

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.

Warm Up - Read 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: Matthew 2:12-21 (ESV)

Title: Eternal Hope In The Midst of War: Israel's True Problem **Teacher:** Tim Rice

¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." ¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

The Storyline

The storyline of Christmas is *shockingly violent*. Defenseless babies from a poor farming community are killed by Herod, the murderous power crazed King who should have, instead celebrated the coming of Israel's and the world's greatest King and Savior, Jesus. The Bible is the bloodiest book you will ever read cuz it is the story of God redeeming a people, a violent, rebellious, evil people, to Himself. Into this violent rebellion, God sends an innocent baby to live a perfect life and at 33 years old to be falsely accused, stripped naked and murdered to save the very ones who murdered Him. (of whom I am one) God sends Jesus into the evil and violent world to save all those who would acknowledge their rebellion, love of self-rule and autonomy then turn and live in His love, following His ways, delighting in His presence. God sends and Jesus gladly goes into the very places, "location, location, location" that signify our greatest struggles to prove to us His promised victory is sure: to Egypt the place of our slavery and oppression, to Nazareth the place of obscurity, to die in Jerusalem the place of the special presence of God, His Temple, the cross to die the murderer's death, to heaven so we can know we will live forever with Him and our Heavenly Father. So now we are sent to love same, those dear ones who struggle with depression, arrogance, hatred, anger, envy, self-love, self-loathing, lust, pity, the marginalized, and the self-promoting with the love of God that loves, sustains and empowers us.

Themes:

- Hope / Evil
- God / Satan
- Cause / Source
- Rebellion / Violence

- Rescue
- Locations as historical representations

Kingdom Centered Prayer: (10 min)

1. Adoration - Worship the LORD for His conquering power and the security that comes with His reign. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that rather than destroy us in His justice, that He offers to save us instead.
2. Confession - How have you lived defiant toward, or covetous of, God's power? Confess your proud rebellion to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you and change your state of mind to be humble, loyal, and truly loving.
3. Thanksgiving - Give thanks to Jesus for His willingness to go into suffering and obscurity to save us (Egypt, Nazareth, death and hell). Thank Him for *entering suffering we caused to actually accomplish our salvation and Satan's undoing*.
4. Requests for others - Who do you know that is defenseless? Or who do you know that is lustful for power? Pray for them, calling upon the Lord who defends the helpless and overthrows the arrogant.
5. Requests Personal - Ask the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit of faithfulness in you. Ask that you would grow in what it means to hold to His will and priorities even in the face of opposition (even suffering) from the powers of this world.