



HOLY
TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

COMMUNITIES OF CALLING
SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

Communities
of Calling  **Collegeville** Institute

INTRODUCTORY COMMUNITY CHURCH ARTICLE

In his book *Let Your Life Speak* Parker Palmer points out that the word vocation comes from the Latin word for “voice,” which is why vocation is properly understood as “a calling that I hear.” And this calling, Palmer suggests, is uniquely heard in one's life: “I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about--quite apart from what I would like it to be about...I must listen to my life telling me who I am.”

Palmer's understanding of calling is linked with identity, which makes for a certain beautiful simplicity. It means that God's *purpose* for one's life is found in God's *design* of one's life. And this idea resonates. As writer Ryan Pemberton offers, “It's something we feel to be true, somehow. Like a kite released into the wind, there are moments in life when things line up in such a way that we realize we were created for *this*.”

The *Communities of Calling Initiative* at Holy Trinity is a project based out of St. John's in Collegeville and funded by the Lilly Foundation. Holy Trinity has been selected as one of 14 congregations throughout the United States and Canada to serve as a partner congregation with this effort. We have received a grant to explore how Christians discover and deepen their sense of God's calling.

As is stated on the Communities of Calling website, “We all love a good story. It's our belief that vocation is communal and is lived on the local level. Today's secular versions focus on the individual: what do I want to do with my life? But the Christian tradition also believes callings serve the common good.”

Without a doubt you have a story to tell. What are the things that you are doing in your life that make your story part of the human story, part of God's story? Holy Trinity is about to launch a number of small groups around a variety of interests in the hope of allowing members to connect with others in a way that does not always happen on Sunday mornings. The groups will meet four-six times between January and May and the members will determine the dates and times that work best for them. If you are interested in being part of a group or would like more information, look for the display and sign up in the Community Room.

Here is a listing of the small groups: Outdoors Adventures (led by Tom and Julie Cahoy); Birding (Keith Olstad); Lectio Divina (led by Dennis O'Brien and Kathy Howe); We are Neighbors (led by Erin Arifin); Drum Circle (led by Benhi Khabebe); Advocacy (led by Bob Hulteen); Hospitality (led by John and Kay Buzza); Aging and Saging (led by Paul Hardt); Art and Laughter (led by Sharon Englund); Lake Street #1 (led by ZoeAna Martinez); Lake Street #2 (led by Teresa Butel); Grief (led by Pastor Angela Khabebe); Take Me to the Theater (led by Peter and Amy Johnson).

The grant we've received means that we have money available to support all of these groups' activities. No one will be excluded because of finances! Join a small group. Deepen your commitment to learning about one another and about God's call for your life!

Deep thanks,

The Communities of Calling Team, including Kathy Howe, Deb Anderson, Mike Mann, Pastor Ingrid Rasmussen, Ann Schrooten, Erin Arifin, and Sandra Hisakuni

LISTING OF THE SMALL GROUPS AND MEMBERSHIP

(Please note: Membership is subject to change. Groups leaders will have the most up-to-date information.)

ADVOCACY

Leader:

Group description: Scripture tells us that our young women and men will see visions; our old men and women will dream dreams. If we hope to bring these aspirational visions and dreams into fruition because they will make real differences in real peoples' lives, we will know how to develop and work for just policies. As citizens, many of us are called to engage the public sphere. This small group will work together with elected leaders and registered lobbyists to learn some skills about, as they say on Sesame Street, "how a bill becomes a law" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otbml6WlQP0>). This small group will meet three times to discuss the different ways to make a difference, using a spectrum of civic responses, as well as some optional group meetings attending a county commission, city council, or legislative committee meetings. And there might be a little homework.

HOSPITALITY

Leaders:

Group description: The group will gather for a home cooked meal followed by in-depth discussion of such issues as: our calling, hospitality, spiritual journey, personal stories, deep questions and other issues arising from our interaction. The group will meet monthly.

BIRDING

Leader:

Group description: Birds are wonderful to see and hear simply for what they are, but they are also a telling indicator of the health of their environment. This small group will meet for several field trips to metro birding hot spots throughout the year, as well as meet occasionally for coffee or lunch in order to discuss environmental topics related to birds. We will consider possible policy or political action for advocacy and conservation of both resident and migratory birds. Keith is chair of the board for the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Leaders:

Group description: Join us for a new outdoor activity group, starting in November. We will get to know each other while hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and other activities this winter and spring. We will share a cup of hot cocoa (and other beverages) after our outings.

LECTIO DIVINA (READING SCRIPTURE)

Leader:

Group description: Come join us for Lexio Divina. Lexio is reading scripture not to study it but to open ourselves and listen carefully to what God is saying to each of us personally in this moment. We will read short

passages repeatedly as a group, listen, and share as we choose what we heard. Finally we will share a snack and get to know each other better. We hope to leave each session with friendship and a word from God.

DRUM CIRCLE

Leader:

Group description: Drumming is powerful. It provides an access point to higher power. It releases negative feelings, emotional blockages, and emotional trauma. It grounds us in the present moment. It provides a space for connection with both self and others. No musical (or, more specifically, drumming) experience necessary.

AGING AND SAGING

Leader:

Group description: Many people confront the prospect of aging with fear, as they look forward to a decades-long decline into personal diminishment and impoverishment. On the other hand, our culture also tells elders, "Now you can finally doing all the things on your 'bucket list,'" with little regard for the interior life of the elder. Rabbi Schachter-Shalomi presents a model of the sage or "elder of the tribe," who practices contemplative disciplines and comes to terms with their mortality. They harvest their life experiences, pass on their wisdom to younger people, and safeguard the health of our ailing planet. Using the book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older* by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller (2014 edition), we will discuss this new vision of sage-ing in 5-6 meetings. The book is available from Amazon or from your local bookstore. If you need assistance purchasing the book, contact the church office.

LAKE STREET #1

Leader:

Group description: Learn the stories of immigrant-owned business owners. And then share yours with them. We have learned from the Lake Street Council—one of our partners that engages, serves, and advocates for the Lake Street business community in Minneapolis to ensure the vitality and prosperity of the commercial corridor—that there is a great need to tell the stories of immigrant-owned businesses that are being affected, and, quite frankly, threatened, by the current administration's immigration policies. This group will get to know the owners of Habanero Tacos Grill and one additional business. A videographer will accompany the group's travels and make a video about each of the business owners that will be shared on social media.

LAKE STREET #2

Leader:

Group description: Learn the stories of immigrant-owned business owners. And then share yours with them. We have learned from the Lake Street Council—one of our partners that engages, serves, and advocates for the Lake Street business community in Minneapolis to ensure the vitality and prosperity of the commercial corridor—that there is a great need to tell the stories of immigrant-owned businesses that are being affected, and, quite frankly, threatened, by the current administration's immigration policies. This group will get to know the owners of Ricardo Levins Morales Studio and Himalayan Restaurant. A videographer will accompany the group's travels and make a video about each of the business owners that will be shared on social media.

ART AND LAUGHTER

Leader:

Group description: There is art all around us and in us. Our group will take a look at the many forms of art and sometimes the so-called mundane and see the serenity, the wildness and/or beauty. We will think about the lives of various artists and how and why their art became. We can visit a few art museums as well as street art. Discussion of all variations of art will be welcome including wall art, statuary, performing art, the art of conversation, culinary art, etc. There are movies about painters and/or performers we can watch. All of this we can reflect upon as we reach further into the meaning of art in our own spiritual lives and how it affects us and those around us. Even as some participants are artists, we probably will NOT be doing any art/crafts ourselves as a group. And as in many things, there is humor. Laughter is healing and fun. I bet we'll find a fair amount of humor in some art we experience.

WE ARE NEIGHBORS

Leader:

Are you a resident of Trinity Apartments? If not, would you like to strengthen your relationship with residents of Trinity Apartments? Then this group is for you. We are going to meet over lunch at very nearby restaurants. Cost of the meals will be covered for all participants.

Team HOPE (Healing Our Pain...Eventually)

Leader: Pastor

Sooner or later, we all experience the loss of a loved one. Our HOPE group is a nonjudgmental space where you can share your story and benefit from the stories of others. As a supportive community, we will journey together through the grieving process. You are not alone.

TAKE ME TO THE THEATER

Leaders:

Group description: We all love a good play or musical! This group will attend up to four theatrical performances at different theaters, with ticket costs covered for all. Our group will meet first to decide what

the plays are we'd like to see, then plan for post-performance discussions to talk about what we've seen. Holy Trinity has a long tradition of presenting and supporting theatrical productions, and this will be a great way to keep that tradition alive.

SMALL GROUP FACILITATION GUIDE

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Have energy awareness: your energy, the group's energy, and individuals' energy.
 - a. Part of being a group facilitator is helping people transition out of everyday experience and into this new environment of the small group.
 - b. Take a moment to identify your purposes and goals for your group and talk about what purposes and goals others bring.
2. Be space-aware: as you meet in different settings, try to do things that will help to keep the group energy intact.
3. Structure and Safety that welcomes comfort and participation.
 - a. Identify and communicate a clear but relaxed structure to your meetings. Establish clear start and end times. For some groups, an agenda can be helpful; for others, a clear process and purpose to the meetings is enough. Rituals for gathering can also help.
 - b. For some, a free-flowing conversation will work best; for other groups, a more methodical, deliberate process may work where everyone gets a turn to speak without interruption (e.g., use a talking stick).
4. Establish at the beginning some agreed-upon rules of process and procedure.

KEY AWARENESSES

1. Anxiety: always present to some degree. It's contagious! It's good for the leader to be upfront about your own anxieties as this may help others be open about theirs.
2. Alliances: they are natural. They can be healthy, but they can also be excluding.
3. Look for a balance of participation. "Let me hear from some of you who have not spoken."
4. Watch for cross-talking.
5. Respect people's time.
6. Attrition: this can happen. You want to develop a plan for how to maintain group size.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

1. Defining purpose: what do you want people to take away (e.g., education, relationship building, skill building, advocacy efforts).
2. Defining your leadership role (e.g., facilitator, guide, teacher, or host).
 - a. Have clarity about how you will do this and share it with the group.
3. Structure of sessions.
 - a. Length and frequency.
 - b. Who will plan the sessions?
 - c. How will you start and stop the sessions?
4. How will you communicate between sessions?
5. Needed supplies and materials.

6. Snacks and beverages?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions may help your groups “go deeper,” thus providing pathways for connection. You may choose to modify them based on your small group activities. For instance, the theater group might ask, “Mr. Fill-in-the-Blank-Character, in that theater production that we just saw, was being pulled in a thousand different directions. What callings are making demands on your time and energy right now?”

SESSION ONE

1. What is it in your journey of life that has brought you here?
2. Why have you chosen this small group?

SESSION TWO

1. Tell us about two or three of your different roles and relationships in life. Follow up: How do you experience God in this work or relationship?
2. Where does your life feel most unbalanced today? Where are you feeling the push and pull of multiple roles, relationships, or callings?

SESSION THREE

1. Share a story of a time that you felt God at work in your life (for example, through an experience of nature or an encounter with another person). What did you learn from this experience?
2. Reflecting on your group’s discussion, what insight did you receive—from others’ stories or from sharing your own experiences?

SESSION FOUR

1. Share an example of a time of pain, grief or loss in your own life that affected your faith in God. How did this experience change your understanding of how God works in your life?
2. Share a story of a time that you felt called in a struggle, away from a difficult situation, towards something new, or for a deeper purpose than you first thought.

OPENING/CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord God,
You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

MISCELLANEOUS

COSTS

All costs (within reason) will be covered by the grant. If you need reimbursement from the church, simply fill out a reimbursement form in the church office (in the work room by the copier) and label it "COMMUNITIES OF CALLING + THE NAME OF YOUR SMALL GROUP." What might you need to purchase? Books, snacks, museum tickets, coffee...whatever you dream up!

SPACES AT CHURCH

While you may want to meet somewhere special, the church is available, too. You can schedule rooms by contacting Pam Wetterlund (pwetterlund@htlcmpls.org). The church is readily available Monday-Thursday from 8:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m., Fridays from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

JOURNALS

Erin Arifin has a journal for each small group member. If she hasn't yet connected with you and handed you a stack of journals, you can contact her (erin.arifin4@gmail.com). Use them as you would like!

SOMETHING TO SHARE?

We'd love to keep the congregation and our grant funder informed about the small group activities. If you have pictures, written pieces, or other discoveries to share, please send them to us (ingridrasmussen@htlcmpls.org).