

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.

This Week's CG Mtg Element: Worship in Small Groups - Fellowship Group Manual, Redeemer**Worship in Small Groups**

Worship is central to our calling as human beings. We were built to delight in God's beauty and glory and to celebrate his deeds. We are summoned to praise and magnify God by focusing on his nature and actions. In worship we "ascribe to him the worth of which he is worthy." Until we are a worshipping people, we are spiritual paupers. Worship brings joy to God and pleases him. It also brings health to our souls and substance and weight to our lives.

In worship God gathers his people to himself as the center: 'The LORD Reigns'. Worship is meeting God at the center so that our lives are centered in God and not lived eccentrically. We worship so that we live in response to and from this center, the living God. Failure to worship consigns us to a life of spasms and jerks, at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, every siren. Without worship we live manipulated and manipulating lives. We move either in frightened panic or deluded lethargy as we are, in turn, alarmed by spectres and soothed by placebos. If there is no center, there is no circumference. People who do not worship are swept into a vast restlessness, epidemic in the world, with no steady direction and no sustaining purpose. —Eugene Peterson

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIP IN SMALL GROUPS

Worship is often neglected in small groups. People argue that they don't have enough time in their tight group schedules to fit it in. They are concerned that various styles of worship would be incompatible. They are concerned that they will not have the emotional energy that worship requires. They are afraid it will make visitors uncomfortable or embarrassed. Or perhaps they themselves feel embarrassed or overly self-conscious. Some, equating worship with singing, refrain because they can't carry a tune in a bucket. However, none of these are sufficient reasons to overlook worship

Remember, small groups are above all Christian communities in which God participates as the primary host. They are places where God is at the center and in which we deal with him and one another. Worship is, therefore, vitally important. The presence of worship may mean the difference between a group which is superficial and insignificant in its effect on people's lives and a group of depth which makes a real difference to those who attend.

Like other elements of the group meeting, be sure to carefully plan the worship activities. Unless people have confidence that you know where you are leading them, they will be anxious and reluctant to enter into worship. Stifling or legislating spontaneity isn't the idea. You merely want to assist the group by proving helpful worship formats.

This is an ideal aspect of group life in which to allow other members to help share the load - assigning differing people the task of leading the group in worship from week to week. If you do this, you will still want them to tell you what they are planning to do so as to help them think through the best way to lead the group in worship and to avoid having them try something that would be met with opposition by the rest of the group.

Warm Up - Read Sermon Passage and Corporate Worship Themes**Proclamation of God's Word**

Text: Hebrews 11:11-12; Genesis 17:1, 4-5, 15-21 (ESV) **Title:** By Faith: Sarah **Teacher:** Tim Rice

Hebrews 11:11-12 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. ... Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ... 4-5 Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." ... 15-21 And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."

The Storyline- The Feel of Faith, First Laugh Out Loud But "on second thought"

What is the first feel of faith you ask? That's easy, laughter, due to the absurdity of the request. That is why, Christians are "on second thought" kinda folk. Holy Spirit is the greatest, most patient, "on second thought or laugh" discipler ever. He "on second thought's" King David with the Prophet Nathan. He "on second thought's" Saul to become Paul on the road to Damascus. What does He know that we don't? We never, ever get it the first time. We see someone's sins habits and "ugh" over them and their doings then we realize "on second thought" we do the same. We come to know Jesus dies for us as a gift from God then ... "on second thought" it ain't just about the gift but the Giver and His delight in us. So, with sin and our first recognitions of it and with the death of Jesus and our appreciation as with God's promises and our first and seconds seem just like the others. God promises to do the impossible, unlikely, unheard of and we first, per our usual, laugh then ... "on second thought", "on third thought", and then by Holy Spirit every thought after that, realize God is ALMIGHTY, GOOD AND TONS OF FUN TO HANG OUT WITH so He is likely up to something that is GOING TO GET US LAUGHED AT but is really, really cool so let's go with it and Him.

All faithings start with a "no way am I doing that cuz it won't work" sense of the ridiculous and you know that you will experience the rejection clearly worthy of ridicule but in the end it turns into a "wow oh wow, what a ride" followed quickly by a "and let's do that again" feeling. Abraham and Sarah, renamed and under new management, laugh at the very promise that will bring our King who will save the world and bring peace on earth good will to men on whom His favor rests. God is full of laugh out loud promises for you to enjoy. Bask this week in the ridiculous promise that Jesus was dead and has come to life so that you can die with Him and now live with Him by faith because Holy Spirit has given you a new heart convinced that you too are under new management and eager to be ridiculed by and for your neighbor to believe knowing they won't get it the first time but "on second thought".

Themes:

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|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| • Big Promises | • Renaming | • World or Heaven |
| • Abraham/Sarah | • Responsibility | • Work of Man |
| • Feel of Faith | • El-Shaddai | • Work of God |
| • Laughter | • Ridicule our Maker | • Problem Solving |
| • Unbelief | • God's Pattern work with weak, few, broken, sinful | • Death and Resurrection |
| • Ridiculous | | |
| • Ridicule | • Functional Atheist | |

1. Launcher: Helping Friends Tell Their Story (10 min)

- When did you last laugh at someone's claims?
- When did someone laugh at one of your ideas?

2. Worship: Songs of the Series – (SoS) Faithful God (10 min)

Developing your song playlists for a sermon series and then listening to it is a great way to keep your heart tuned to God and sensitive to His leading and it is just plain fun.

I am They – Promises

https://open.spotify.com/track/6Jiso4ug5cX4zByqXyGUHw?si=DL_vO3jKTc-o6Bk9jgQoOA

Promises

I Am They

You say that You'll come through
But it's been so long
It's like the desert sand
Goes on and on and on

But I believe there's something on the other side
of all this waiting
Where all of these tears will turn to celebrating
So no more holding back and no more hesitating
Because I know

You keep all Your promises to me
Every word You're speaking, my heart is
believing
Standing in a future victory
All my hope in You, Lord 'cause You always keep
Your
Keep Your promises
Yes and amen to eternity
You keep all Your promises
You keep all Your promises to me

You've been the cloud by day
You've been the fire by night
You'll never let me down
You'll never leave my side

I believe there's something on the other side of
all this waiting
Where all of these tears will turn to celebrating
So no more holding back and no more hesitating
Because I know

You keep all Your promises to me
Every word You're speaking, my heart is
believing

Standing in a future victory
All my hope in You, Lord, 'cause You always
keep Your
Keep Your promises
Yes and amen to eternity
You keep all Your promises
You keep all Your promises to me
(All Your promises to me)

I trust the plan of a God who loves me
Who is for me, who is good
I trust the plan of a God who loves me
Who is for me, who is good

Oh, I trust the plan of a God who loves me
You are for me, You are good
I trust the plan of a God who loves me
You are for me, You are good

You keep all Your promises to me
Every word You're speaking, my heart is
believing
Standing in a future victory
All my hope in You, Lord, 'cause You always
keep Your
Keep Your promises
Yes and amen to eternity
You keep all Your promises
You keep all Your promises to me
(All Your promises to me)

Oh, I trust the plan of a God who loves me
You are for me, You are good
I trust the plan of a God who loves me
You are for me, You are good

Faithful God - I Am They

<https://open.spotify.com/track/00ZGzrcnmOC56TJGQ2E3yu?si=DXk3q4EcQNejiVyQ4tqDxA>

I am surrounded
On every side
Can't see the light of day
But I am persuaded
Beyond all hope, You won't let go of me
I stake my claim on every word You say
You will not be late

I will sing through fire and thunder
'Cause You are on my side,
I trust You with my life
I know my story, it isn't over
Even against all odds
You are a faithful God
You're faithful God

The darkest of weather
Though I can't see, I still believe You're good
So I'm moving forward
Through crashin' waves
I know I'm safe with You
You hold my life
You hear my cry
With every breath inside

I will sing through fire and thunder
'Cause You are on my side,
I trust You with my life
I know my story, it isn't over
Even against all odds
For You are a faithful God
That's who You are
You are a faithful God

I am convinced that Your promises will hold together
And I will dwell in the hope of Your love forever
I am convinced that Your promises will hold together
And I will dwell in Your love

And I will sing through fire and thunder
'Cause You are on my side,
I trust You with my life
I know my story, it isn't over
Even against all odds
Oh, You are a faithful God (yeah)
That's who You are
Oh, You are a faithful God
Oh, You're faithful God

3. Sermon Reflection:**(10 min)**

GOD'S ASTOUNDING PROMISES - How do we see God's holiness in His promises?

- Where do you need to see God's amazing work?
- Where do you need God to rename you?

LAUGHING OUT LOUD - How have you laughed at God's words (and promises)?

- How have you scoffed at God's promises or commands?
- How have you planned and then lived as a functional atheist?

GRACE VS. WORKS - How does God get in the last laugh?

- How have you experienced God as YOUR, ONE and ONLY, and there is no other?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer: (10 min)

1. Worship the LORD, God Almighty, for His all-surpassing power and goodness. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit for how amazing He is to promise us such great things by His grace.
2. How have you lived cynically toward God and His promises or commands? Confess your pride and foolishness to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you and to renew your mind to see how ultimately real He is.
3. Give thanks to Jesus for His work and covenant to do the most amazing work ever – to cleanse our sin and conquer death and hell to save us. *Thank Him for doing the impossible to save people who were wrong.*
4. Who do you know that is cynical? Pray for them, asking the Lord to open their eyes to see their need for God and His grace to save anyone who repents and trusts Jesus.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to bear in you His fruit of patience and faithfulness. Pray for His work to help grow in you steadfastness while you wait for God's promises to be fulfilled in His timing and in His ways.

5. Mission: 5 – 15 Attacking Functional Atheism by Praying (10 min)

My prayer trainer assessed my work and concluded that I do not attach those I am with to God, Father, Holy Spirit and Jesus. His comment was they learn about Him but don't know Him. They become confident in God's ability, but they don't do things with Him like "talk" to Him. So, He challenged me to put my meetings on a timer 5 minutes of prayer then 15 minutes of talking... every meeting, all the time. Ha, ha I just realized writing this that I had forgotten to put myself on the 5-15 timer for writing The Facilitator and so it goes. It is so, so very hard to learn a new habit and break an old one.

- Let's reorient our hearts and lives praying for 5 minutes then working for 15 or 30 min.
 - So, this week start with 5 minutes of prayer then stop every 15 minutes and pray for 5 minutes then work, read, bake, exercise or whatever you are doing for 15 minutes then 5 then 15 and on it goes.
 - Then let's get together and next CG and share what happened.
 - Make every hour a prayer meeting.

6. Jesus From Others (10 min)

Close your time together by letting each person share something they came to love about Jesus from something someone in the group shared during your time together.

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