

# Drawing Near to God Community Groups



**Welcome Packet for Leaders**

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## Welcome Letter from Joanne Ellison

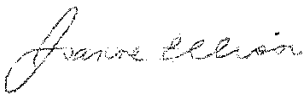
Dear DNG community group leaders,

I am so excited that we are entering into a season of expansion for Drawing Near to God Ministries. I have always believed that the Lord designed this ministry to impact our city and nation with the Good News of Jesus Christ. To that end we are establishing DNG community groups to enable us to reach all parts of our city and beyond.

Thank you for serving in the leadership role to bring our women closer to God. Although the Bible study has temporarily moved locations while St. Andrews is under construction, the staff and I want to be sure that all the groups stay connected to one another even though we are no longer all under that same roof. God has knit our hearts together and we want to remain a connected community across the Charleston area.

To that end, we're excited to equip you with a DNG Community Group welcome packet. This document will help you prepare for your small group times, provide the necessary information to connect you with DNG staff, and show you how you can incorporate your small group to the larger ministry of Drawing Near to God.

God bless each of you dear ladies as you seek to know Jesus in a deeper way. His love is contagious and together as we express this love, we will be a city on a hill shining for His name's sake.



Joanne Ellison

## About Joanne

Founder of international nonprofit Drawing Near to God based in Mt. Pleasant, S.C., Joanne Ellison teaches women to make space for God so that God's presence keeps them from being overwhelmed with life.



Driven by a vision to motivate women to pursue a deeper relationship with God, Ellison founded Drawing Near to God in 2000 and has since reached tens of thousands of women through Christian radio, television broadcasts, her weekly Bible study, livestreaming, speaking, books, CDs and DVDs. She is the author of over 20 Bible study guides, the popular 365-day Bible devotional, *Drawing Near to God*, *Sitting at His Feet* devotional and *Tell Your Heart to Beat Again*.

Ellison is an engaging speaker, writer and Bible teacher. Her speaking style includes both vulnerability and humor and is rooted in her passion for the Bible. She has shared her passion globally, with speaking engagements ranging from the coast of South Carolina to the coast of California and from universities to the Women's Union of Nairobi, Kenya.

She is a mother of three, grandmother of 11 and has been married for 45 years to Dr. Blount Ellison. Making her home in the Charleston area for most of her life, Ellison is a graduate of the College of Charleston and an active member of St. Andrew's Church, Mount Pleasant, SC.

## Meet the Drawing Near to God Staff



**Tori** has been with the Drawing Near to God team since December 2013, but transitioned into a new role within the last year. She manages all communications and operations for the ministry. Having studied Organizational Communications at Western Kentucky University, this is a dream role for her! Prior to joining the DNG team, Tori developed her marketing skills at a Charleston-based marketing agency, where she specialized in directing social media initiatives for clients.

Tori married her husband, John, in November, 2016. She enjoys traveling to see family & friends, spending time outdoors and at the beach, being active in the Junior League of Charleston and playing with her chocolate Labrador, Bo.



**Elise** joined the Drawing Near to God team in July, 2016. She assists with managing finances, the ministry's resources, Bible studies, and offers other administrative support. After completing her degree in Music Education, Elise worked as a youth and college minister for a non-denominational church in Potsdam, New York. During her ministry in New York, Elise partnered with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in preaching the gospel at outreach events on local college campuses, and led several Bible studies for college students. After relocating to the lowcountry, Elise attended the Seacoast School of worship.

Elise and her husband, Matt have been married for three years, and live in North Charleston. She has led worship for several churches in the area, and loves leading God's people into his presence. She's a marathoner, enjoys baking bread, and playing with her cat, Willy Nilly.



**Candie** joined our team in May, 2016. She is leading initiatives to grow & develop each branch of the ministry as well as the fundraising initiatives to support this growth. She brings almost 20 years of development, fundraising, marketing, and event management experience to the ministry. She has worked with many non-profit organizations to design and execute fundraising and development programs. Her non-profit experience includes development work with Clemson University, Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, Operation Home and most recently, East Cooper Montessori Charter School.

Candie and her husband Brian have lived in Mount Pleasant for over 16 years and are blessed with a daughter, Emalee (14) and a son, Hayden (12). She is very active in her own church, Mount Pleasant Presbyterian, where she served as an Elder for three years. She also served on the Charleston Atlantic Presbytery Children's Ministry committee for over five years.

# Drawing Near to God Core Beliefs, Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

## Core Beliefs

### We Believe:

In the one, true, and living God, Creator of all things in heaven and earth.

In the unity of the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is the perfect revelation of God to mankind, and who is the way for all to the Father through His sacrificial death and resurrection.

In salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

In the necessity of receiving Jesus Christ by faith as personal Lord and Savior in order to become a child of God.

In the continuing work of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer as well as in the life of the church today.

That the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

In the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory to establish completely the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## Guiding Principles

### Ourselfs

We endeavor to grow spiritually through prayer, studying God's Word, and discipling one another.

### Our Relationships

We seek to develop strong connections of love, respect, and concern among the community and ourselves as we promote the Christian growth of each individual.

### Our Conduct

We will endeavor to live in a manner that allows the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to be reflected in our lives.

### Our Environment

We will endeavor to create a safe and secure environment that promotes spiritual growth in others and in ourselves as we respond to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

### Our Stewardship

We will endeavor to use our God-given gifts and resources in a way that glorifies God.

### Our Citizenship

We, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, will seek to serve others in such a way that they may see Christ in us.

### Our Outreach

We will go out in God's strength as we put our trust in Him to walk in His way.

## Vision

**Helping women make space for God so that they will not be overwhelmed with life.**

## Mission

**Inspire people to make space for God**

**Equip people with resources**

**Empower people through mentoring and training**

## Getting Started with a Drawing Near to God Community Group

We hope you feel inspired, and equipped to start this new journey of leading a DNG community group! Here are the few simple steps you'll need to take to establish a group:

- Choose a time/place for your group to meet.
- Get members to join your group - invite friends from previous DNG groups, your church small group, neighbors, etc. - and point them to the DNG website to register, ([joanneellison.com](http://joanneellison.com))
- Contact DNG Office Staff - share when/where you are meeting and let us know if you are open to adding members who are seeking a group to join.
- Communicate with your group to let them know about the first day at Ashley River Baptist on September 7, and arrange a carpool if necessary.

## Resources for Community Group Leaders

We want our DNG leaders to feel well resourced, and connected to the ministry. To provide you with the best leadership experience, DNG is providing our Community Group leaders the followingsupport:

**An open invitation to attend Tuesday Leadership Training Meetings.** Each week, our small group leaders meet (9:30 a.m. at St. Andrew's,) for a time of worship and prayer, updates from DNG staff, and a time of equipping for the coming week's lesson. Please attend as you are able.

**Special Email Communication.** In addition to a monthly newsletter for all DNG Community Group participants, you'll receive additional ministry updates, opportunities for shared prayer requests, and tips for effective leadership from our staff.

**Full support and access to DNG Staff.** We'll provide additional administrative support, and coaching for difficult small group dynamics. We'll also be available on to troubleshoot any technical problems with livestreaming the event. Feel free to call us during our office hours, (Monday – Friday, 8:30 – 4:30) with any needs.

## Using Drawing Near to God Online Resources

Livestreaming permits you to watch an event over the internet. With livestreaming, you can tune in to exactly what is going on during our live Teaching and Worship Experience. The "stream" will broadcast our worship and teaching time every Thursday during our ministry season from approximately 10:30 – 11:30.

If your community group can't watch live on Thursday mornings, the livestreams will be archived, and will stay archived throughout the semester, so you can watch whenever it's convenient for you.

To access the livestream:

- Login to your account and navigate to the 'Community Group,' page on the DNG website. Select the icon appropriate for the semester's study. You'll see a player where you can view the live video, or click through to watch recorded lessons.
- To watch the livestream, all you need is a device to view the stream, audio capability and an Internet connection.

A wired connection is highly recommended for HD connection but wireless will work as well for many users. The recommended minimum connection speed for normal viewing is 700 Kbps and for HD viewing is 5 Mbps.

For a DNG Community Group, we recommend the following equipment:

- Computer with internet connection
- TV to hook up to the computer
- Cord to connect TV to computer

## Programs & Events Offered by Drawing Near to God

Drawing Near to God is so much more comprehensive than our Thursday morning teaching and worship experience! The following programs and events, and ministries are here for you, and your community group members.

- Taste & See Luncheons – *October 5, February 1, March 1*. Traditionally held on the first Thursday of the month, during ministry season. Small groups are encouraged to set aside a time to eat together, fellowship, and build community.
- Oysters at the Point - *Thursday, November 2nd at Patriot's Point Links in Mt. Pleasant*. Our annual Oyster Roast is the ministry's main fundraiser for the year. Bring your friends and family, enjoy great food, and support DNG as we strive to fulfill our vision and mission.
- Face to Face Mentoring Program – A Christ-centered mentoring and discipling community designed to equip young women to be fulfilled in all aspects of life.
- Missions – Drawing Near to God supports several local, and international missions organizations. We often provide opportunities to 'be the hands and feet of Jesus,' and serve those in need in the lowcountry.
- Drawing Near to God Conference – *April 13-14, 2018 at Ashley River Baptist Church*. This women's conference draws women from all over the country for a weekend of inspired teaching, worship, and fellowship.

## Live Teaching & Worship Schedule

### Please Note

To foster unity and community, all small groups (DNG Community Groups & Small Groups assembling for the live teaching,) will meet at Ashley River Baptist Church for our first teaching and worship experience, (September 7, 9:30 – 11:30 am.) Please plan to join us live as we kick off our ministry season!

Small Groups meeting at Ashley River Baptist will adhere to the following schedule on Thursday mornings. Your DNG community groups is encouraged to follow this same schedule as closely as possible, but we understand certain modifications may need to be made to accommodate your group's needs.

#### **Small Groups: 9:30 - 10:15AM**

The Christian life is designed to be lived in community with fellow Christians. The early church fellowshiped with one another, prayed together, and shared meals. The small groups, like the early church, are designed to help participants grow in a community setting.

#### **Welcome, Announcements & Worship: 10:25 - 10:35AM**

Our worship time provides the place for participants to draw near to God by focusing on Him alone. As we worship Him our hearts are prepared to encounter His Presence.

#### **Teaching: 10:35 – 11:15AM**

The weekly teaching by Joanne Ellison focuses on applying God's Word to our daily lives. Her vulnerability and willingness to share her own spiritual journeys helps make the Word relevant for today. The Scriptures come alive through stories and difficult passages become clear with a straightforward approach to the gospel message.

#### **Response Prayer Time: 11:15AM – 11:30AM**

At the end of our session, we encourage participants to carve out a few minutes to be quiet and reflect on what God is doing in their lives. This is a very powerful and refreshing part of our weekly ministry. DNG community groups might carve out time for group intercession, meditating to worship music, or praying in partners.

## Lesson Preparation for Community Group Leaders

All leaders should be prepared each week, completing and meditating on the lesson. Lesson preparation increases the ability of the Facilitator to be relaxed and attentive. The following guidelines are given to help prepare the lesson for class day.

### **As you prepare for the lesson:**

- Pray for God's guidance & revelation while you study the scriptures and questions.
- Note anything that stands out in the scriptures as particularly significant.
- Re-read all the questions before beginning to answer them.
- Re-word questions that seem more challenging for those who might not understand them.
- Note any personal blessings and/or challenges from the questions.
- Be prepared with personal stories to help further clarify a question.

## **Guidelines for Facilitating a Community Group**

During the small group time, participants have the opportunity to discuss ways of applying insights they are gaining from the study.

### **Each Facilitator should:**

- Remember, you are not a teacher, you are a facilitator.
- Pray before each class on your own, and with your assistant, (if applicable.)
- Pray daily for your group. Ask God to bless them with time to study the questions and to stir up their hunger to know Him.
- Open and close your session with prayer.
- Pass out Prayer Request Cards to encourage group members to pray for specific needs throughout the week.
- Maintain an awareness of the time. It is important to begin and end on time.
- Keep a record of attendance and be sure to email and /or call the participants who were absent. Encourage regular attendance.
- Make sure that DNG's Finance and Resource Assistant is aware of group address changes, etc. Weekly rosters, and changes in group members/ contact information will be communicated electronically.
- Encourage the flow of discussion. Allow the group to get involved in the question allowing more than one person a chance to answer.
- Do not let one person monopolize the discussion. Help is available if you need assistance to gracefully handle an issue.
- Use your Bibles. It is okay to have different versions. Encourage participation by asking for volunteers to read.
- Assistants, (if present), be sure to fill-in and support the Facilitator when things get quiet or when no one volunteers.
- Be encouraging and supportive to everyone. Do not call on people. Ask a question and give time for a volunteer to answer. Do not be afraid of silence.
- Stress the importance of group participation.
- Make it clear that confidentiality is important throughout the year.
- We are interdenominational. Do not debate about religious affiliations, beliefs, etc.
- Do not debate or talk about political issues.
- Plan Taste and See luncheons with your groups. Be creative and encourage attendance. Be sensitive to financial and babysitting needs.

### **Facilitator Absences**

When a Facilitator is not able to be in attendance, the group will meet. Arrangements need to be made that promote continuity in the group. Facilitators are encouraged to follow these procedures:

- Arrange for an assistant to lead the group.
- Prepare your assistant to lead by forwarding any important information.

## **Tips for Facilitating on the First Day**



- Open with prayer
- Facilitator & Assistant introduction
- Participant introduction –make sure the new people feel welcome
- Go over DNG Vision & Mission
- Let the participants know that small group is a safe place; all that is discussed is confidential
- Pass small group roster for attendance and to check that ALL information is correct – those that just registered please handwrite your personal information on the bottom of the roster –you want to go home with as complete a roster as possible in order to send out a welcome email!
- Give course description and dates for Fall and Winter/Spring Studies.
- Explain how completing weekly lessons work: there are no right or wrong answers; all will grow in knowledge and wisdom as they apply the scriptures to their lives. It's best to study the lesson daily – 20 minutes/day. Give grace if they can't get homework done!
- Prayer Request Cards – encourage group members to pray for specific needs throughout the week. Encourage participants to pray daily for each person in their small group.
- Visit Joanne's website ([www.joanneellison.com](http://www.joanneellison.com)) & sign up for Joanne's blog. You can also Like our Facebook Page (Drawing Near to God Ministries with Joanne Ellison) for social media updates.
- If you miss a class, you can watch via livestream. CD copies of the teaching will be made upon request for a \$5 fee.
- Remember new people can join each week. Bring your friends!
- Close with prayer.

## Important Dates 2017-2018 Ministry Year

### Fall Semester

- Aug. 22** Leadership Training Day for Facilitators & Assistants, St. Andrew's
- Sep. 7** *Ruth & Esther* Bible Study Begins, Ashley River Baptist
- Sep. 12** Tuesday Leadership Meetings begin, St. Andrews
- Oct. 5** Taste & See Luncheon (suggested)
- Nov. 2** Oysters at the Point, DNG Annual Fundraiser, Patriot's Point Links in Mt. Pleasant
- Dec. 7** *Ruth & Esther* Bible Study concludes

### Spring Semester

- Jan. 2** Tuesday morning Leadership meetings begin, St. Andrew's
- Jan. 4** *A Study of Ephesians* Bible Study begins, Ashley River Baptist
- Feb. 1** Taste & See Luncheon (suggested)
- Mar. 1** Taste & See Luncheon (suggested)
- Mar. 29** *A Study of Ephesians* Bible Study concludes
- Apr. 13-14** – Drawing Near to God Conference, Ashley River Baptist

## Quick Reference Guide

For Help With	Name	Home Phone	Email
	<b>DNG Staff</b>		
-Fundraising -Development	Candie Goode	<b>(843) 814-3395</b>	candie@drawingneartogod.com
-Finances -Resources	Elise Booz	<b>(843) 284-4328*</b> <b>(518)813-3774</b>	elise@drawingneartogod.com
-Communications -Operations -Getting in touch with Joanne	Tori Hennis	<b>(843) 284-4333*</b> <b>(859)620-9738</b>	tori@drawingneartogod.com
-Technical Support		<b>(843)790-4002**</b>	

\*- These phone numbers are for the DNG office, and are a preferred daytime contact.

\*\* - Our technical support line will connect you to a DNG staff, and is available during business hours, (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)



**PRAYER REQUEST CARD**



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