

COMMUNITIES/SMALL GROUPS

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

JANUARY 12, 2020

Happy New Year and Welcome to the first Sunday in 2020 set aside to allow Communities and or small groups to meet. The dates set aside for Communities or small groups to meet are: today, January 26; February 9, 23; March 8, 22; April 5, 19 and May 3.

There are a number of different approaches that you can take whether you meet in a small group or as a Community joining together for a meal. Below you will find some suggestions as to what to talk about or what sorts of exercises you can do. If you are a leader take the time to go through the options and pick which ones you deem appropriate for the setting you find yourself in.

- I. **Beginning Your Time Together:** Why not take a few moments to ask those gathered to share some special memory or moment from the just completed Christmas/New Year's season. (If needed, please refer to the material prepared for September 22, 2019 for other suggestions as to how you might want to begin your time together. (ccrc.on.ca/communities))
- II. **Some questions/matters to think about and discuss together as you meet as a Community – you can easily take a few minutes to answer some of these questions when you meet together for a meal.**
 - a) Take some time to think about the CCRC Community you are in. Who is in that Community? Can you name everyone? Orally going through the list reminds people of who is all in their Community.
 - b) Take some time to list some of the needs in your CCRC Community, if known. What are some of the concerns that live among the members of the Community? Write them on a large sheet on the wall so that all can see them and are aware of the concerns throughout your gathering. They can later be shared with the whole Community. How can you address the needs? Work out some action plan. If not known, what can you do to become more informed about the needs in your CCRC Community? What are some creative ways in which to minister to the needs of those in your CCRC Community? Pray about the things mentioned.
 - c) Is your elder or deacon one of those office bearers – “responsibility bearers”- who is coming to the end of his or her term? Talk about that together and begin to think about who could become the new elder or deacon in your Community. Spend some time in prayer over this matter.
- III. **Are there some things you can do when you gather for a meal together besides just eating? Maybe an exercise between the main course and the dessert?**
 - a. Are there some fast moving board games that can include people of all ages?
 - b. There is now a foosball table in the multipurpose room. Perhaps a tournament of sorts? (That table is only available for those using the multipurpose room, of course.)
 - c. Pastor Amanda has a pile of photographs available for use by a Community. Place the pictures face up on a table and throw out a challenge, like: “find a picture that expresses where you are at in your faith journey right now” or “find a picture that best describes your hopes for the new year” or “find a picture that speaks to your mood right now” or “find a picture that best

describes what you like to do for fun” or “just pick a picture that speaks to you or that you like” ...well, you will have to be creative. Once every one has picked a picture, either in small groups or in the larger circle get them to share with everyone what picture they picked and why. This is a great exercise for all ages.

IV. Discussion Guide (for those desiring to talk about the sermon series): In the worship services over the next couple of months, we will be walking through Jesus’ teaching on discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses, giving God’s people the law and making known God’s will. The Sermon on the Mount in many ways parallels Exodus 20ff, where God gives the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. In his first teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus lays out the radical principles of the Kingdom of Heaven in contrast to the values of the Empire, reframes the law, reinterprets spirituality, and roots everything in the Truth.

While the sermons provide some back ground information and help to inform the conversation, one does not necessarily have to listen to the sermons in order to participate in the small groups.

(Note: sermons can be accessed online at ccrc.on.ca/sermons)

Introduction: The opening of the Sermon on the Mount, called “The Beatitudes,” is a famous and comforting passage of scripture. But the beatitudes are also subversive. Here Jesus presents the core values of the Kingdom of Heaven in stark contrast to the values of the Roman Empire and the values of our culture today (which are eerily similar). In an empire that values ambition, wealth, and power, Jesus calls those who want to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven to model a different way of living—to be salt and light in a world of decay and darkness.

1. Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-16
2. If you heard somebody say, “I’m so blessed,” but didn’t know any other information, what would you assume they had recently experienced? How would you define the word “blessed” as used in the “beatitudes”?
3. What does the word “beatitude” mean? What is the point of the “beatitudes”?
4. Scripture Reading: Luke 6:17-26. What is the difference between Luke 6 and Matthew 5?
5. Go through each of the “beatitudes” and pick out the main words (“poor in spirit”, “mourn”, etc.) and list them. Read the list a couple of times aloud. What do each of the words they mean to you?
6. What do you think of the Talmud’s statement? – “We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are.”
7. How do the “beatitudes” run counter to what we usually think, i.e. how do they describe the difference between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdoms of this world? In other words, how do the Beatitudes compare to the values of the world around us?
8. What does the world think will make a person happy? Does it? What makes you happy?
9. The last two “beatitudes” warn that there may be resistance or even persecution as we seek to live as followers of Christ. “Blessed are you when...” Really? Explain. Have you experienced either, and if so when and how? What makes it hard to follow Christ today?
10. How well are we living into what the “beatitudes” talk about? Do an honest self-evaluation.
11. When are we not “salt” and or “light”?

V. Prayer: As you close out your time together, thank the Lord for a new year and pray that we may be “salt” and “light” as we move into a new year.