

COMMUNITY CARE GROUP GUIDE

APRIL 22, 2018 - EASTERTIDE

Welcome to the time set aside for Communities and Community Care Groups! This is the second to last of 9 Sunday opportunities to meet this winter and spring leading to the final date on May 6. You may want to start thinking about how to keep your Community connected throughout the summer months.

We are now into the season of Eastertide which stretches from Easter to Pentecost, a total of 50 days, seven weeks plus one day. The purpose of Eastertide is to celebrate and reflect on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the power and love of God displayed in that great act of power over sin and death, and on the power given to the church. The challenge of the Scriptures calls the church to be a visible witness to the invisible realities of the gospel. Unity, reconciliation, justice – these are spiritual realities in Christ. But the church is called to bear witness to these spiritual realities by making them visible realities in this fallen world that testify to the Kingdom of God on earth. Perhaps you have already been hearing about the **Belhar Confession**, written in South Africa in the 1980's in the face of Apartheid, a program of government-sponsored racial segregation that had its roots in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Synod 2017 adopted the Belhar Confession as a contemporary testimony for the Christian Reformed Church. Not only will we be including the themes of the Belhar Confession – unity, reconciliation and justice – in the upcoming worship services, but we have already started going deeper into the Belhar as the “Dive into Doctrine” series began this past Wednesday evening. 40 people were introduced to the discomforts of the Belhar this past Wednesday and many read the confession for the very first time. This coming Wednesday evening we will be participating in the “Blanket Exercise”, an interactive exercise that helps us understand the experience of indigenous peoples in North America. There is still time to join for the next four Wednesday evenings...

www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/contemporary-testimony/confession-belhar

***There are **two options** for discussion presented in this material, preceded by some creative “connecting” questions with which you can begin your time together. All of the material is concluded with some thoughts as to what Communities can do to think ahead. 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.

Option 1 is a unique exercise based upon what Pastor Carel and his wife experienced last weekend as they visited Prince Edward Island. It is an exercise that will require you to do some thinking about Communities and CCRC's approach to ministry.

Option 2 includes questions about the topic raised by the GEMS theme. There are no April 15 services or themes to fall back on because of the cancelations of both worship services last Sunday.

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 either option or somehow do them both.

(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. How did the **ice storm** affect you or your family? How did you spend the Sunday? What did you learn about yourself or about your family being shut in for a weekend?
- What signs of spring have you seen already?
- What book have you read lately and why would you or would you not recommend it?
- What are the youth or children watching?
- Review the Community list. Who is all in your Community? Have you made contact with someone you don't know?

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 – Last weekend Pastor Carel and his wife, Irene, responded to an invitation to visit with the Charlottetown CRC (a congregation of which they had been a part - 1985-1993). The invitation was to come and “tell the story of ministry at CCRC”. Opportunity was given to tell about our Communities and about how we are living together here in the Waterloo Region. Pastor Carel found it “exciting and life-giving”. Well, you have been invited, you have responded positively, in other words you are coming to tell, but now you need to put a presentation together. What would you include in your presentation? If you were to share what is happening at CCRC, what would you say? What sorts of things would you bring to the fore? What sorts of things excite you? What would your presentation look like? Have some fun with this. Make a PowerPoint. Include some pictures, whatever....Share the result of your work with your elder and or deacon.

Prayer: As you think about CCRC and its approach to ministry, pray for your Community and for the broader congregation. Pray that people may catch the vision and be excited about the good news of Jesus and about the church. Pray that the Lord would allow us to live our faith in our daily lives and that people would “know that we are Christians by our love.” 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 morning worship service

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:1-11 (GEMS service and theme – Pastor John)

1. If you have children from grades 4, 5, or 6 in your group ask them what they talked about in their sermon discussion this week. What sorts of topics and questions were raised?
2. Today's GEMS' theme and the sermon challenged us to think about how we are like Jesus...or not like Jesus. Think about Jesus. Is there a story or an action or a teaching that you especially like? If we're called to live like Jesus, what is especially hard for you in living like Jesus?
3. ***In His Steps*** is a best-selling religious fiction novel written by Charles Monroe Sheldon. First published in 1896, the book has sold more than 30,000,000 copies, and ranks as one of the best-selling books of all time. The full title of the book is *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* The story in a nutshell: When a homeless man interrupts the comfortable routine of First Church of

Raymond, Pastor Henry Maxwell challenged the congregation saying: "I want volunteers from First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly, for an entire year; not to do anything without first asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?'" Perhaps you have read the book or seen the 2013 movie adaptation. The GEMS theme was somewhat similar for this past year. For a while the WWJD campaign had people wearing bracelets as a reminder of the question. What do you think about the question? Is it helpful? Is it cliché? Is it unrealistic? Beyond merely the question and issue of WWJD, talk about what it means to walk in Jesus' steps. What are the implications of living out fully what Jesus taught?

4. What are some things that Jesus asks us to do that we find very tough to follow?
5. Discuss: "Do not love the world or anything in the world (I John 2:15)." What does that mean and how does one live in such a way that one does not "love the world or anything in the world"?
6. What If We Disobey? Portions of Scripture like this one can make us feel like we'll never be enough. Like we'll never measure up. It can leave us asking: "Obey all the commands? What? I can't do that! Even if I tried really hard!" Where does that leave us?
7. Today is known in our broader society as "Earth Day". What is the connection between ecology or "earth keeping" and "In His Steps"?
8. The Belhar Confession is a document that calls us to action. If you have someone in the group who was present this past Wednesday evening, ask them to tell you something of what they learned about the Belhar and or about what it asks of us.
9. The purpose of Eastertide is to celebrate and reflect on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on the power and love of God displayed in that great act of power over sin and death, and on the power given to the church. The church has power? Really? What power? Discuss.

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.

Thinking ahead:

There is only one week left that has been set aside specifically to allow us to meet as Communities and Community Care Groups. What will you do as Communities to stay together and to keep the relationships going throughout the summer months? Are there any creative service projects that might bind you as a group in the months to come? Are there special Community worship opportunities that might be possible in the months to come? Be creative and think ahead. Even though the formal Sunday opportunities are coming to a close that does not mean that Communities cease to exist.