

Seasons

Theme based reflections and outreach actions in ministry groups.

The Word - Inform - Pray – Reach out – Create - Celebrate



Introduction

Seasons came from an exploration at Coatesville on how to be better engaged, as a worshipping community, with the world around us. While our mission activities are well-focused on meeting the needs of the community around us, we needed something broader, something that would help us to frame them with the big issues ... and the result was *Seasons*.

The intention of *Seasons* is to provide a church community with immersion in a relevant issue – to inform, to promote outreach outcomes and to bring our responses, dreams, stories and experiences before God in prayer. It is exciting to consider the possibilities when our thoughts, our meditations and our actions *as a whole worshipping community*, have their basis in a shared vision to live out ministry in the name of Christ.

So how does *Seasons* work?

The *Seasons* materials begin with information that will hopefully enable you and your group to **extend your knowledge** of the focus area. Then we take a look at some passages in the **Word of God** that shed light on the subject. We encourage you and your group to spend some **time in prayer**, meditating on the issues raised by the trigger and Biblical material.

An important part of the process takes the form of **response** and **outreach**. It is as the church reaches out into the world with something to say, or do, in response to God's Word and calling, that brings God's kingdom to earth.

Part of the *Seasons* process takes the form of an invitation for anyone to contribute to the season's topic **creatively**. This could mean music, artwork, craftwork, poetry, drama etc and has potential to result in some very exciting results.

The final part of the process provides for a chance to **celebrate** our shared journey at the end of the Season. It is important to celebrate new understandings, new learnings, new experiences of God's grace and outreach outcomes in a manner that fits with your group. Whether it's in a combined worship celebration or in a group event, celebration recognizes our experience of God through the process.

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At each stage, there is significant flexibility in how the group engages with the material. This is because each the community in which each group exists is unique, as is the mix of gifts and talents available.

The Seasons process doesn't *replace* what small groups normally do, nor should it necessarily *dominate* the life of your group. We are excited though, by the possibilities that present when our entire family focuses, learns and grows through common themes.

Coatesville CUC Leadership Group
November 2013

Postscript

As we travelled through the first two Seasons (Healing and Hope), the outcomes have been quite amazing! We have focused our prayers on these themes and importantly increased our time in prayer – a critical expression of our faith. In terms of outreach, through the Seasons process we have seen:

- The creation of nearly 60 Red Cross Trauma Teddies
- The raising of funds for cancer research
- The establishment of a weekly prayer meeting
- The writing, recording and performance of music on the themes of healing and hope
- Hosted a cell group lunch and reflection
- Engaged in group discussions on the themes of healing and hope
- Undertook card-making for distribution to the sick and elderly
- A 'Friendship Lunch'/Bible Study
- Planning for our youth group to visit and support people with a disability in care
- The creation of 'Comfort Packs' for breast cancer patients
- The staging of a 'High Tea' that raised awareness of issues faced by nomadic women in Ethiopia as well as raising \$1,200 to supply birthing kits.

These are the activities and outcomes we know of. This list of achievements looks a bit like a 'bragging list'. It is. We can surely be humbled by the outcomes of focusing in prayer on the Word and then taking creative action in the world around us. For this, we simply say 'Thanks'.

We have confirmed, once again, the importance of bringing our hopes, dreams, frustrations, sorrows and joys before God in prayer.

November 2014

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