



HANGOUTS

CONNECTING
WITH OTHERS

WORD OF GRACE – HANGOUTS GUIDE

1. WHAT ARE HANGOUTS? (Definition)

Hangouts are **member-initiated gatherings** designed to help people build meaningful relationships through shared interests and simple connection. They create *open doors for belonging* so relational discipleship can follow.

We recognize two types:

• One-Time Hangouts

A single gathering (e.g., a hike, a cookout, a board-game night, a women's craft night, a men's golf outing).

• Ongoing Hangouts

A recurring gathering built around a shared interest or rhythm (e.g., weekly pickup basketball, monthly crocheting night, regular video game night, weekly pickleball, recurring volleyball).

Hangouts are:

- **Simple** — easy to join, easy to invite a friend to.
- **Relational** — designed to connect people, not teach content.
- **Open** — anyone can participate. (*with contextual exceptions i/e. "Women's fitness"*)
- **Member-led** — ideas come from the church family.
- **On-ramps** — they help people take a step toward deeper community and next steps.

2. WHAT HANGOUTS ARE NOT

To protect clarity:

- **Hangouts are not Bible Studies.**
- **Hangouts are not Community Groups.**
- **Hangouts are not church-run ministries** (though staff may support them).
- **Hangouts are not teaching environments.**
- **Hangouts are not counseling or accountability groups.**

- **Hangouts are not private groups** — anything listed on the website must be open to the church body.

If a Hangout drifts into regular teaching, counseling, or heavy discipleship, the leader will be asked to either

(a) realign the Hangout **OR**

(b) move toward becoming a **Community Group** after talking with the staff.

3. PURPOSE & WINS

The Purpose of Hangouts

To create natural spaces where friendships form, trust grows, and meaningful relationships develop — giving discipleship and spiritual growth a rich soil to take root.

The Win

A Hangout is winning when:

- New friendships form.
 - People who were previously disconnected begin to feel like they belong.
 - Invitations are happening — people are bringing friends, coworkers, neighbors.
 - The Hangout remains simple, relational, and Christ-honoring.
 - The leader communicates clearly and consistently.
 - The Hangout is life-giving, not burdensome, to everyone involved.
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4. WHAT MAKES A HANGOUT APPROVED & LISTABLE ON THE WEBSITE?

(AKA: “The Standards”)

A Hangout must meet all of the following:

A. Clear Purpose & Description

- The leader can articulate the activity, the vibe, and the intended rhythm.

B. Open Invitation

- Anyone from Word of Grace (and their guests) can join.
 - With appropriate exceptions where specific contexts are appropriate (e/i. Father/Son Hangout, Moms & Kids Play-Date at the park, Senior Citizens Hangout..etc)

C. Christ-Honoring & Appropriate

- The activity must not be contrary to our church's mission, values, and witness.
- No alcohol-centered events will be listed publicly (e.g., bar-hopping).
- No environments that create moral, legal, or safety risks.

D. A Defined Host / Leader

- Must be a committed member/regular attender walking in integrity.
- Must be willing to communicate clearly and manage logistics.
- Must demonstrate a heart that reflects the character of Christ.

E. Sustainable Rhythm

- One-Time Hangouts simply need a date/time/location.
- Ongoing Hangouts must have a reasonable schedule (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, seasonal).

F. Alignment with the Vision

- The Hangout should help people connect relationally and foster belonging.

G. Administrative Requirements Completed

- Hangout Request Form submitted.
- Leader agreement affirmed.
- Event details approved.

Once approved, the Hangout gets posted on the website & calendar.

5. HOW TO START A HANGOUT (The Process)

Step 1 — Dream It

A member senses a desire to gather people around something they enjoy:

- Activity
- Interest
- Hobby
- Shared life stage
- Skill
- Just wanting to build friendships

Step 2 — Submit the Hangout Request Form

The form includes:

- Hangout name
- Brief description
- One-Time or Ongoing?
- Rhythm (if ongoing)
- Location(s)
- Leader contact info
- Any costs involved
- Childcare information (if applicable)

Step 3 — Review by Staff

A designated staff member (or appropriate ministry leader) will evaluate:

- Purpose clarity
- Alignment with mission/values
- Safety considerations
- Leader readiness
- Scheduling conflicts

Step 4 — Approval & Confirmation

If approved:

- Leader receives confirmation and expectations.
- Staff posts the Hangout on the website.
- Graphics, registration, or signups (if needed) are created.
- Leader receives a shareable link for inviting others.

If not approved:

- Leader will receive a gracious explanation and any recommendations for adjustment.

Step 5 — Launch

Leader promotes, invites, gathers, and connects people.

Staff champions Hangouts publicly.

6. LEADER EXPECTATIONS (Simple, Not Heavy)

Leaders are not teachers.

They are *hosts* — connectors, inviters, facilitators of belonging.

Leaders are expected to:

- Show up consistently and on time.
- Communicate clearly with participants.
- Maintain a Christlike tone and environment.
- Keep the Hangout relational & inclusive.
- Inform staff if plans change, the schedule shifts, or the Hangout ends.
- Protect unity — no divisive topics, no teaching contrary to church doctrine.
- Keep things safe (appropriate supervision, legal boundaries, healthy environments).

Leaders are *not* expected to:

- Provide counseling.
 - Teach the Bible (unless the Hangout becomes a Community Group through process).
 - Handle conflict alone — staff is here to help.
 - Pay out of pocket for others (unless they choose to personally).
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7. SAFETY, LIABILITY, & WISDOM GUARDRAILS

To honor God and care for people:

For All Hangouts:

- Activities must be safe and appropriate.
- Any cost must be transparent.
- Leaders must avoid situations that could create moral or legal compromise.
- If minors are participating, at least **two screened adults** must be present.
- No romantic match-making events.
- No off-the-radar, overnight, or travel Hangouts without explicit staff approval.

For Physical or Competitive Activities:

- Participants assume personal responsibility for their own safety.
- Leaders should communicate any risks ahead of time.
- No extreme or dangerous activities without extra approval (e.g., skydiving).

For Hangouts in Homes:

- Homes must be clean, welcoming, and reasonably safe.
 - Pets must be disclosed (allergies, safety, etc.).
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8. THE STAFF ROLE (Light Touch, High Support)

Staff does **not** run Hangouts — members do.

Staff simply:

- Reviews and approves requests.
- Provides clarity and guidance.
- Posts Hangouts to the website.
- Assists with graphics/logos/descriptions as needed.
- Ensures alignment with the church mission.
- Helps troubleshoot any issues.

Staff involvement should **never** overshadow the member-led nature of Hangouts.

9. HOW HANGOUTS SUPPORT DISCIPLESHIP AT WORD OF GRACE

Hangouts are a “**Connect Pathway**” tool.

They help:

- new people feel at home,
- introverts and extroverts find entry points,
- friendships form that become bridges to Community Groups,
- relational trust develop before spiritual vulnerability.

They strengthen the culture we’re building:

Gather → **Connect** → **Grow** → **Multiply** → **Reach**

Hangouts primarily live in the **Connect** space, but often overflow into the others.

10. HOW A HANGOUT ENDS

A Hangout may naturally come to completion when:

- The season ends,
- The leader can no longer host,
- Participation drops,
- Or it runs its purposeful course.

Leaders simply notify staff so the website can be updated.

There is no drama.

No failure.

Seasons change — and that’s okay.

11. SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Short description for website:

Hangouts are member-led gatherings built around shared interests, hobbies, or activities. They're simple, relational spaces that help people form friendships and take meaningful steps toward community. Some happen once. Some happen regularly. Everyone is welcome — bring a friend!