

Opening: Open Each Community Group Meeting by Reading the Community Grp Summary

What is a Community Group at Trinity Presbyterian Church?

Community Groups are basic Christian communities. Believing that getting to know Jesus and falling in love with him are activities best carried out in a community context, Community Groups provide that context. They are gatherings of 6 to 12 people meeting in homes and apartments throughout the city during the week. In Community Groups, people come to know God and to experience His presence, community is developed and fostered, and people are nurtured, equipped and released for God's work in the world. They provide an opportunity for intimacy, mutual support, practical love and service, learning about the Christian faith, prayer, and sharing of what we see God doing in our midst.

What is the Purpose of Community Groups?

A place to meet and experience Jesus Christ in our midst through mutual ministry

A place for fellowship and friendship

A place where gifts are exercised

A place to discover Christianity

What happens during a Community Group Meeting?

Worship – Experiencing the Worth of God and freely giving ourselves to Him

Sharing – Learning to tell the story of our journey with God

Sermon Application – Reflecting together on what God has given us from His Word during Corporate Worship

Prayer – Talking with God

Mission – Having experienced God’s love, we now go to love our neighbor with the love we have from God

How do they fit in at Trinity as a whole?

Community Groups are the *primary place for pastoral care at Trinity*. Churches do one of two things: They either practice systematic care and encouragement of the congregation or systematic neglect of the congregation. Our network of community groups is the means through which we seek to practice the former. While some congregations may have small groups, *our congregation is small groups*. Our network of Community groups serves as the nervous system of our church. In them, the gospel is used to motivate people towards a richer relationship with God. In them, the gospel is used as a balm to apply to the wounds we incur in this broken world. In them, the gospel is used to call and motivate people into the service of God’s kingdom: In response to God’s grace, people are urged to develop lives of moral beauty, integrity and other-centeredness and to discover and use their gifts to carry out ministry both within the congregation and to the world.

The Context of Change: The Worshiping Community

Worshiping God enables us to see the beauty of God and the beauty of godliness. When we worship, we find that our love for God deepens and the hold that other things have on us loosen. When we worship, we find that it changes what we want: we want God and we want to please him more than we want and desire other things. Regularly worshipping God with the larger church, in small groups and on a daily basis as an individual is indispensable if our lives are to change.

Growth by Multiplying New Groups

Trinity’s primary vision is that by multiplying groups we are able to increase our capability as a church to care for people. When people are not involved in significant Christian relationships, like Community Groups, it greatly inhibits Christian maturity. Currently many of our friends at Trinity fall outside this kind of caring and encouraging community. For this reason, we consider it imperative to develop new leaders and expand the number of groups. We are not concerned with multiplying groups as an end in itself. We want to increase the number of groups because we want to provide quality personal care and community life for those who are part of our network of friends. As long as we have too few groups, Trinity, Lakeland and Polk County will fail to be as effective as we might be. If we are going to be successful at multiplying groups, then we will need to cast a vision that will make people enthusiastic and committed to these things. If this vision casting is neglected, the resistance to multiplying groups will prove too strong to overcome.

Mission in Community Groups: An Overview

The church does not exist for itself. It exists to carry out God’s purposes in the world so that glory is brought to him. As microcosms of the church, Community Groups also do not exist for themselves. They are to be concerned with God’s cause: the formation of a people who belong to him, who reflect his character, and who share his concern for seeing the world become a just and joyful place.

Mutual Ministry as Mission

Though a group ought to eventually be directing its energies to those outside its membership, its mission must begin with building up one another. Each person in the group is to be concerned with seeing Christ formed in the other group members. We are to look beyond our own individual needs to the needs of the others in the group. Selflessness is practiced within the group prior to being practiced outside the group. This aspect of the groups mission and ministry continues on throughout its existence and is crucial to the ministry it carries on outside its walls. For as J.I. Packer has stated, “In the Christian life, community has priority over witness.” Only as we develop a unique quality of life as a community will the gospel message we share seem credible. Only as we provide support for one another will we be sustained over the long haul in our efforts to seek mercy and justice for those who desperately need them. Only as we develop a common life will we be able to discern what kinds of ministry, if any, we should be involved in as a group. One extension of mutual ministry within the group is ministry done by the group to the larger church body. A group might decide together to participate in children’s ministry, in ushering, in welcoming newcomers, etc.

Social Action As Mission

Christianity is a faith which is concerned with “world redemption” and not merely individual redemption. As Eugene Peterson writes, “Salvation is God’s determination to rescue his creation; it is his activity in recovering the world. It is personal and impersonal, it deals with souls and cities, it touches sin and sickness...God takes on the entire catastrophe.” Therefore, when Jesus, who was “powerful in word and deed” calls us to love our neighbors, such love will necessarily involve both word and deed. The ministry of Jesus makes it clear that all Christians have a responsibility to care for the poor, the downcast and those who are hurting. How this is done, however, is an area in which we are given a great degree of latitude. So follow the Lord’s lead and go love those in need.

Some CGs will choose to participate together in activities which minister to the material needs and brokenness of our world. Other CGs will not do much by way of outside ministry as a group. Instead, they will be a base from which individual Christians are sent out into the world in the name of Christ. The group should provide encouragement, strength, and prayer for one another in the ministry to which we are called in our places of work and in situations or neighborhoods of need.

Evangelism as Mission

The plight of others who are “without God and without hope in the world” should be of great concern to us. Making sure that others are able to hear the life-giving message of the Gospel is to be one of our preoccupations. How can your Community Group reach out to those who are not Christians and invite them to turn to Christ and participate in God’s story of setting all things right?

Warm Up - Read the Sermon Passage and Corporate Worship Themes

We read the sermon passage, storyline and themes to warm our hearts and minds to remember what God has spoken to us in our time together Sunday morning.

Proclamation of God’s Word

Text: Hebrews 13:1-7, 15-16 (ESV)

Title: Family Values of God’s People: Living in Philadelphia **Teacher:** Tim Rice

1 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. 5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” 7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ... 15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

The Storyline

Our family is hurting, both our Christian family and the family of mankind. Many are beating each other up and despising one another, wounding and being wounded. As Jesus followers, we are equipped to help because our own need, our own brokenness, our own helplessness, our own pain, and our own loneliness causes us to cry to Jesus so we are then the most able and eager to go to our friends. Having been helped, we offer help. To be with them. Walk with them. Listen to them. Hurt for them. Care for them. Do good to them. Give to them. Offer Jesus to them. We now do for them what is being done continually by Jesus for us. Jesus is continually doing good to us. Jesus is continually being generous to us. So, we live praising God for his gift of Jesus. Simply, we are loved by God to love our neighbors, all of them! What an adventure! What fun!

Themes:

- Receiving and Giving
- Family Brokenness
- God’s Wholeness
- Philadelphia – Brotherly Love
- Care for the Troubled
- Marriage / Adoption
- Loved by God with love for your neighbor
- All humanity is hurting
- God is
 - Continually Doing Good
 - Continually giving to us
- So we continual praise Him

1. Get Acquainted: Icebreaker (10 min)

- What is your favorite “praise” of God?
 - What is your favorite “praise” you tend to say to others?
- What is the favorite “good thing” God has done for you?
 - What is a “good doing” that you enjoy doing for others?
- What is a “from the stuff of God” that He has given of his to you?
 - What is a “out of their stuff” that someone gave you that is special to you?

2. Worship: Heavenly “Continual-ings” – Praise, Doing Good, Giving Stuff (10 m)

Read the following Psalms from yesterday’s CBR. When you notice a praise, a good doing or a giving of stuff underline it, highlight it or put an exclamation point. Then after reading, worship God for “His continuals” and our opportunity to do the same with our family, friends and enemies.

Save Me, O My God

3 A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON.

- 1 O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
- 2 many are saying of my soul,
“There is no salvation for him in God.”
- 3 But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.
- 4 I cried aloud to the LORD,
and he answered me from his holy hill.
- 5 I lay down and slept;
I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.
- 7 Arise, O LORD!
Save me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.
- 8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;
your blessing be on your people!

Psalm 55 Cast Your Burden on the LORD

- 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God,
and hide not yourself from my plea
for mercy!
- 2 Attend to me, and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint and I
moan,
3 because of the noise of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the
wicked.
For they drop trouble upon me,
and in anger they bear a grudge
against me.
- 4 My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen upon
me.
- 5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.
- 6 And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a
dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;
7 yes, I would wander far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness;
8 I would hurry to find a shelter
from the raging wind and tempest.”
- 9 Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues;
for I see violence and strife in the
city.
- 10 Day and night they go around it
on its walls,
and iniquity and trouble are within it;
11 ruin is in its midst;
oppression and fraud
do not depart from its marketplace.
- 12 For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
then I could bear it;
it is not an adversary who deals
insolently with me—
then I could hide from him.
- 13 But it is you, a man, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend.
- 14 We used to take sweet counsel
together;
within God’s house we walked in the
throng.
- 15 Let death steal over them;
let them go down to Sheol alive;
for evil is in their dwelling place and
in their heart.
- 16 But I call to God,
and the LORD will save me.
- 17 Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he hears my voice.
- 18 He redeems my soul in safety
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed against me.
- 19 God will give ear and humble them,
he who is enthroned from of old,
because they do not change
and do not fear God.
- 20 My companion stretched out his hand
against his friends;
he violated his covenant.
- 21 His speech was smooth as butter,
yet war was in his heart;
his words were softer than oil,
yet they were drawn swords.
- 22 Cast your burden on the LORD,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.
- 23 But you, O God, will cast them down
into the pit of destruction;
men of blood and treachery
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in you.

Psalms 106:1–48 (ESV)

Give Thanks to the LORD, for He Is Good

106 Praise the LORD!

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!

² Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?

³ Blessed are they who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times!

⁴ Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you save them,
⁵ that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory with your inheritance.

⁶ Both we and our fathers have sinned;
we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness.

⁷ Our fathers, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wondrous works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet he saved them for his name’s sake,
that he might make known his mighty power.

⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry,
and he led them through the deep as through a desert.

¹⁰ So he saved them from the hand of the foe

and redeemed them from the power of the enemy.

¹¹ And the waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.

¹² Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his counsel.

¹⁴ But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;
¹⁵ he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

¹⁶ When men in the camp were jealous of Moses
and Aaron, the holy one of the LORD,
¹⁷ the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the company of Abiram.

¹⁸ Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.

¹⁹ They made a calf in Horeb
and worshiped a metal image.

²⁰ They exchanged the glory of God
for the image of an ox that eats grass.

²¹ They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
²² wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

²³ Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

²⁴ Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.

- 25 They murmured in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of the
LORD.
- 26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore
to them
that he would make them fall in the
wilderness,
27 and would make their offspring fall
among the nations,
scattering them among the lands.
- 28 Then they yoked themselves to the Baal
of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the
dead;
29 they provoked the LORD to anger with
their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
- 30 Then Phinehas stood up and
intervened,
and the plague was stayed.
- 31 And that was counted to him as
righteousness
from generation to generation
forever.
- 32 They angered him at the waters of
Meribah,
and it went ill with Moses on their
account,
33 for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke rashly with his lips.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,
as the LORD commanded them,
35 but they mixed with the nations
and learned to do as they did.
- 36 They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.
- 37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and
daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of
Canaan,
and the land was polluted with
blood.
- 39 Thus they became unclean by their acts,
and played the whore in their deeds.
- 40 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled
against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
41 he gave them into the hand of the
nations,
so that those who hated them ruled
over them.
- 42 Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into
subjection under their power.
- 43 Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their
purposes
and were brought low through their
iniquity.
- 44 Nevertheless, he looked upon their
distress,
when he heard their cry.
- 45 For their sake he remembered his
covenant,
and relented according to the
abundance of his steadfast love.
- 46 He caused them to be pitied
by all those who held them captive.
- 47 Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the
nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy
name
and glory in your praise.
- 48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, “Amen!”
Praise the LORD!

3. Sermon Reflection: (10 min)

A Wretched Family History

- Have someone tell the story of the “Good Samaritan”.
- What current example in the news of our, mankind’s, failure to love hurts you the most?
- Designed to love God and love our neighbor, how have you neglected both?
- When have you been like the story of the Good Samaritan and been too busy to stop and help someone in need?
- Neglect – to super ignore – who have you super ignored, put out of your mind, that God is calling you to love and care for?

New Family in Christ – to as many as receive Him, they become children of God

- Everyone is hurting, beat up and left for dead ... but Jesus comes and gives us life.
- We join a new family – God’s Family as we marry Jesus and are adopted by God.
- Jesus will never forsake you. Jesus will never leave you.
- Having been loved ... now we love, having been cared for... now we care.
- How is your life different now having become a daughter or son of God?

Living Philadelphia – Brotherly Love

- Live in love, Remain in love
- Live generous
- Make space for others
- Our need is our leverage. Jesus is who we need. Jesus is who we offer.
- How has God cared for you through others?
- Who has he given you to care for?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer: (10 min)

1. **Adoration** - Worship the LORD for His unrivaled love and grace. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit that He loves us in such a miraculous way as to take us into His own home and family.

2. **Confession**: How have you lived as if you’re an orphan, doubting God’s goodness or provision? Confess your pride and unbelief to Jesus, *asking Him to forgive you and assure you that He really does own us, even in our worst failures.*

3. **Thanksgiving**: Give thanks to Jesus for the wonders of His saving love, especially to know our true sinful state and claim us anyway! Thank Him for hearing and seeing you in your bondage and distress *and claiming you as His!*

4. **Request for Others**: Who do you know that is in trouble or distress, especially if they claim to be a follower of Jesus? Pray for them, asking the Lord to help them, and to use you as He can to encourage them and meet their needs.

5. **Request for Yourself**: Ask the Holy Spirit to bear in you His fruit of love, kindness and goodness, especially for others around you who need care. Pray for His eyes to see and ears to hear, so that as the LORD saw and heard your distress, that you will see and hear others.

5. Mission: Heavenly Pleasing(s) – Praise, Doing Good, Giving CONTINUALLY

Here were my reflections on my reflections this morning during a Holy Spirit called prayer time at 2am - My Passion of the WEAK: The cycle of Heavenly PLEASINGS - Continually Praising, Continually Doing Good, Continually Giving Away What I Have.

So in order to do that:

- I must be thinking of the next praise in the middle of the current praise,
- Thinking of the next good doing in the middle of the current good I am doing
- Be looking at the stuff I still have while the stuff I am giving away is still in my hand on the way to the one in need.

How fun is that life going to be? How fun is HEAVEN!!!

- So at what point in your week do you have planned to enjoy a praise that leads to a praise that leads to a praise that leads to a Tsunami of praises?
- Think of a “First Good” you want to try this week that has a “Second Good” built in that will lead to a “Third Good”?
- Think of “your stuff”. Think of your family, friends and enemies. Like laying out your clothes for school in the morning, lay out a plan of giving away your stuff to someone in need in stages.
 - Example: I am going to go through my shed and see what tools I don’t use and ask Holy Spirit to bring to mind a connection with someone who needs it or even be open this week for someone to ask for it.

6. Jesus From Others (10 min)

- What do you love more about Jesus from what someone shared during our CG tonight?