



Small Groups

Planning Center Leader Guide

EAST COAST GROUPS

Planning Center Leader Guide

Welcome

Welcome to East Coast Groups!

Planning Center is one of the primary tools we use to help leaders connect with people, communicate effectively, and care for every member of their group.

This guide will walk you through the most important functions you'll use as a Small Group Leader. While Planning Center is a great organizational tool, remember that ministry is always about people. Use this system to help you stay connected, follow up consistently, and ensure no one falls through the cracks.

Quick Start Checklist

Before Your First Meeting:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Log into Planning Center | ✓ Send a welcome message to group members |
| ✓ Verify your group information | |
| ✓ Review pending member requests | ✓ Take attendance |
| ✓ Create or verify upcoming meeting events | ✓ Follow up with anyone who missed |

Table of Contents

Click any section title in the PDF Table of Contents to jump directly to that section.

Getting Started

- [Section 1: Logging Into Planning Center](#)

Managing Your Group

- [Section 2: Viewing Your Group](#)
- [Section 3: Managing Members](#)
- [Section 4: Communicating with Your Group](#)

Events & Resources

- [Section 5: Events & RSVPs](#)

- [Section 6: Resources](#)

Administration

- [Section 7: Settings](#)
- [Section 8: Attendance](#)

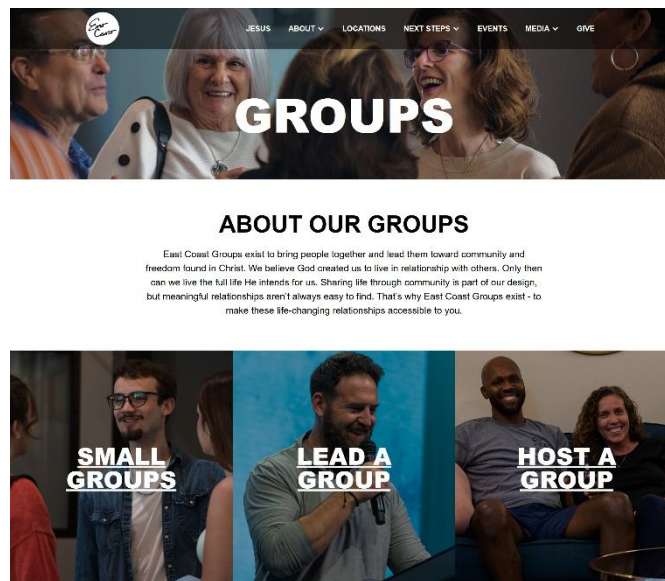
Leader Best Practices

- [Section 9: The Two Most Important Things](#)
- [Need Help?](#)

Section 1: Logging Into Planning Center

Accessing Your Group

1. Go to East Coast Groups: <https://myeastcoast.church/groups>
2. Click Small Groups.
3. Log in using your Planning Center account.



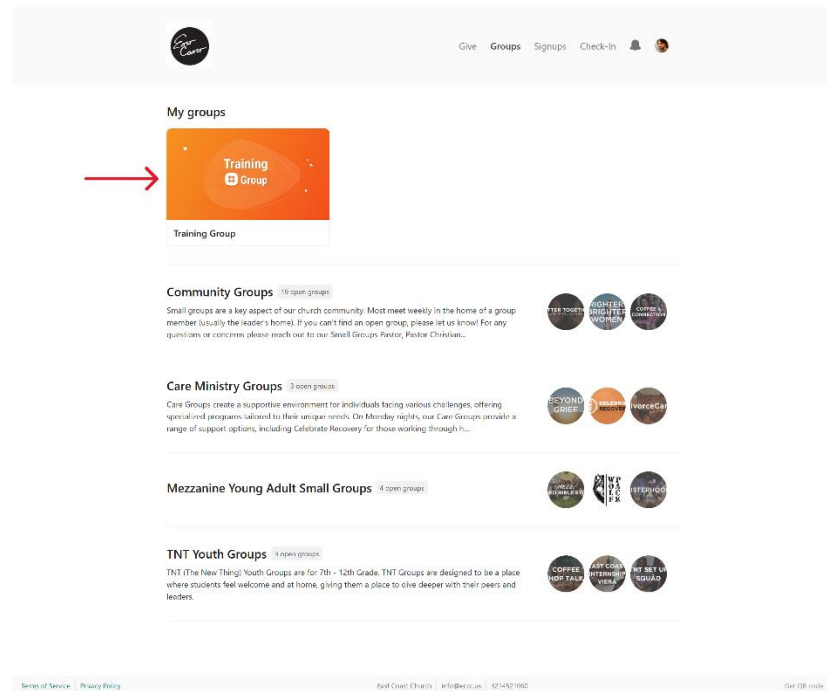
Helpful Tip

Bookmark the login page on your computer or phone for easy access throughout the semester.

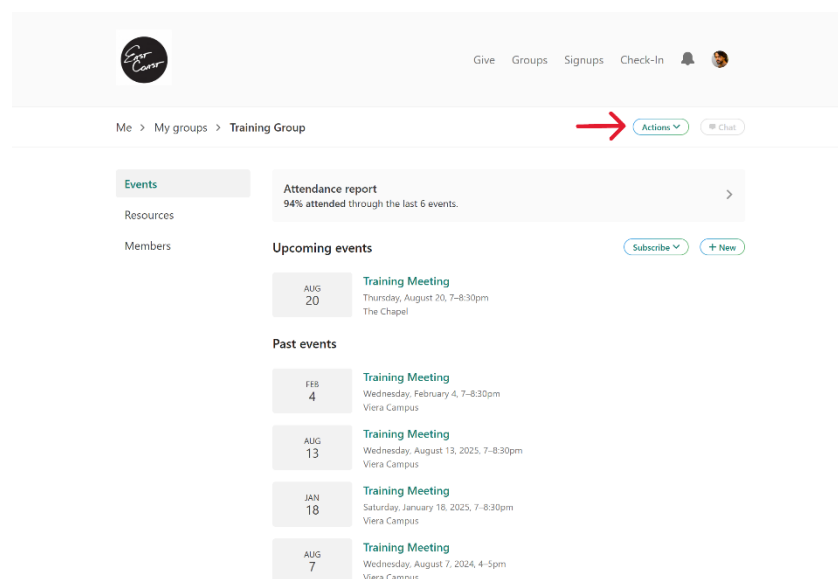
Section 2: Viewing Your Group

Group Home Screen

After logging in, **click your group image** under **“My groups”**.



Next, **click on the toggle button “Action”**. Then **click “Manage on Planning Center”**.



What You'll Find

- Members
- Events
- Resources
- Settings
- Overview
- Attendance

Training Group

Schedule: Once every 6 months

Community Groups Listed Accepting members

View on Church Center

Notes

Actions

Members 2

Events

Resources

Settings

Group Membership Requests

6/12/2026
Curtis Lawrence
View message
Don't add... Add...

Search by name

2 Members

	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ROLE	EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER	MEMBER SINCE
☐	Christian	Hurston	Leader Edit			8/3/2023 Edit
☐	Simon	Peter	Leader Edit			1/18/2025 Edit

Privacy Policy Terms of Service Help

planning center

Org O15853 User P15527168

Section 3: Managing Members

New Member Requests

When someone requests to join your group, you will receive an email notification.

New member request for Training Group

Inbox x

Convert to PDF

East Coast Church <no-reply@churchcenter.com>

12:32 PM (20 minutes ago)

☆ 😊 ↩ ⋮

to me

Hi Simon,

Curtis Lawrence has a Member request to join your group, Training Group.
Please view and respond as soon as possible.

Message from Curtis Lawrence ...

I'd like to help out.

View group requests

Important

Please respond within 48 hours.

For many people, joining a group requires courage. A prompt response helps people feel welcomed and valued.

Approving a Request

1. Click Add.
2. Send the default message or personalize it.
3. Confirm the member is added.

Declining a Request

If a group is full, closed, or no longer meeting:

1. Click Don't Add.
2. Send a kind, personalized explanation.

Removing Members

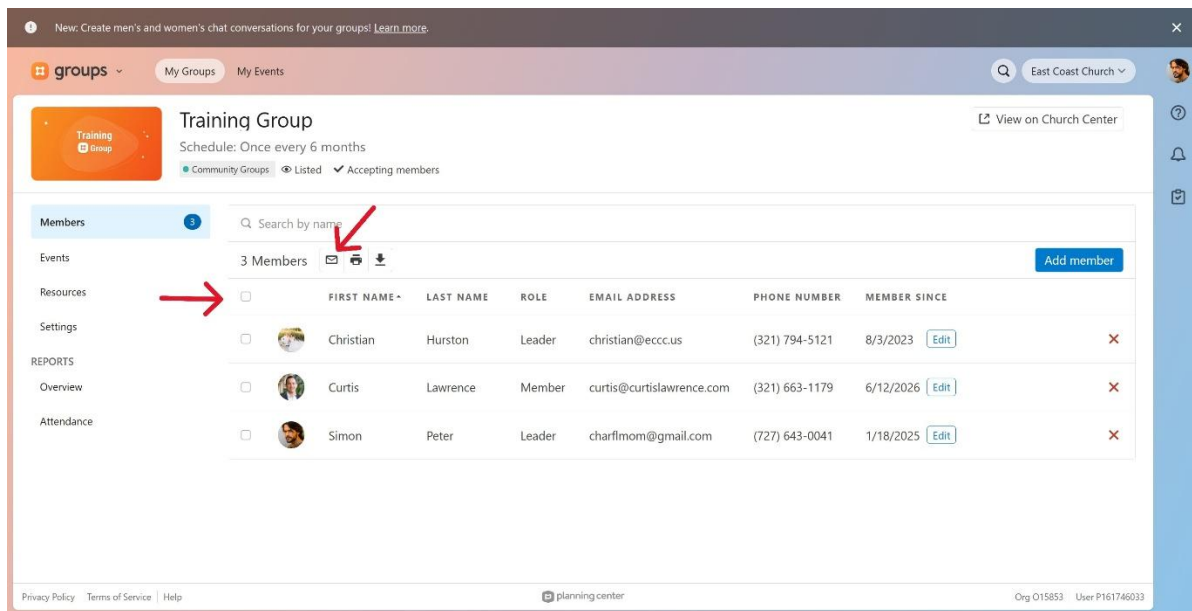
1. Click the red **X**.
2. Choose whether to notify the member.
3. Confirm removal.

Section 4: Communicating with Your Group

Sending Emails

Planning Center allows you to communicate with individual members or your entire group.

Hint: If you have a group with more than 25 members, do not click on the box in the header to select all members. This box will only select those members on the first page. Just click on the envelope and it will automatically select all members.



Leader Best Practice

Do not rely solely on automated event reminders.

Personal emails, texts, and follow-up messages help members feel known and cared for.

Section 5: Events & RSVPs

Creating Events

Events allow members to:

- View meeting dates
- Receive reminders
- RSVP in advance

Freedom & Rooted Leaders

Events will be preloaded for your group.

Benefits of Events

- ✓ Better attendance planning
- ✓ Automated reminders
- ✓ Easier communication
- ✓ Clear semester schedule

Tracking RSVPs

Members can respond:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe / No Response

The screenshot displays the 'Training Group' interface. At the top, there's a header with the group name 'Training Group', a schedule 'Once every 6 months', and a 'View on Church Center' button. Below this is a navigation bar with 'Members' (3), 'Events', 'Resources', 'Settings', 'REPORTS', 'Overview', and 'Attendance'. The main content area features two calendar views for June and July 2026. The June calendar shows a date range from Sunday to Saturday, with the 12th highlighted. Below the calendar is a checkbox for 'Start week on Monday'. At the bottom, there's a table with event details.

DATE & TIME	EVENT	STATUS	NOTES	REMINDER	RSVPS
6/12/2026 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm	Training Meeting	Has not started yet		Sent 2 minutes ago	1 Yes 1 No 1 Maybe

Footer: Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | Help | planning center | Org O15853 | User P161746033

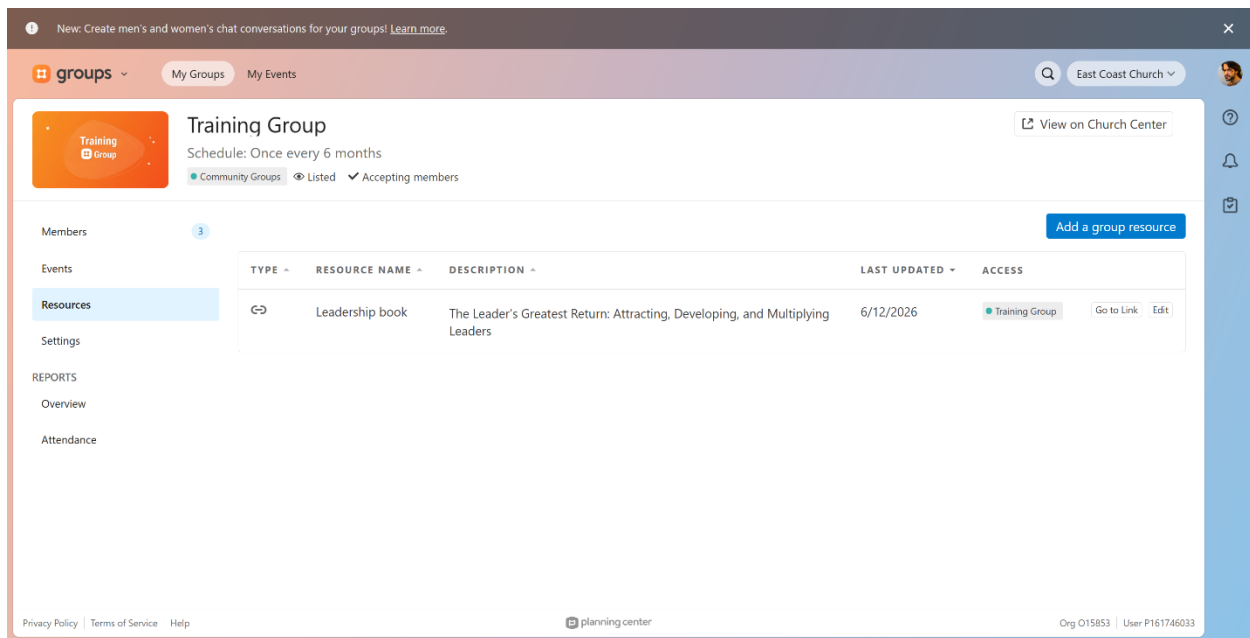
Use RSVP information to prepare seating, materials, childcare, food, or follow-up communication.

Section 6: Resources

Sharing Group Resources

Resources can be a file upload or URL link which can include:

- Study guides
- Discussion questions
- Book links
- Videos
- Event information



Visibility Options

Choose whether resources are visible to:

- Members
- Leaders only

Section 7: Settings

Updating Group Information

Use Settings to update:

- Description
- Meeting details
- Contact information

Branding Reminder

Please do not upload your own group images.

East Coast Church will provide graphics that align with church branding standards.

Section 8: Attendance

Why Attendance Matters

Attendance is one of the most important responsibilities of a Small Group Leader.

Attendance helps us:

- Care for people well
- Notice when someone is missing
- Follow up appropriately
- Identify future leaders
- Measure group health

Required

Attendance is **mandatory** for all East Coast Groups.

The screenshot shows the Church Center interface for a 'Training Group'. The group's schedule is 'Once every 6 months'. The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options: Members, Events, Resources, Settings, and REPORTS (with sub-options Overview and Attendance). The main content area displays the 'Attendance Report' for the period from August 13, 2025, to December 31, 2026. A table lists members and their attendance status for specific dates.

FIRST NAME - LAST NAME	%	AUG 13	FEB 04	JUN 12	AUG 20
Curtis Lawrence Joined June 12, 2026	0%				
Christian Hurston	100% 2 of 2	✓	✓		
Simon Peter	100% 2 of 2	✓	✓		
Attendance totals:		2 of 2	2 of 2		

At the bottom of the interface, there are links for Privacy Policy, Terms of Service, and Help, along with the text 'planning center' and 'Org O15853 | User P161746033'.

Easy Option

If needed, use a paper sign-in sheet during the meeting and enter attendance later.

Recommended fields:

- Name
- Email
- Phone Number

This is especially helpful for guests.

Section 9: The Two Most Important Things

1. Reach Out

Never allow automated reminders to be your only communication.

Healthy groups are built through personal connection.

Send messages.

Check in.

Pray for people.

Follow up.

Care for your group.

2. Take Attendance

Every meeting.

Every time.

Attendance helps ensure nobody falls through the cracks and helps church leadership better care for the people God has entrusted to us.

Need Help?

If you have questions about Planning Center, your group, or leadership responsibilities, please contact the East Coast Groups Team.

We're here to help you succeed.