 percent increase in small groups participation. “Understanding what’s working and what isn’t is a matter of looking in the mirror,” Pena says. “Data is the key that ensures we know what we need to know about ourselves.”

Conclusion

Each church leader interviewed acknowledged a period of transition that took place after implementing Church Community Builder. The length of the transition period seemed to be driven by two things: how established and documented church systems and processes surrounding small groups ministry were, and ongoing training for new and existing small groups leaders. Those two functions existed within all three churches profiled.

A shared optimism exists among all three leaders that Church Community Builder presently contains the ability to grow with their church as its small groups ministry expands — even if that expansion means moving more groups off campus. If there are leaders concerned their small groups ministry might one day outgrow Church Community Builder, that doesn’t appear to be a worry among this group of churches. Each church has been able to grow small groups participation while using Church Community Builder to manage its small groups ministry.

With the stated mission of Church Community Builder, “guiding church leaders to a better how,” the small groups management functionality is certainly fulfilling its goal as far as these three churches are concerned. It

is worth noting that small groups is just one dimension of the complete church software solution. Church Community Builder supports small groups ministry as a viable and effective means of building lasting community among members and regular attenders.

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