

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: Luke 2:25-35 (ESV)

Title: Eternal Hope In The Midst of War: Simeon’s Song **Teacher:** Jeff Skipper

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are leaving your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.” ³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

The Storyline – What is your only hope in life and in death?

Simeon sees Jesus and sings while others walk right by. Simeon sees the hope of the world, in the life, death and resurrection of this little one that he holds in his arms. He also knows that many of those who walk by will in a few short years demand the execution of this infant when he becomes a man. But through the work of Holy Spirit many, many more will see what Simeon sees and believe on Jesus for eternal life. Those who do will be fully known and fully loved experiencing peace with God, peace with themselves, and peace with their neighbor forever and ever more. Those who will not believe will be quarantined to live an eternity of complete and full ruin in every aspect of their existence that will never end. Every moment of our time on earth is an opportunity to reflect, repent, believe so that we would know Jesus, love Jesus and rejoice in Jesus now and through all eternity. So, what is your hope in life and in death?

Themes:

- Life and Death
- Eternity
- Reflection
- Ambition
- Dreams
- Disappointment
- Sin, Separation
- Good Works and acceptance
- Heaven / Hell
- Our Problem / God’s Solution
- Faith / Repentance
- Singing, Music, and The Gospel

1. Get Acquainted: Icebreaker (10 min)

- When was a time when you “walked by” and did not notice something of immense value?
 - Example: Jeff Skipper walking passed “The Hope Diamond”.
 - Example: TimO “walking passed my Mom”, the priceless wonder and gift of God to me, rather than stopping and listening to her musings.
- When was a time that you succeeded in achieving a dream but felt lost, unfulfilled and unhappy?
 - Example: TimO at 28 years old, making \$70,000 per year in 1990 doing a job I loved with a boss I loved and having a wife I adored. I pulled off on the side of the road crying out to God that there had to be more, there had to be much more in this life for me.

2. Worship: Enjoy the Comfort of Belonging to Jesus (10 min)

Read question 1 of The Heidelberg Catechism and then worship God for His work of grace in Jesus’ saving work applied to us by Holy Spirit.

The Heidelberg Catechism

<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>

Lord’s Day 1

Q & A 1

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own,

but belong—

body and soul,

in life and in death—

to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,

and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way

that not a hair can fall from my head

without the will of my Father in heaven;

in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,

Christ, by his Holy Spirit,

assures me of eternal life

and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready

from now on to live for him.

3. Sermon Reflection: (10 min)

The Comfort of Christmas

- What are the comforts of Jesus for us in his life, then in his death, and finally his resurrection?

The Contrast of Christmas

- (Jesus asking) **“What does it mean to be “with me”?** What do you gain?
- (Jesus asking) **“What are the consequences of being “without me”?**

The Confrontation of Christmas

- Am I fulfilled?
- Can I stand before God unashamed?
- Am I fully known? Am I fully loved?
- On my bed at night, do I go to sleep ready and happy to meet Jesus?
- What is your only hope in life and in death?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer: (10 min)

YOU CAN PRAY WITH US ...

1. Worship the LORD for His transcendence (greatness/sovereignty) and His immanence (nearness/intimacy). Praise Him for graciously moving towards us in the greatest way even when we rebelled against Him.
2. Where are you grabbing onto things other than Jesus and saying, “This is my salvation; now I can die in peace!”? Confess your idolatry and ask God to draw your heart back to Him.
3. Give thanks to Jesus for His willingness to come all the way down to us, taking on human flesh, and even death, for us (Philippians 2:5-11).
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to produce a spirit of humility in you. Ask that you would be in the right posture, the low place of need, to receive His gifts with great joy.

5. Mission: At Peace with God: Celebrating Everyone You Meet (10 min)

A Christian is constantly honing their craft of celebrating each person you meet, each time you meet them, to help them be great all the days of their lives.

- Who has God placed in your life to celebrate this week?
- What can you do or say to help them be great?

6. Jesus From Others (10 min)

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