



725 South High Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Dear Trinity Community,

From the very beginning, the church gathered at Trinity has continually sought to discern how God is calling us to follow Jesus in this particular time and place. Over the years, the fruit of this discernment has grown through the ministries of House Churches, and recently with the addition of Marks Groups. While calls have been made in the context of corporate worship, the work of discernment is ongoing, and happens wherever the Spirit of God is moving, which is to say everywhere!

During these challenging times, our need to discern how to respond to the challenges in our communities and the world around us, particularly with the reality of COVID-19, is perhaps greater than it has been to this point. One of the added difficulties is that we are unable to gather as we always have, unable to issue calls as we always have, and how we are able to be present in ministry with one another is different than it has always been. However, we believe that God is still calling us to specific ministries in this time and place, and we believe that the Holy Spirit is still at work, enlivening that sense of call in the members of this church.

We grieve that we are unable to be together, physically, in worship. But our hope is that the communal work of discernment can be enhanced, and made even more accessible, with the following plan.

During the Harvest season, our Nurture time will focus each week on missions and ministries that are supported by the church in a variety of ways. As we enter that hour with a focus on mission and calling, **we will designate the Nurture hour on Sunday, September 20, for a time during which House Churches and Marks Groups can be called.**¹ We will begin with prayer and a responsive reading, “What is God saying to Trinity?” Then we will invite those who are prepared to make calls to do so, using the following format:

- Start by reading a Bible verse or a short passage that speaks to the calling of the group
- Elaborate on the focus of the group, and whether you intend to call as a House Church or a Marks Group

¹ See the end of this letter for more information about House Churches and Marks Groups



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- Issue an invitation to participate, which should include a day, time, and location or format of first meeting, and who to contact for more information

After the initial calls have been made, we will have opportunity for more conversation, asking any questions and sharing excitement for the calls that have been made, as well as opportunity for others to share if there are potential calls that have been on their hearts and minds. It could be that someone is unsure of whether or not to issue a call, but will be inspired to do so from the conversation, or find that the potential interest is shared by others. We will close the Nurture session with prayer together.

This Nurture time, along with the others, will be recorded and made available for viewing by Monday, with a link posted on Facebook, the church website, and sent out by email. In addition, a list of all of the calls will be typed up and sent out through all of those methods. The **video from the Nurture time will be edited to distill the calls and played in worship on Sunday, September 27**. During this time, any additional calls can be sent in by email to the Pastor, and they will be read in worship on September 27. After that service, the complete list of calls will be circulated again on the website, Facebook, and email. A hard copy of this letter, and the letter summarizing the calls, will be mailed to church members who do have access to email.

If you need technical help connecting on Zoom, or if you would like to make a call but are not comfortable accessing Zoom, please contact any member of the Harvest Team and we will be happy to troubleshoot, provide assistance, or issue the call on your behalf.

If you haven't joined the Fellowship or Nurture on Zoom before, there are instructions for doing so on the church website and weekly email. You can also contact one of the members of the team below. The Fellowship Zoom begins immediately following the end of the livestream of worship on Facebook. This season we will have a focus on God's faithfulness, so the Fellowship conversation will be a little more structured, around the question "Where have you experienced God's faithfulness in the past week?"



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Nurture will use the same “Zoom room” and login as the Fellowship time, so if you are already on Fellowship, we will transition from there to Nurture. You can also login to the Zoom just before or right at 11:15 to join for Nurture.

As a reminder, while the physical office is closed, the virtual office remains open on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:30-2:30. During these hours you can call and reach Wonshé at the church phone number, 434-9556.

Even though we are unable to gather in traditional ways, and while we are grieving the loss of so much right now, we also affirm that God is present and at work here and now, and calling us as partners in Christ’s service. The Harvest team is grateful for constructive feedback from church members that has significantly shaped and reshaped this plan. We think that House Churches can be a particularly meaningful way to connect during these days, not only for mission but for fellowship, nurture, and worship, and our prayer is that individuals or groups in the church will feel called to respond by calling or joining one of the calls.

Members of the Harvest Team:

Ellie Cale
Mark Facknitz
Kandy Grant
Mary Colleen Knapp
Susan Phend
Bill Reinhold
Stephanie Sorge

For more information on ministry opportunities at Trinity, please see <http://www.trinitypresbyterianharrisonburg.org/get-involved.html>

House Churches:

- A house church is typically called around a critical, focused, more long-term, “external” or outreach mission or need.
- A house church is based on sound theology and sociological theory and includes the four marks of the church: nurture, worship, mission, and fellowship.



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- A house church develops a covenant based on an established covenant template that is brought by the Marks Elders for approval by the Session. It includes identification of a pastoral leader and four marks leaders for nurture, worship, mission, and fellowship.
- A house church evaluates its activities on an annual basis and may or may not recall the house church based on this evaluation.

Marks Groups:

- A marks group is based on at least one of the four marks and differs from Trinity committees or teams in not just “doing the work” of Trinity. It typically expands or complements this “work” and may focus on either internal or external/outreach needs.
- A marks group may have a very focused ministry and a more informal leadership structure than a house church. Its call might be limited to a short-term window (weeks or months); however, it could continue over a longer season and may be continued or recalled annually. Membership could be more fluid, allowing those interested in particular ministry opportunities to join on either a short-term or long-term basis. If continuing without being officially recalled, the opportunity to join a marks group should be made available to the congregation on a regular basis.