

Growth, Miracles and Salvations Flourish in House Church Network

Roots Assembly of God, located in Metro Detroit, Michigan, may only meet corporately twice a month, but the reach of their community impact and the depths of their discipleship speak volumes about what God is doing through this unique church.

Roots AG, led by founding pastor Art Thomas, 39, considers themselves a network rather than a congregation, a model that their website states is unlike a “typical church.” That’s because this body of believers, which averages around 300 individuals, is actually made up of 10 house churches and plans to grow that number to 13 in the coming months.

According to Thomas, church starts in the home.

In 2005, while serving as a worship and youth leader in a small, rural church plant, Thomas began to feel led that he should start a house church in his home, which was located an hour away from the church building, while also continuing in his traditional ministry roles.

It was not long before both churches were growing. However, Thomas states that what he saw God doing in his house was like nothing he had ever before seen.

“It was like living immersed in the book of Acts,” he remarks in his book, *Gospel Houses*.

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Three years later, Thomas and his wife moved, and Thomas found himself serving once again in formal ministry capacities at a mid-sized AG church.

But in 2011, Thomas realized he was being called, for a second time, to plant a house church. Within four years, a second house church launched. Growth continued, and in 2018, a third house church was born.

Observing a need to collectively unify this network that was being built by the Lord, Roots AG was officially established on Aug. 25, 2019.

Today, Thomas acts as founding pastor but leads a team of men and women who oversee the network. Several qualified and trained men, women and couples pastor their own house churches under this team's mentorship.

Alex Perry, 26, who was discipled in Thomas' original house church, now pastors a house church alongside his wife, Gracie.

"While I was part of Art's church, I noticed how my personal discipleship was accelerating much faster than it had in a traditional church," Perry recalls. "When Art asked me to start a house church, I was nervous, but my heart was already in it."

Gracie admits her initial doubt about the model's effectiveness but states that she "noticed the ability given to everyone to minister to each other and started to see a lot of spiritual growth in herself and others."

Jon Carlisle, 40, and his wife, Heather, had served in conventional church settings for much of their lives before coming to Roots AG last year. Carlisle notes, "This is the easiest form of ministry I've done, and we're seeing so much fruit and lives changed."

Another house church is led by intergenerational team Luke Maxon, 24, and co-pastor Ellen Pye, 77.

Maxon states, "This is the healthiest body of believers I've ever been part of. Every person is being equipped to minister

every single week. If you want to grow, the sky is the limit—from discipleship to how to reach people for Christ.”

Week after week, testimonies pour in, attesting to the move of the Spirit that is happening as a result of these “family style” meetings in and around the Metro Detroit area.

“When we do board meetings, we always start with a half hour of testimonies about what God is doing throughout the network, and we usually have to cut it short,” Thomas says. “People are being saved and set free, healings are being reported, marriages are being restored and more as people throughout our church share the gospel and love people in their everyday lives.”

The intimate discipleship is also equipping this body of believers for everyday ministry.

Perry recalls a gentleman who reluctantly attended their house church after experiencing tremendous spiritual hurt at a former church. Within the walls of Perry’s home, the Lord brought total healing to this man’s life and filled him with the Holy Spirit.

“We’ve known him to go to downtown Detroit just to eat soup with some of the homeless population and to listen to their stories and share Jesus with them,” he states. Today he pastors a house church of his own in the Roots network.

Another testimony is shared by JonMark Baker, Evangelism and Discipleship director for Roots AG.

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As he was driving home from a house church meeting, he noticed a man staggering along the sidewalk. As he passed the man, he felt the Holy Spirit telling him to give the man a ride home.

“When he got in the car, we started talking. As soon as he found out I was a pastor, he asked me what God thought about suicide,” recalls Baker. “Come to find out, the man had just received another DUI, lost his license, his job and was about to lose his home.”

Immediately, Baker began to share the gospel with him and connected him with a friend who offered him employment beginning the next day.

Within a week, the man was plugged in to a Roots house church and baptized in the homeowner’s bathtub.

In fact, states Baker, another man, who had been plagued by demonic spirits and addicted to drugs, came that night for the first time and got saved after watching the baptism and hearing the man’s testimony. He had come at his girlfriend’s recommendation after she was physically healed on the street and heard the gospel, though she hadn’t yet attended.

Soon after, she was saved, too, and both were baptized at their house church. Over the past year, their church family has walked them through the process of finding work, getting married, and establishing stability in their lives.

“The best parts of Christianity were never meant to be limited to big church buildings,” Thomas states. “And my favorite part,” he says, “is that it’s not just a person on a stage, everyone is doing ministry.”

The network does come together twice a month, every first and third Sunday evening, for a corporate time of worship and for a larger fellowship event. House church pastors gather on second Sundays.

As for the rapid growth, many of the house church pastors attest to the deep discipleship that naturally takes place in the small group setting.

Perry states that house church pastors teach people in the group how to feed and minister to each other.

“It creates a group of people who are ‘getting it’ and can share the gospel effectively. If people are being disciples and making disciples, the house churches start themselves,” he says.

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