

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

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 7:22-25 (ESV) Title: Easter

Teacher: Tim Rice

The Storyline – All Access - ETERNITY

The family dinner table was “the place to be” for my brother Ted and me. Imagine every night you get to play outside on 10 – 50 acres of hard, old, mined phosphate land that left a layout of hills, pits, and pastures that were perfect for all the adventures we could dream up. And at the end of each day we’d get the call to come in and eat dinner with your favorite people on earth. Every Day was the Greatest of Days!! To be honest they were more than our favorite people, they were and always have been our heroes. We ate dinner with our living heroes every night and never ever wished or wanted to be anywhere else. Ted and I adored every member of our family. We loved them, their stories, their laughter, their struggles, their gifts, their goofiness and all the rest. Again, if we are being honest the food was not all that good most days, but we never noticed cuz we got to be with *them*. It was ALL ACCESS!

UNTIL IT WASN'T!

You see, every once in a while, the time from Adventures Outside to Dinner Inside did not leave us enough time to clean up and put on shirts so we just came in and sat down. Then one of our heroes would point out to Mom that we were not quite up to snuff when it came to our odor and outfit. Then we all would hear our Mom yell, “Theodore Robert, Timothy Oliver, you boys get up right now and march into that bathroom (“that” cuz we only had one for the 9 of us) and take a bath right now (she said that twice for emphasis). And I mean PRONTO!” Ted and I did not speak fluid Mother, but we got what she meant. So off to the bathtub, where Mom made us put Dreft diaper detergent in the water, which she then called a bubble bath. After 10 minutes she would allow us to get out, get dressed, and join the family for dinner. She never asked if we used soap because the Dreft detergent did all the work and by that I mean it took off the dirt and the skin it was connected to, we came out of the tub like snakes shedding their skin. We were so cleaned we shined. Then we put on some shorts and would run to the table and sit down ready for the show but....

ACCESS DENIED AGAIN!

Ugh! As Mom would be walking the food in from the kitchen, she would notice our outfits and give her unbiased assessment of our attire by announcing, “Good Heavens, you boys are ½ naked! Go put your shirts on. You know better than to come to the dinner table without your shirts on. What is wrong with you two! What were you thinking?”

ACCESS – GRANTED – JOY AND FRIENDSHIP FILLED OUR HEARTS AND SHAPED OUR LIVES FOREVER!

Mom was teaching us our need for Jesus. We were unacceptable for 2 reasons. WE STANK! WE WERE FILTHY! And we needed not just a cleansing but we needed “right” clothing to be acceptable to take part in our family dinners. Jesus’ is the mediator of both for us. His shed blood cleanses us from our stank guilt and shame and He clothes’ us with the righteousness of His Perfect Life of obedience. So now we are adoptable by God. God who was against granting us access due to our filth and disobedience, now welcomes us not only to his banquet table but into His very family, even to sit in HIS lap to know his love.

JESUS, OUR MEDIATOR GIVES US WHAT WE ASPIRE TO MOST – ALL ACCESS TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S HEART!

Themes:

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|---------------|------------|-------------|
| • Aspirations | • Intimacy | • Me w God |
| • Access | • Mediator | • Guarantor |
| • Blocked | • Conflict | |
| • Joy | • God w Me | |

1. Launchers: (10 min)

- What is your highest aspiration?
- What was Jesus' highest aspiration in His resurrection? A REVOLUTION!!
- What is your favorite part of Jesus' global revolution?

2. Worship: Our Aspiration – A Global Pandemic of Worship (10 min)

One of our Confessional Documents, The Westminster Confession, has one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the freedoms that Christ has purchased for us in His Life, Death and Resurrections. Read the following through one time then read it again pausing at the paragraph breaks to praise and worship Our Father, Jesus His Son and Holy Spirit for what is accomplished for us in the gift of salvation.

CHAPTER 20 Westminster Confession of Faith — Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience.

The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from:

the guilt of sin,
the condemning wrath of God,
the curse of the moral law;

and in their being delivered from:
this present evil world
the bondage to Satan,
the dominion of sin,
the evil of afflictions,
the sting of death,
the victory of the grave,
and everlasting damnation;

also in their free access to God,
and their yielding obedience unto him,
not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love,
and a willing mind.

All which were common also to believers under the law (Old Testament);

but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in:
their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law,
to which the Jewish Church was subjected;
greater boldness of access to the throne of grace,
and fuller communications of the free Spirit of God,
than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

3. Sermon Reflection: (10 min)

THE ULTIMATE PRIZE – The Smile of God’s Blessing and Delight

- How is God’s blessing and delight every human’s ultimate prize?
- What is it like to live without God’s blessing and delight?

WHAT’S THE PROBLEM? - Your access is as good as your mediator

- How have you assumed you can just walk up to God?
- Why can’t you? What blocks you from God’s blessing and presence?
- What if you were blocked from what you longed for the most?

JESUS’ UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

- Why do we believe Jesus is better?
- What if all fear in your life was replaced with hope?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer: (10 min)

YOU CAN PRAY WITH US...

1. Worship the LORD for His holiness and grace. Praise Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit that He is utterly pure and authoritative, *and also* that He is gracious and merciful to provide a way for sinners like us to be redeemed.
2. How have you tried to live a lie, as if you can avoid your guilt and attain lasting joy without Jesus? Confess your pride and unbelief to Jesus, asking Him to forgive you and to save you to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25)
3. Give thanks to Jesus for being your Mediator, to represent you before the Father and represent the Father to you. Thank Him for all that He has done to conquer sin (by His death) *and* death (by His resurrection).
4. Who do you know that lives naively chasing joy while being helpless before the power of death? Pray for them, asking the Lord to open their eyes to their true peril and the hope that Jesus offers to us.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to bear in you His fruit of love and joy. Pray that He would work the hope of Jesus’ resurrection power into your heart and that He would flush out of you any instincts of selfishness and fear.

5. Mission: Reflection that leads to wonder (10 min)

Christians are people on mission. Our mission is to listen, to ask, and to help our friends, family and enemies to reflect on the wonder of God in the world He has made, and on the salvation, He offers in His Son. What a fun week God has planned for us. Have fun.

- What if all fear in your life was replaced with hope?
- May I take 3 minutes and tell you my journey from paralyzing fear to abounding hope?

6. Jesus From Others (10 min)

Close your time together in 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?