

COMMUNITY CARE GROUP GUIDE

MAY 6, 2018 - EASTERTIDE

Welcome to the time set aside for Communities and Community Care Groups! This is the last of 9 specifically set aside Sunday opportunities to meet this winter and spring.

Just a note for your information concerning the activities of a couple of the other Communities. **Community 7** has a member who is unable to worship and participate in Lord's Supper on a regular basis because of various health concerns, so the leadership of the Community thought it would be wonderful to bring the worship and Lord's Supper to the individual. Therefore, tonight that Community is meeting in a home and celebrating the Lord's Supper together. This gathering also allows for an opportunity to teach the children of the Community all about the sacrament. Pastor Carel will be leading the gathering. Earlier today, **Community 9** met to say farewell to a couple of its members and to also welcome new people into their midst. The Community also will be involved in an interactive devotional exercise to get to know not only their Community better but to also spend some time reflecting on their geographic piece of the city.

Both of these are exciting new initiatives to help the Communities as they seek to grow in relationship to God, each other, and to the community around them.

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. For a number of weeks now you have 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 have we been including the themes of the Belhar Confession – unity, reconciliation and justice – in the worship services, but we have already started going deeper into the Belhar as the **“Dive into Doctrine”** series on Wednesday evenings. There is still time to join for the next two Wednesday evenings... www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/contemporary-testimony/confession-belhar

***There are any number of things that your Community or Community Care Group can do on this final designated Sunday:**

1. Open the Scriptures and discuss the message delivered on Sunday, April 29 by Pastor Amanda, concerning the parable of the prodigal Son and the whole matter of reconciliation, as talked about in the Belhar Confession. Or perhaps you may wish to reflect on the Friendship Service from this morning. The discussion questions can be found later on in this material.
2. Take some time to look back to the materials in previous weeks to see if there are topics or Bible studies that you perhaps missed and now wish to use for discussion purposes. The material is on the church website under the “Communities” tab.

3. Take up the challenge presented to you two weeks ago (April 22) where you were asked the question (based upon Pastor Carel and Irene's trip to PEI), "What would you say, if you were asked, to describe the Community model as used by CCRC?"
4. Take some time to enjoy each other's company and talk about how you will remain connected for the summer months and what sorts of things you can do to improve upon this past season of "being community". What sorts of things would you like to see in September?
5. Perhaps, like Communities 7 and 9, you have already made plans for your time together today. If you like what you are reading about the two mentioned Communities and would like to do the same in your Community, by all means contact Pastor Carel. There are plenty of weeks in the summer for such events.

Leaders are asked to go through the materials ahead of time and use them to prepare a discussion for the meeting times. Feel free to pick one of the above suggestions.

(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 it go? What did you enjoy? What did you struggle with?
- 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 or as a Community Care Group, ask God to bless your conversation and grow you as a Community through it.

Reflections on the morning worship services – April 29/May 6 (Pastor Amanda preaching)

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:11-32

1. If you have children from grades 4, 5, or 6 in your group ask them what they talked about in their sermon discussion last week or this week. What sorts of topics and questions were raised?
2. Tell the parable in your own words or act it out.
3. Who is this story about? The youngest son? The oldest son? The father? Why do you answer as you do?
4. Spend a few moments describing each character in the parable. What are they like? How are the relationships between each described?
5. Who do the characters refer to in the context of the world where Jesus lived?
6. What is the point of the parable?
7. Pastor Amanda said, "At the end of the story, one son is restored and the other, the one who never left, is outside the party refusing to come in. So we are left wondering...how does the story end for these two sons, these two brothers?"
8. Pastor Amanda made a reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu was asked if the Commission had done its job. Have the deep divisions in the land been healed or bridged? Is the story finished? And if so, is it a happy ending or failure? Desmond Tutu responded by reframing the question turning over

the very assumption underlying the question. He said, "Reconciliation is a process. It is not something that is just an event. And we are constantly saying it is a national project where every South African has to make their contribution and that is a process to heal over 300 years of separation and division." How do you react? What is reconciliation? What does it look like?

9. Think about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission here in Canada. What is our response to it? Will we venture down the road of obedience and reconciliation or continue to walk the road of prejudice and fear? How will the story end?
10. Pastor Amanda ended her message with a couple of pointed questions: Where is the reconciling love of our God calling you to venture on the road of reconciliation? Where in your lives, your relationships, our world, is God nudging you to take the first few steps down that road of obedience and reconciliation? Are you willing to share some thoughts with the group on these two questions?
11. **Read:** I Corinthians 12
12. What does this passage tell us about the nature of the church?
13. What message did the Friendship service this morning leave with you?
14. 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. Thank the Lord for your Community and small group and for a good season of study and time spent together. If you want, you may close your time together by singing a song or reciting the Lord's Prayer together.