

COMMUNITY CARE GROUP GUIDE

MARCH 11, 2018

Welcome to the time set aside for Communities and Community Care Groups! This is the fifth (yes, we are keeping track...) of 9 Sunday opportunities to meet this winter and spring leading to the final date on May 6. Communities and Community Care Groups are, of course, encouraged not only to meet on the designated dates but to be creative and use any opportunity to fulfill the four purposes of Communities: fellowship, pastoral care, discipleship and mission. These 4 purposes were explored in an exercise now completed by all the Communities. The results and subsequent questions are intended to provide fodder for further Community discussions.

***There are **two options** for discussion presented in this material, preceded by some creative “connecting” questions for people to get comfortable with one another. Of course you are also welcome to go back to any material from previous weeks. The material is on the church website under the “Communities” tab. Suggestions (they are merely suggestions meant to provoke some thoughts or ideas of possibilities for community involvement) for Communities/Community Care Group projects or involvement can be found on previous CCG guides (January 28 and February 11).

Option 1 includes the results of and feedback for the Community Exercise, now sent to all 12 Communities. The pastoral elder and deacon of the Communities mentioned have material in their possession.

Option 2 includes questions about the current sermon series on the Gospel of Mark. Questions cover both the message from March 4 and from today, March 11.

Leaders are asked to go through these materials ahead of time and use them to prepare a discussion for the meeting times. Feel free to pick from all the available options.

(Note: At the moment it is not possible to have the latest sermons online)

Beginning Your Time Together

Spend some time with one or two of the “connecting exercises” (good for all ages). Here are some suggestions:

- Talk about your week. What did you do and what did you experience?
- Did you notice anything about the area of the city you live that was unusual? What sorts of conversations have you had with your neighbours recently?
- What book have you read lately and why would you or would you not recommend it?
- Anybody watch “Black Panther”? What do you think? What message is it sending?
- What are the youth or children watching?
- Any sci-fi lovers in the group? Ask them what is it about sci-fi that captures their attention?

Prayer: Whichever of the options you choose to discuss as a community, ask God to bless your conversation and grow you as a Community through it.

Option 1 - If your Community leaders have received feedback on and questions about the Community exercise, you may wish to work through them (one section at a time) over the next number of Community gatherings. Please spend some time talking about the exercise and the questions it raised.

Prayer: As you think about your Community, take the opportunity to spend some time in prayer for your Community – the CCRC members and also your neighbours. Pray that the Lord would bind you together as a small “congregation” and provide leadership. Pray that the Lord would open doors of service in the broader community around you. Include people of all ages in your prayer time. Such prayer can be done early in your gathering or at the end of your time together. You will need to plan some time if a number of members of the group are going to be involved in prayer. Waiting until the very end of the meeting often cuts prayer time short because it encroaches upon eating time or departure time.

Option 2 - Reflections on the Gospel of Mark

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 5:1-8; Mark 12:1-12 – (March 4 sermon - led by Pastor John)

1. If you have children from grade 4, 5, or 6 in your group ask them what they talked about in their sermon discussion last week. What sorts of topics and questions were raised?
2. As we are reading through the Gospel of Mark, perhaps there are those who may wish to share some observations about the Gospel as a whole.
3. Read through the parable of the tenants as found in Mark 12 and spend a few moments talking about who the tenants refer to, and what the vineyard refers to and who the messengers are and who the son is and so forth. In other words put the parable in a broader context.
4. This is the only parable that Jesus tells in the Gospel of Mark after he starts teaching his disciples about his death. Why do you think Jesus doesn't use parables as much after he sets out toward Jerusalem? Why do you think the disciples have such a difficult time understanding his "plain speech"? Are there places in the Bible where you have trouble accepting the "plain speech" of Scripture?
5. The "Song of the Vineyard" from Isaiah chapter 5 was a well-known story for Jews in Jesus' time which shaped their identity as God's people even though they lived under Roman rule. What stories do we tell that shape our identity? What stories did you grow up with about your ancestors?
6. In this parable, Jesus takes a well-known identity story and twists it to reveal a deeper truth. What is that deeper truth? With whom did this parable hit home? Why did it hit home with them?
7. Have you ever used a story to cover up a part of your life that you didn't want people to know? What about your family stories? If Jesus were to re-tell your identity stories, what ways would he twist it and what deeper truths would he reveal?
8. Jesus quotes Psalm 118: 22, 23 in Mark 12:10, 11. What is a “capstone” or “cornerstone”? If you have a builder in the group ask them to explain the importance of such a stone. What does it mean that Jesus is the "cornerstone"? If you want, you may sing "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less," "Cornerstone," or "The Church's One Foundation" together as a group.

Scripture Reading: Mark 14: 1 - 11 (March 11 sermon – Pastor Amanda preaching)

1. Before beginning with a discussion about the story today, perhaps someone, who has been reading the Gospel, may wish to share some of their observations about the Gospel of Mark.

2. Retell the story found in Mark 14 in your own words. Have children involved in the telling of the story.
3. If you have the time compare the four accounts of this story: Matthew 26: 6-13; Mark 14:1-11; Luke 7:36-50, John 12: 1-11. What are some of the differences or similarities in the way the stories are told?
4. What is striking about the story for you? Share with the group.
5. Where else in the Bible do you find stories of someone being anointed, or Jesus being anointed? Share some examples.
6. Did Pastor Amanda identify the woman in the story? If so, who was she?
7. Some commentators suggest that the woman of the story was somehow emotionally unstable and not really aware of what she was doing. What do you think?
8. How valuable was the perfume in terms of a laborer's wages? How would these wages translate to our currency today? (14:5)
9. Why did the woman anoint Jesus with such expensive perfume? What do you think was the point?
10. How did people react to the woman's gesture? Why do you suppose they reacted the way they did? Was it about the expense of the perfume; was it about the perfume; was it about the fact that she was a woman; was it about Jesus? Why did the people in the room react the way they did?
11. How did Jesus react to and interpret the gesture? Why did he defend her (14:6-8)? What was the woman's legacy?
12. What do you do with a story like this? How does it speak into your life?
13. What does this story tell us about Jesus?

Prayer: For your closing prayer time, it's always a good idea to go around the circle and let everyone who is willing share what is on their hearts. Be sure to include children as well. Let everyone who wants to pray have a chance to pray. If you want, you may close your time together by singing a song or reciting the Lord's Prayer together.