

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. Is there a service needed in your church your CG could provide?

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 with you?

1. Launchers : Living is Giving

- What was your first or the most profound experience of radical generosity you have ever witnessed?

2. Worship: The Gospel is Radical Generosity! Live to Give.

Worship the Lord for both your great need and poverty that is the perfect match to God's abundance. Read and believe.

The Compassion of the LORD - Isaiah 55:1–13 (ESV)

55 “Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;

and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that
which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is
good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting
covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the
peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do
not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to
you,

because of the LORD your God, and of the
Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD,

that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the
LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the
earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down
from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my
mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I
purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² “For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their
hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the
cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

3. Sermon Reflection: Live to Give. Compassion for the Marginalized.

What is the aim of our compassion?

What is the work of our compassion?

What is the reward of our compassion?

4. Kingdom Centered Prayer

YOU CAN PRAY WITH US ...

1. Worship and be in awe of the compassion of the Lord. Reflect on His goodness, mercy, and compassion in His work of loving the poor, marginalized, and outcast.
2. How have you lived contrary to loving the marginalized? Confess the ways you serve and love those who are easy to love. How do you love those around you transactionally, rather than seeking to serve and love others, expecting nothing in return?
3. Who are you neglecting to show compassion to? Who has the Lord put on your heart to go and love?
4. Give thanks to Jesus, the richest person in the world, who left those riches to save the poor, helpless, and harassed. Thank Him for lavishing His riches upon you, to make you an adopted child of God and an heir to God for eternity.
5. Ask the Holy Spirit to grow your heart in loving those who cannot repay you? Where is the Spirit leading you to spoil, lavish, and love the marginalized?

5. Mission: Live to Give.

Christians are people on mission. Our mission is God's mission. God gave His Son. God gave. We give. God is generous. We are to be generous.

- Who can you give to that can't pay you back?
- What can you do for those who can't pay you back?
- Why is there great joy in giving?

6. Jesus From Others

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?