



COMMUNITY

Small Group Facilitator Guide

Set up:

- Ensure that all technology is in place and ready to view the video. If your church does not have adequate WiFi, this may mean that the facilitator will need to download the video before arriving for the session. Facilitators will also need to ensure that everyone will be able to hear and see the video as it is being played. Facilitators may wish to turn on closed captioning.
- Create a welcoming space to have a conversation.
- Place a table in the center or near the conversation space to create an “altarscape” of items that will help set the tone and keep the conversation focused on each Sign of Life.

What you need:

- Video viewing capabilities
- Conversation guide for the facilitator
- Practicing Signs of Life and worship handouts for each participant
- A table for the altarscape
- Specific items to create altar scape. For community, bring back parts of the elements from each week: candles, a bowl of water, bread and fruit, and the shelter of the crèche.

Learning Outcomes

- For participants to be able to link community to liturgy, their own life, and experience of God.
- For participants to gain a better awareness of the presence of the holy in everyday life.
- For participants to deepen relationships through spiritual conversation.

Small Group Session for Community

Gathering Prayer/Setting the Altarscape: (5 minutes)

Gather participants into the conversation circle. Invite a few moments of stillness, and then pray this collect:

Almighty Triune God, we thank you for the gift of community, by which we share life's journey and grow together. May we follow your example of mutual self-giving and love to bless each other with an ever-widening embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dances with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity of persons now and forever. Amen.

After the prayer, place the shelter of the crèche on the table. Take a few moments to pause and think about community.

Check-In (15 minutes):

Orient participants to the rhythm of this session. Let them know that you will do check-in, watch the video, have a conversation, and then close with worship.

Invite participants to answer the following question:

Last week we discussed shelter. How did you notice the presence of shelter this week?

Facilitators may wish to practice mutual invitation (see Small Group Facilitator Guide, above) or they may wish to simply go around in the circle. Participants who pass should be invited to share after the other participants have shared.

Watch Video (15 minutes):

Before you start the video, read this script:

“As you watch this video, pay attention to the various ways community is explored, and think about how community is present in the life and liturgies of your worshipping community.”

Play video to the end. Invite the group to come back together for conversation.

Small Group Conversation (40 minutes):

Open the small group conversation with the following question:

“Where is community present in the life and liturgies of your own worshipping community? How are these symbols and practices similar or dissimilar to what you heard and saw in the video?”

After the opening question has been discussed, choose any of the following questions to discuss with your small group. The facilitator should use their best judgment to select the questions that they believe will elicit meaningful conversation for your context. The small group may spend the entire time on one question, or do several. How many questions the group moves through is less important than fruitful conversation for the group.

- How has your experience of community influenced your spiritual journey?
- Brother Jim says, “We are created as social beings, and God is a community of persons. It’s actually to our health that we do come together as community and have our rough edges rub up against those of others.” When have you had a rough edge rubbed off?
- Brother David says, “Silence is a gift that allows us to recognize and revere the mystery of every person. Only God can know this person as who they truly are.” How can being silent help you know someone better?
- In a healthy community, individuals can flourish as individuals. Tell a story about a time you were accepted exactly as you are.

When there are about ten minutes left for conversation, ask the following question:

“How has your experience of the Signs of Life (Light, Water, Food, Shelter, Community) been transformed?”

Wrap Up/Weekly Practice (5 minutes):

Remind the participants of the weekly practice. Distribute the Practicing Signs of Life handout for Community. Reiterate the instructions from the video:

“Here is a reminder of the daily practice for this Sign of Life. When you spend time with other people this week, be fully present with them, putting away distractions, and ask them to do the same. Remember that Jesus dwells in each of us and is manifest among us in community.”

Assuming this is your final session, facilitator should thank people for participation and suggest upcoming formation opportunities, or recommended resources for continuing spiritual deepening.

Worship (10 minutes):

Pass out the worship handouts to each participant. The facilitator may wish to lead worship, or may invite another participant to lead worship. Groups may wish to use the altarscape as a focal point during their worship time.

After worship, the small group session has ended.



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Small Group Worship

Leader prays the collect: Almighty Triune God, we thank you for the gift of community, by which we share life's journey and grow together. May we follow your example of mutual self-giving and love to bless each other with an ever-widening embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dances with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity of persons now and forever. **Amen.**

Song of Ezekiel

Read antiphonally by half verse.

I will take you from among all nations; *

and gather you from all lands to bring you home.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you; *

and purify you from false gods and uncleanness.

A new heart I will give you *

and a new spirit put within you.

I will take the stone heart from your chest *

and give you a heart of flesh.

I will help you walk in my laws *

and cherish my commandments and do them.

You shall be my people, *

and I will be your God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Leader: Without silence, words have no meaning.

Listen to this poem about community.

Suggest reading from "To be of use" by Marge Piercy

In the silence that follows, let God companion you.

[Silence for two minutes]

Prayers of the Gathered Community:

Leader: Even as we are gathered into a community of love, there are those who need to know the love of God. Pray for the lonely and all who need community, either silently or aloud.

Our communities have loved us and shaped us into who we are. We give thanks for those communities that we name, either silently or aloud.

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Now let us pray the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your Name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and for ever. Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**



COMMUNITY

Practice Sheet

This week we invite you to reflect on the sign of Community

Question:

Who is your community?

Scripture:

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

John 15:12-17

Collect:

Almighty Triune God, we thank you for the gift of community, by which we share life's journey and grow together. May we follow your example of mutual self-giving and love to bless each other with an ever-widening embrace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who dances with you and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity of persons now and forever. Amen.

Practice:

When you spend time with others this week, be fully present with them. Put away distractions, and ask them to do the same. Remember that Jesus dwells in each of us and is manifest among community.



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