

Name:



*Put out into the deep water
and lower your nets for a catch*

Episcopal Evangelism

Gathering Disciples for Transformation

May 10-11 2013

Dumas Bay Retreat Center – Federal Way, WA

Sponsored by the Diocese of Olympia Evangelism Commission

Presenters: Melissa Skelton Eric Stroo Andrea McMillin

Goals for our time together:

- Learn about evangelism within an Episcopal congregation and its rootedness in the core purpose of a parish church
- Learn about the importance of orienting, and work on specific ways we can orient people to our congregations
- Learn about and practice speaking to others about congregational identity (rooted both in Episcopal identity and in local personality)
- Work on strengthening coffee hour and the overall process for guiding newcomers into the life of your congregation
- Identify one improvement we want to make in our parish and plan how to implement it

Gathering Activity : The purpose is for you to learn the names of six people and to learn something meaningful about them.

1. Find two other people in the room and share with each other.
Your name and: “When I think of the word “transformation” what comes to mind is _____”
2. Find two other people and share with each other.
Your name and “A person who has been transformational in my life has been _____ because _____”
3. Find two other people in the room and share: Your name and “A moment in my congregation’s liturgy that has been transformational to me has been _____”

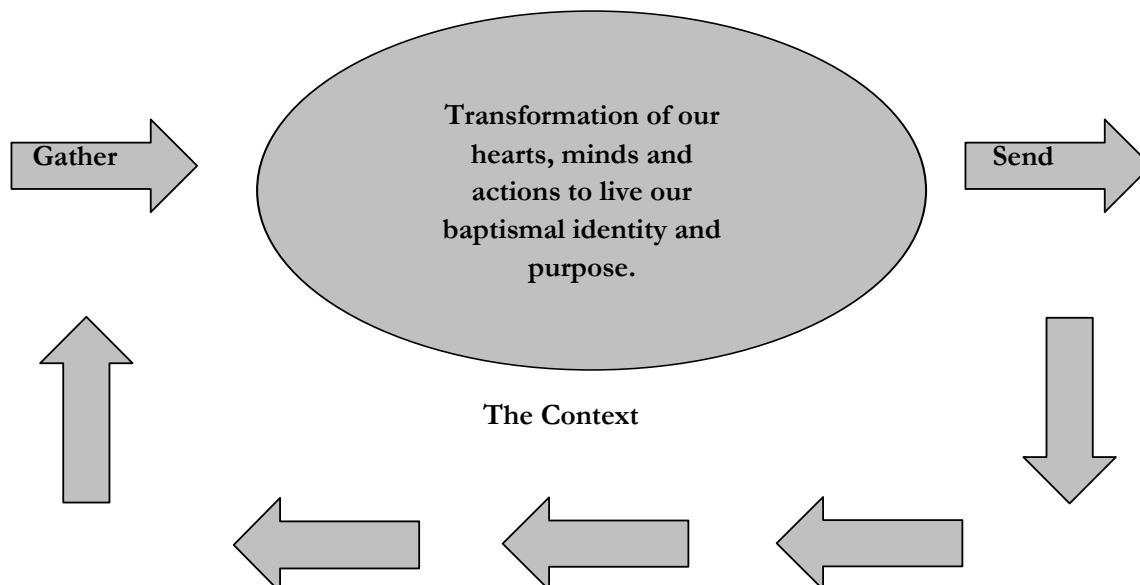
Model 1

Gathering, Transforming and Sending: The Purpose and Work of a Congregation

All organizations have what might be called their “primary task,” that is, their reason for being: the focused activity that they uniquely exist to do. The primary task of a social service agency is different from an auto manufacturer which is different from an educational institution which is different from a Christian congregation. Being aware of and reminding ourselves about our organization’s primary task helps us to focus our efforts and define what our organizational “faithfulness” looks like.

One way of describing the primary task, the unique purpose and work of a congregation is to **gather** those called by God into Christ’s body, the Church, a community of **transformation** of mind, heart and action, and to **send** these same into the world to be and to act as God’s loving and transforming presence.

Another way of saying this is that the purpose of a congregation is to be the body of Christ and, with God’s help, to create and renew the Christian folk who in turn, create and renew a world that we believe both already is and is in the process of becoming God’s own realm—a realm of forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, peace and hope.



Gathering

As this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom.

(Early Eucharistic prayer found in the Didache, c. 100AD)

We believe that God is the source of all invitations to life in the faith communities that are Christ's body, whether these invitations come in the form of gentle nudges, tender entreaties or rude awakenings. For us in the Church, the questions are: how we can assist God in inviting and receiving people into the life of Christ's body, the Church? How can we continue to invite and receive them over the various stages of their lives and their lives in Christ?

In Alice Mann's book entitled *Incorporation of New Members in the Episcopal Church* (1983), she outlines stages related to the overall incorporation of people into the Episcopal Church. Even now Alice's work provides an excellent description of the primary elements related to gathering.



Inviting—that is, drawing attention to Christ and the Church, motivating people to explore further and inviting people to this particular parish. Different elements of inviting include: 1) physical presence in the neighborhood to include signage, 2) relationship to the community, 3) invitations to others by individual members and word of mouth, 4) website and other electronic ways of reaching people, 5) printed materials in the form of brochures, PR and advertising, 6) invitations in response to enquiries about the sacraments, and 7) re-inviting the lapsed.

Greeting—that is, recognizing, welcoming and extending appropriate and helpful hospitality to those who are our guests. Different elements of greeting include 1) recognizing and acknowledging visitors, 2) an appropriate and interested welcome, 3) clearly stated boundaries and worship norms and 4) a functional and hospitable Coffee Hour

Orienting—that is, helping people understand and participating in where things are and how we do things in this particular place. Different elements of orienting include: 1) follow up contact and conversations with visitors, 2) newcomers gatherings and classes, 3) orientation to the building and to the activities of the church, and 4) connection to the clergy and others

Incorporating—that is, the process of being knit into the congregation and its people as a local expression of the Body of Christ. Different elements of incorporation include: 1) deeper involvement in a social/formational/activity group, 2) completion of an enquirer's course a series of foundations courses and/or a catechumenal process, 3) The invitation (and acceptance) to be baptized, become confirmed, received or transfer membership, and 4) the invitation to make a financial pledge to the congregation.

Transformation

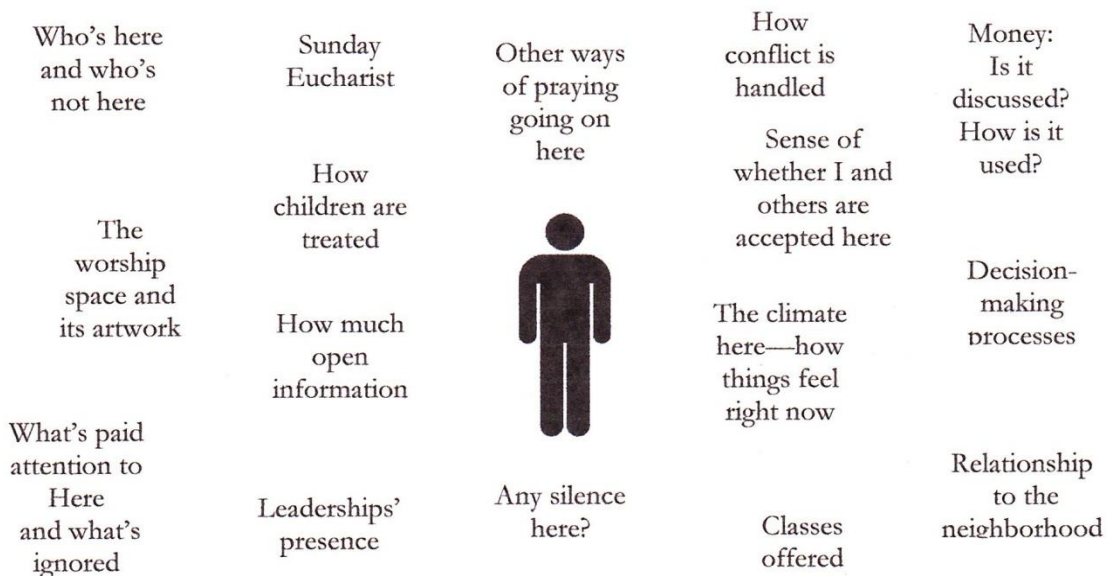
A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. (Romans 12:1-2)

Congregational life, life lived with others in Christ, is the place where we are baptized, fed and renewed to become the people whose presence the world needs, and to do the work we are sent into the world to do. This process is called many different things—continual renewal of baptismal identity and purpose, sanctification, conversion or formation.

By transformation we mean the gradual process begun in baptism by which the Church experienced in the local congregation comes to shape us more and more into the human beings that God calls us to be. This process is an organic one in which our Christian identity and purpose is shaped by the sacraments and other forms of prayer, learning, life in community and the practices and actions we ourselves engage in. (The elements outlined in the “Sources of Transformation model)

But these are not the only sources of transformation. The culture and climate of a parish, informal relationships, decision-making processes, the way the parish handles conflict and transition, the personal presence of leaders, the physical property to include the artwork in the worship space, the neighborhood the parish is located in, the parish’s attitude toward its neighborhood—all of these are sources of transformation as well. Thus, the transformation process in a congregation is never the sum total of programs and liturgies. It is an organic web of actions, dynamics, relationships, etc that make up the living system, the living organism that is a congregation, a specific and local manifestation of the Body of Christ.

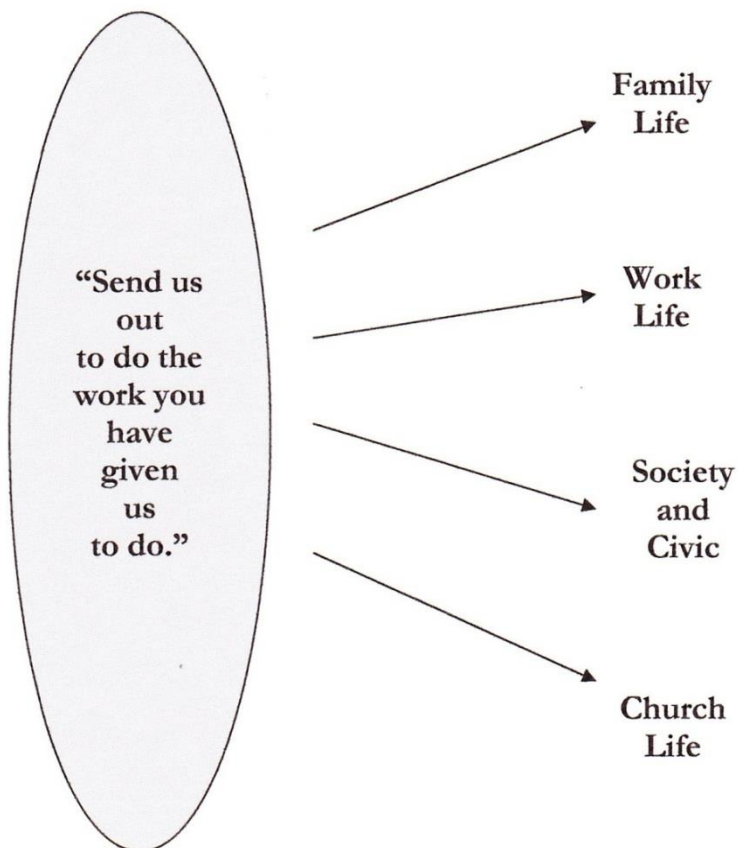


Sending

Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart through Christ our Lord.

Post-Communion Prayer, The Book of Common Prayer, The Episcopal Church, p.366

William Temple spoke of the church is the only institution that exists for people who are not its members. God sends us into the world over and over again to be God's own loving presence in a world in need of transformation. The first place that God sends us is into the relationships, communities, roles and occupations we already find ourselves in. And so God asks us to learn what it means to live reconciling, peaceful, and justice-loving lives as parents, sons and daughters, spouses and partners, lawyers and factory workers, politicians and health care workers, volunteers and voters.



Drilling Down: Orienting on Sunday Morning

Orienting people to our congregations is about giving them a meaningful social experience so that they will not be lost socially, physically, spiritually – they will have a way to ‘anchor’ into the congregation and take the next steps in their spiritual journey in Christ

Some areas for orientation:

- The space: the physical setting and stuff of your congregation. Remember that you are orienting with a purpose—not just helping them find their way around (this is important!) but also attaching them to the congregation’s story
- The people/community: This is both about getting them connected to specific people and kinds of people AND about getting them connected to the personality of your congregation and community
- Our identity /theology: We are The Episcopal Church locally expressed in a specific tribe. Who is The Episcopal Church? What is that tribe?
- Experience / Worship: What have newer-comers just experienced? What did they notice? How can we help them interpret this enough to tell go forward to experience and learn more?

Ideas:

Space

- Tour to include bathrooms, childcare, nursery, and classrooms
- Kitchen – and at the appropriate time, teach how to make coffee
- Artwork and other “stuff” and stories and connection to who you are NOW
- Special sacred places & objects: any devotional practices associated with these.
- Anything distinctive and different and what it says about the congregation NOW

People/community

- Introducing the newcomer to people who have things in common with him or her
- Connecting to rector, vicar or other clergy – yes, very important
- Any tidbit about the history and what it tells us about this people in the NOW
- Any connections between this church community and the neighborhood that says something about this people NOW. What is the role of this church in the community
- Partnerships with other churches.

Identity/theology

- Any unique feature of The Episcopal Church that this community expresses
- A particular theological emphasis in the congregation
- Notable cultural identities

Experience/worship

- What would newcomers have noticed? What can be said about what it expresses about the congregation’s identity NOW

ORIENT WORKSHEET

Working on space and how you can orient people via conversation/comments about space:

Below, list places/spaces, physical features or “stuff” in your congregation that you might tell someone about. By each make notes about a story or some description that you might mention about that place/space, physical feature or “stuff” that would say something about the congregation’s identity as it exists NOW.

Episcopal Identity

Anglicanism has its own personality, culture and ethos. This is a culture was rooted in English culture but has since adapted itself to a variety of countries, cultures and time periods. The question for congregational development practitioners is to what degree and with what transparency does the local congregation reflect this broader organizational culture and how does the local congregation adapt or respond to society (broader or more local) as it functions. The following is a shortened version of John Westerhoff's articulation of Anglican spirituality and temperament.

Anglican Spirituality

Liturgical/Biblical: Anglican spirituality is rooted in communal daily prayer (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayers, Evening Prayer, Compline) as laid out in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Thus, our way of praying tends to have more formality and structure and is shaped by the Scriptures, the divine reading of Scripture and the prayerful meditation on the psalms.

Communal: For Anglicans, communal prayer comes before and shapes personal prayer. Prayer is seen as an activity that connects us to God, to each other, to include the living to the dead. Communal prayer is a part of daily, weekly and yearly rhythms and both surrounds and informs community gatherings and meetings in which decisions are made.

Pastoral: Anglicans tend to see their relationship to God as lived out and “measured” by their relationships to their true selves, other people and the natural world.

Sacramental: Anglicans see the world, itself, as sacramental, that is, capable of mediating the grace of God. Anglicans also emphasize the two primary sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as well as offer the other sacramental rites of confirmation, holy matrimony, reconciliation, unction, and ordination.

Incarnational: Anglicans emphasize the incarnation, God's entry into human life and history. Accordingly, Anglicans have an earthy spirituality that affirms the goodness of life and the created world and believes that the extraordinary is to be found in the ordinary.

Mystical: Anglicans experience union with God as happening over time, bit by bit through a journey aided by spiritual discipline and prayer. Such a belief is consistent with the description of spiritual progress found in the mystics.

Questions for reflection:

Which three of these qualities resonate most with your own spirituality?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

While most parishes include most of these elements, which three of these does your congregation embody the most clearly?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When you gather with your group in the next exercise (later): Find out how they answered these questions and write their responses below. What does this say about your congregation's identity?

Anglican Temperament

Comprehensive: Anglicans believe the truth is to be found in the tension between counter-opposites. We affirm both sacred and secular, both the material and the non-material, both the mind and the heart, both the transcendence and the intimate closeness of God.

Ambiguous: Anglicans are not “black and white” thinkers, but instead affirm the ambiguity of experience and the value of learning to tolerate and embrace complexity and ambiguity in many aspects of human life and in the spiritual journey.

Open-minded: Anglicans are people of a questioning faith. We search for wisdom in many places and encourage people to listen to each other and to bring their honest questions to their spiritual life.

Intuitive: Anglicans are at home in the world of image, symbol, myth, ritual, and the arts. Very few Anglicans write systematic theologies. Instead we are writers, poets, pastors, and musicians.

Aesthetic: Anglicans believe that beauty is the doorway to truth and goodness and that beauty is a doorway to God.

Moderate: Anglicans avoid extremes, believing that a godly life is one that is disciplined, balanced and temperate.

Naturalistic: Anglicans have a reverence for nature and its rhythms. Anglicans believe in working to protect the natural world and its creatures.

Historical: Anglicans value their historical roots and learn from a careful reflection on the past.

Political: Anglicans believe that Christian life has political implications and that civic life is both a legitimate and important place for Christian’s apostolate to be expressed.

Questions for reflection:

Which three of these qualities resonate most with your own temperament?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

While most parishes include most of these elements, which three of these does your congregation embody the most clearly?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When you gather with your group in the next exercise (later): Find out how they answered these questions and write their responses below. What does this say about your congregation’s identity?

Congregational Identity: Discovering and Speaking about Who We Are -- Among Ourselves and to Newcomers

We believe that congregations have a basic purpose or reason for being that is expressed in the model “Gather-Transform-Send”. One way of describing the primary task, the unique purpose and work of a congregation is to **gather** those called by God into Christ’s body, the Church, a community of **transformation** of mind, heart and action, and to **send** these same into the world to be and to act as God’s loving and transforming presence. This purpose is assumed as any part of a conversation on a congregation’s identity.

It’s easy to think that in order to grow a congregation needs to be “all things to all people.” However, we believe that congregations that choose to develop a solid identity within our overall core purpose of renewing people in their baptismal identity for ministry in the world, have the greatest potential to deepen who they are and to make a compelling invitation to newcomers.

But how can a congregation define its identity and find a way for most of the people in the congregation to be able to articulate that identity to others? And how can this identity provide a kind of reflection both of what is and what a congregation aspires to be more deeply?

Our work today will begin this process as small groups and individuals, on our own personal statements about our churches: how we begin to articulate our congregation’s unique identity in compelling ways. This is an outline to facilitate this process with a larger congregational group, generating ideas to create an identity statement that might work for your own personal use, or for the whole congregation on a website, print media and other outreach materials.

A Process to Explore and Articulate Congregational Identity

Here is an outline you can use to facilitate a process in your congregation to teach the concept of congregational identity, and to generate ideas and content for your identity statements. People will leave with their own personal ideas to use as they speak about the congregation, as well as contribute to the congregation’s statement to be used in outreach media.

A leader or leaders’ introduction to the idea of identity and its importance to congregational life: identity as important to us as people and as congregations; identity as both God-given and shaped by us. Teach the Gather-Transform-Send model as a starting place about identity.

After this initial introduction, frame up the activities as a series of conversations that a smaller group will craft into an identity statement. Not all ideas will be used but the process and all ideas will help us get to a statement.

- A conversation about what people most appreciate about their congregation as they have experienced it
- An exploration about the way in which a congregation is distinctive versus neighboring congregations and/or those congregations and other activities that are an alternative to choosing the congregation
- Essential features of the congregation related to size, demographics, program, location and context, style of worship, ways of operating, connections to the community in terms of outreach or social justice initiatives.

- The ethos/personality/flavor of the congregation. (see separate descriptor sheet for some ideas)
- The values of the congregation (though this can begin to sound generic if you're not careful). This area can be connected to the ethos/personality.
- The elements of the congregation's life that are not as fully developed but, more fully formed, are a part of the congregation's "birthright" and/or "destiny" and calling.

The raw material generated from meetings with the whole congregation are given to a smaller group (to include the clergy leader) to work out a draft an identity statement that could be brought back to a larger group for comment before finalizing.

Once the identity statement is finalized, it or elements of it would be used on every available communication vehicle and would be used to train greeters and other key people who are in a position to be in dialogue with others about the congregation. The identity statement would also be a guide for the focus of any website and photography.

Some examples of identity statements (none of them perfect!)

Thad's, Santa Monica

We are Monday-Saturday followers of Jesus who worship on Sunday. We're a movement of missionary people who've made a choice to leave the relative safety of the established church and take the love of Jesus "to the streets". Our calling is to bring this transforming love into people's lives in positive, transformative and practical ways..

St. Paul's, Seattle

We are an accepting, progressive Anglo-Catholic parish renewing its people for their Christian lives in today's world through worship, spiritual formation, engagement with the arts, life in community, and acts of compassion.

St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco

Saint Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church is made up of children and elders, families and singles, straight and gay people, lifelong Christians, interfaith couples, converts and seekers. We join in worship and service, creating a community that shares the unconditional welcome offered at Jesus' Table.

From a small rural congregation – Christ Church, Blaine

Welcome home to Christ Church. You will find people here who genuinely care for one another, and who gather for worship each week. We are very much like a family – many different ages and stages, personalities and quirks, with political, theological, and personal perspectives of every sort. We strive for authentic prayer, inspiring preaching, and worship in the Anglican/Episcopal tradition. We have several artists here, and you'll see evidence of that in our banners, stained glass windows, and art gallery.

Congregational Identity Worksheet

Instructions: Pair up with another person, preferably from another congregation, swap your papers, and ‘interview’ them by asking the following questions. Write their answers on their worksheet.

Tell me the “facts” of your congregation’s life (size, location and context, program emphasis, partnerships, worship style, ways of operating, growing or not?)

What do you most appreciate about your congregation?

What would a guest/newcomer notice immediately after attending a Sunday liturgy in your congregation?

What are the distinctive differences of your congregation versus other congregations that people might choose (think about both local Episcopal congregations and others)

What dimensions of Episcopal ethos are most fully expressed in your congregation?

(Continue interview on next page)

How would you describe your congregation's "personality" ?

How would you describe your congregation's values?

(Stop interview here- the other person interviews you – then swap papers back and gather back in plenary)

Personal Congregation Identity Statement – using the notes from the questions above, as well as the key words on page 16, write an identity statement that describes how you see your congregation. Take time to do this on your own. In your small group – compare your individual work and see if you can collaborate on a statement that could work for publicity about your whole congregation. (OR share with someone else, and see how they respond to your statement)

Notice that this is work on two levels: how would YOU talk about your congregation – and what identity statement could work for a larger group's use? For example – this is the difference between you talking with a friend about your church, and possibly inviting them to attend – vs. what a congregation might put as an identity statement on the front page of a website.

Identity Statement Guideline – or "Mad Lib" to get your creative process started:

We are a _____, _____, and _____
(adjective) (adjective) (adjective)

congregation/parish/church/mission. We _____
(Circle one or use a different noun) (verb) (adverb or noun)

in our _____ . (And now... change this and add more!)
(adjective) (Noun)

Possible Descriptors for Congregational Personality or Ethos

friendly, funky, eclectic, reverent, earnest, fun-loving, adventurous, questioning, paradoxical, formal, informal, flexible, creative, compassionate, passionate, effervescent, introspective agile, collaborative, contemplative, diverse, spontaneous, careful, thoughtful, disciplined, structured, outward-looking, irreverent, energetic, on-the-move, growing, intimate, edgy, deep, traditional, hopeful, rooted, complex, mystical, tolerant, joyful, participative, open, honest, multi-cultural, talented, humble, inspiring, supportive, challenging, kind, diverse, courageous, full of wonder, breathtaking, astonishing, centered, questioning, authentic, open-ended, definitive, crazy and mixed up, values-centered, altruistic, self-giving, sacrificial, intense, nimble, lively, experimental, smart, gregarious, polite, freewheeling, harmonious; playful, peaceful, experimental, outdoorsy, environmentally sensitive, maverick, pious, exuberant, organized, outrageous, young, adolescent, mature, standing, on tiptoe, expectant, optimistic, settled, in-the-moment, humble, practical, artistic, persistent, skillful, warm, expansive, free-wheeling, beautiful, winsome, whimsical. tender-hearted, questioning, kindhearted, approachable, gracious, contented, animated, active, alert

Networks – Context – Culture – Your People

There are very few successful anonymous invitations -

The single most effective invitation to church comes through a personal connection, friend, or acquaintance: YOU are that connection for many, many people.

NETWORKS: Write down five networks that you are a part of – be specific – for example, instead of ‘work’ - name the business/location. Name some specific social circles. Instead of ‘friends’ name the group: other young parents at the soccer fields, or – the Rotary Club.

1. 4.
2. 5.
- 3.

CONNECTIONS: Now write down ways that you connect with these people: be specific – are these primarily virtual connections through facebook? Planned meetings, random real-time connections in coffee shops?

1. 4.
2. 5.
- 3.

PATHWAYS: What is happening at your church that could be interesting to these groups? What do these people long for that your church community is already doing, and how can you make that known in compelling, subtle, clear, genuine ways?

1. 3.
2. 4.

Three kinds of invitation

Front Door

Side Door

Information Sharing (Breadcrumbs)

How to Talk to Newcomers after Church

Think about tone, stance, and openness: conveyed through voice, hands, body language.

Aside from the introduction ... you might try some of this on 'old' timers as well!

Introducing Yourself

Hi. I'm _____ and I _____

- am the Rector of the Parish
- am a long-time member here
- have been here about 6 months.
- live in the neighborhood and have been here a few months.
- have two little children the same ages as yours.

Or

Hi. I'm sorry. I don't know your name. My name is _____ and I _____

Following up with open-ended questions

- How did you come to us today? What brought you to us today? How did you find us?
- Tell me about you: Where do you live? How do you spend your time?
- How did it (the liturgy) go for you? (A good question that you can then follow up with something that asks more or builds on what the person says)
- The "or not" part of a question is very important – it opens up more conversation.
- Listen for subtle information and parts of their story that you are hearing

Following up with a "diagnostic" question

Is the Episcopal Church familiar to you or is this all new for you? (Asking this question allows you to understand what world/religious culture the person is coming from and respond accordingly.)

If from an Evangelical church

"All this must be pretty different for you..."

"So how did it go for you?"

If from another Episcopal Church

"So was what we do here familiar to you or not?"

"So how did it go for you?"

If from a Roman Catholic church

"So how familiar was all this to you?"

"So how did it go for you?"

If from no church background

"Wow—how brave of you to come this morning....how did it go for you?"

Making Declarative Statements about Actions

- I would really appreciate it if you would sign our book. We don't abuse the information, I promise!
- I'd love it if you'd go with _____ to Coffee Hour.
- We're having a St. Paul's 101 gathering right now in the Church. I'd love to take you back in and introduce you to _____ who's leading it.
- I'd love for you to come to the next Newcomer's Gathering. Here's the information. It's at my house right near.....
- I'm so glad you came to us this morning. I'd love to see you again next Sunday.
- They say it takes three times visiting some place to get a good feel for whether it would be right for you....

The first five visits -Taking the steps together ... a flowchart to map out your journey with this new person in your church family

The purpose: To have a way to orient guests into your congregation – weave them into the fabric of your common life, and give them a place to ‘land’

To Follow up with guests through their first five visits to your church

To have that process be intentional, clear, with checks along the way so this new person does not drop through the cracks and wander away (unless they want to, of course)

In the space below, write out the steps that are taken when a person crosses the threshold of your church on a Sunday morning (or a ‘side door’ event, if applicable.) This should outline what you/your church does – not what the guest does.

What do you want to continue doing/ what is effective?

What is not effective, and needs to change? Where do you need to add steps/follow up/accountability?

Coffee Hour – (Hint: It’s not just about the coffee…)

Inviting people

Getting there

Location

Nametags

Set up

Getting people to host coffee hour

Food and drink

Festival times

Announcements

Ways to get people's information

People who are "working the room"

What "working the room" means!

Training people to "work the room" (how to take this back to your congregation)

NOTES

SCHEDULE

Friday May 10

9:00 – 10:00 settle in

10:00 – Noon: Plenary and Breakout Session EAGLEVIEW

Noon – LUNCH

1:00 – 3:30 – Plenary: Identity

3:30-3:45 – BREAK

3:45-5:15 – Plenary – Social Networks and Invitation

5:30-7:00 - Social time and Dinner (starts at 6:00)

7:00 – 8:30 – Plenary: Speaking with Guests

Compline

More social time in Eagleview - Quiet time starts at 10:00

Saturday May 11

7:30 - BREAKFAST

8:30 Morning Prayer

9:00 – Plenary – Newcomer Follow up

10:30 – Break

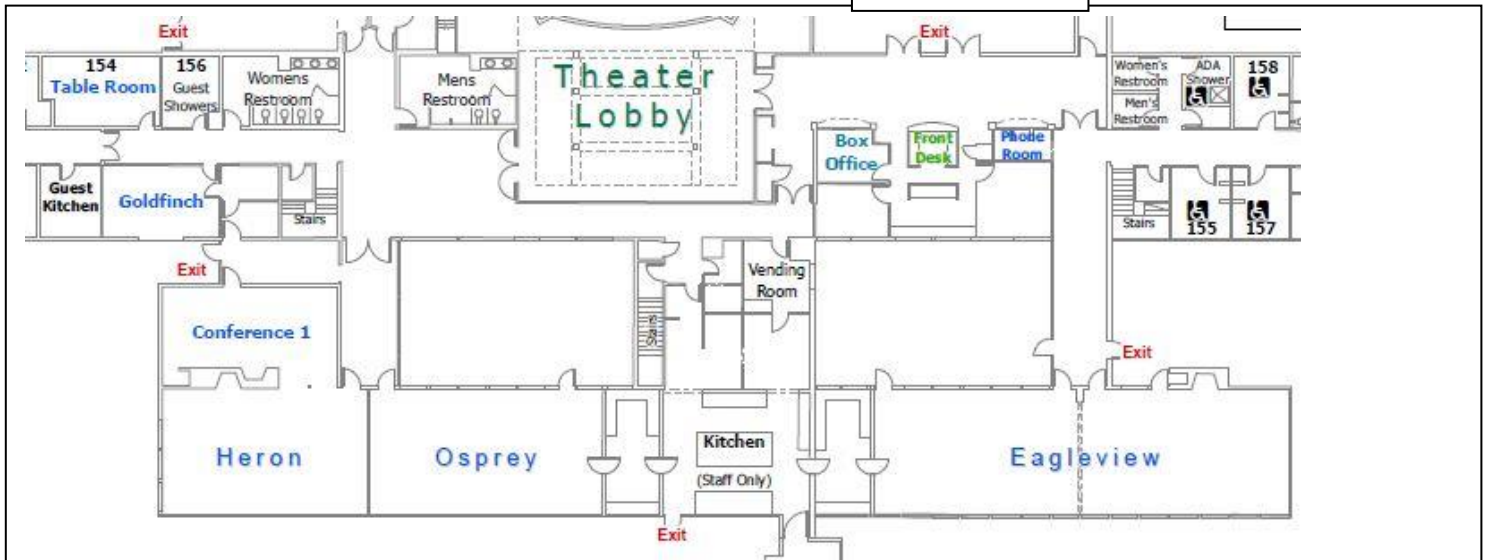
10:45 – Plenary- Coffee Hour Essentials

Noon – LUNCH

1:00 – 2:30 Implementing this in your congregation

Go in Peace!!!

Main Entrance



This map shows the location of our meeting rooms:

- Plenary Sessions are in EAGLEVIEW Dining is in EAGLEVIEW and OSPREY
- The RESOURCE CENTER is set up in OSPREY – open during non-plenary times.
- Breakout sessions will be in HERON, OSPREY, CONFERENCE 1, EAGLEVIEW, and the patio areas or outside, if the weather permits. More than one small group may use each room if needed.