

RESOURCE 3

ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION

TRAINING GROUP LEADERS

"Leaders do not need answers; leaders must have the right questions."

—Church Leadership, Saint Paul School of Theology

WHAT:

The goal of the group

- ♦ Fill in gaps found in the congregational survey.
- ♦ Complete Parish Search Request form.
- ♦ Each person participates in the process.

WHEN:

Timing or format

- ♦ Workshop/retreat design.
- ♦ Several sessions with the same group. (60 minutes each)
- ♦ Several one-time sessions with different groups of people.

WHO:

Participants in the group

- ♦ Whoever comes.
- ♦ Persons invited to represent different constituencies.
- ♦ An established group if this is a special program.
- ♦ Large number to be subdivided into smaller groups.

Size

- ♦ Optimum group size is ten.
- ♦ If twelve people are present, divide into two groups.

WHERE:

The setting

- ♦ At church, in homes.
- ♦ Comfortable chairs and temperature are essential.
- ♦ Refreshments are helpful.
- ♦ Know the culture and what works in your congregation.

HOW:

The Agenda

- ♦ Follow the plan provided.
- ♦ Create your own agenda.

The Recorder

- ♦ Someone, not the leader, MUST be responsible for recording all information.

SAMPLE MEETING OUTLINE

1. Opening Prayer (*2 minutes*)

Use the prayer being used for the church on Sunday mornings.

2. Introduction (*5 to 15 minutes*)

Introduce yourself briefly.

Icebreaker:

Ask each person to tell the following:

- ♦ What is your name?
- ♦ What about this church excites you most?
- ♦ What about this church energizes you?

Review the agenda.

3. Meeting Plan

SAMPLE AGENDA

GOAL: To obtain information for the Parish Search Request Form.

I. Parish Search Request Form of the Episcopal Church (*5 minutes*)

- ♦ What the form is.
- ♦ How it is used.
- ♦ How the form works: includes both present and future.

II. Exploring our Mission (*50 minutes*)

- a. Brainstorm the single word that best describes the mission of this church: outreach, worship, music, Christian education, etc. (*5 minutes*)
- b. List all the words on whiteboard.
- c. Divide into groups of four and pick the top four words. Write one sentence about what each means for your congregation. (*15 minutes*)
- d. As a large group make one list of your top four words. (*10 minutes*)
- e. Spend 5 minutes on each of the top four words in terms of what they mean for your church. (*20 minutes*)

III. Ministry Specialties (*27 minutes*)

- a. Describe the Responsibilities category of Search Request Form. (*5 minutes*)
- b. The group picks its ten most important categories. (*7 minutes*)
- c. Now the group ranks the ten categories in order of importance. (*7 minutes*)
- d. The group chooses the four most important categories. (*3 minutes*)
- e. The group is shown the list of the four top-ranked ministry specialties determined from survey (*this is already written on whiteboard*), then, using this information, chooses again the four Responsibility categories. (*5 minutes*)

IV. Closing Prayer (*2 minutes*)

Thank all participants. Lead the Lord's Prayer.

V. Closing Up

Be sure to collect all papers and written materials.

Total time: 95 to 115 minutes

TEN GUIDELINES FOR A SMALL GROUP LEADER

1. Pray before the meeting
 - ◆ Pray for the people who will be participating in the meeting, by name if possible.
 - ◆ Pray that the meeting goal will be achieved.
 - ◆ Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for yourself and for the participants.
2. Prepare
 - ◆ Room arrangement: seating, temperature.
 - ◆ Materials: Paper and pencils if needed. Handouts? Newsprint and masking tape? Preprinted information?
 - ◆ Task: What is your goal and how do you expect to achieve the goal?
 - ◆ Timing: Plan each step so that the goal may be achieved in the available time.
 - ◆ Relationships: How will you help people feel cared for? What can you do to break the ice? To relax, feel comfortable, open up?
3. Start on time
 - ◆ Don't wait for latecomers.
4. Set a tone of friendly openness
 - ◆ Introduce yourself. Use an icebreaker, if needed.
 - ◆ Establish an atmosphere of love and encouragement.
5. Present and clarify the agenda at the beginning
 - ◆ Discuss purpose and method (how purpose will be achieved).
6. Recognize every person as important
 - ◆ Seek to gain everyone's participation in the group.
 - ◆ Let them know that their ideas and comments are valued.
7. Summarize progress from time to time
 - ◆ This will help keep the group on track and is a way to keep moving toward your goal.
8. Guide more than direct
 - ◆ The leader is a facilitator, not the authority or teacher.
 - ◆ Don't be afraid of silence.
9. Stop on time and on a positive note
 - ◆ Even if you have not achieved your purpose you must stop on time. The only exception is if the entire group really does want to continue. Then contract to continue for a specific amount of time and then you must stop.
10. Thank them for coming
 - ◆ This ends the meeting on a good tone.

OTHER NOTES

A. On-the-job training

- ◆ Many people will have group leader experience from other parts of their life.

B. The recorder

- ◆ Best if this person is another member of the Self-Study Committee.
- ◆ Collects all newsprint and other notes taken, as well as her or his own notes.

C. Use of PowerPoint, whiteboard, or newsprint

- ◆ Using whiteboard, newsprint, or PowerPoint helps keep the entire group on task.
- ◆ Any newsprint to be used by the leader should be written on in advance. Why? To avoid wasting time and to make sure the writing is clear and legible.

D. Value of tight structure: LESS IS MORE

- ◆ People work better on this kind of task with *less* not more time. They are forced to use their intuition and refrain from getting bogged down.
- ◆ There will probably be much grumbling that there is not enough time but that will dissipate.
- ◆ The leaders will function more comfortably with a clearly defined agenda.
- ◆ It is crucial that all groups follow the same agenda in order to compare results.