



**theme:** Community 101 (Romans 12:3-21)

**materials:** Candles, matches, bibles

The theme for this month of cells is belonging. How does one belong to a group? To a church? To Christ? Are there those in your midst who feel that they do not belong? Do you need to believe anything or behave in any way in order to belong to a Church or cell group?

## welcome

Imagine your cell was somehow lost on a desert island. What roles would the members in the cell take? Who would be the hunter? Who would cook? Who would try and build the raft? Who would set about exploring the island? Are there more creative roles that some of you would take? Try and figure out a role for each person to play in this scenario.

## interact

This third week of advent you will be lighting three candles. Before you do, have someone read out Luke 2:1-7, and Matthew 1:18-24. This is a message of Jesus coming into the world through some hardship, uncertainty, and fear. This is the lot of many people in the world, particularly around the event of childbirth.

As you light the three candles, consider the situation into which Jesus came, and the lengths to which God went to have compassion on his people. How far has God gone to bring you the message and possibility of salvation?

Read or sing out the words to "O Little Town of Bethlehem".

## read

Read Romans 12:3-21.

Go through the passage you just read and point out all the instructions in there that would help create a good, loving Church community. Have someone write down all of these good points.

Are there any instructions given here that you would disagree with, things that would not form part of your ideal Christian community?

Is this the kind of community to which you would like to belong?

Is this the kind of community you currently belong to? List off some of the ways your community (or Church, or cell) lives out these instructions.

What is your role in your Christian community?

What would it look like to belong to the kind of Church community described here? In other words, how would each member need to contribute to the formation of this community?

What happens when there is serious disagreement or disunity in the community, in the Body? How can this be dealt with and still have people feeling like they belong?

Why is this kind of Christian community important?

Is belonging to this kind of Christian community essential? Or can you still be a Christian outside of community?

What does having a healthy Church community have to do with mission?



## think

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. How can your cell go out this week and live such good lives amongst “the pagans” that they will see the good you do and glorify God the Father? What is currently warring against your soul? What sin is causing temptation? How can you live as strangers and aliens in the world? This is a call to a radically different life, lived not just on your own but in community.

## live & pray

How are you adding to, or taking away from, Christian community where you live? Are you using the gifts you’ve been given to bless the Body? Ask some friends around you this week what role they see you playing in the Body, what gifts God may have given you. This is not an exercise in pride or in making you feel good, but in identifying some areas in which you could better serve others. Don’t look or wait for an official position before you start living out your role and using your gifts in the Body.

## useful resources

- TV Show: *Lost* – A good example of people working together, and what happens when you don’t.  
Book: *Streams of Living Water* – by Richard Foster. An excellent book on different streams of Church tradition, different strengths of communities and people, but all belonging to the same “Body”.  
Book: *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, by Eugene Peterson.

## leader’s guide

Healthy, loving Christian community is incredibly important for discipleship and for mission. Yes, there is a tradition of monks going off into the desert to be alone with God, but where we do have other Christians around us we ought to be trying to live out these instructions for community. The creation and development of these communities is vital both to mission and to the discipleship of new Christians. We don’t just want to tell people about Christ, we want to show people through our lives how Christ intended us to live here and now. The Christian community is the very Body of Christ present here and now on earth, the limbs through which God is active and at work. If you belong to that Body, you will want to represent Christ well. Christian community is the responsibility of every Christian, not just of those paid by the Church. If you want to belong to the Body, there are responsibilities as well as benefits. Everyone has been given gifts to use for the building up of the Body, not for our own pleasure or advancement. When disagreements arise, and they surely will, they must be dealt with in the spirit outlined in this passage, in particular of honouring one another above oneself. There are times in Scripture when it is advised to cut someone off from the fellowship of believers (ex. Matthew 18:15-17). It should be realised what an absolutely huge deal it is for this to have happen, for such a serious break in fellowship to occur, and that it should never be undertaken lightly.