

## Healthy Church Workshop: HOSPITALITY Outline

### Materials:

- ✓ Yarn
- ✓ Balloons
- ✓ Power point – Hospitality
- ✓ Projector
- ✓ Tables (3-4 depending on group size)

### Hospitality Teaching:

#### A. Welcome

- a. Welcome participants to the Healthy Church Workshop: Hospitality. Share your name and what your position is in the life of the church and or conference.
- b. Share with participants that the workshop will be based on the book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* written by Bishop Robert Schnase, Bishop of the Missouri Conference of The United Methodist Church. They can order copies of the book from Cokesbury and it would be great to get one if they will be coming to this years Annual Conference.
- c. Now, have participants all stand up alone side a wall. Have them count 1,2,3 and continue until everyone has a number. Ask all the ones to seat at table 1, all 2's to seat at table 2 and all 3's to seat at table 3. Explain that these are their work groups for this workshop.

#### B. Warm Up: Church Web of Support

- a. Before your presentation, inflate the balloons for the activity.
- b. Explain to participants that we are going to play "Church Web of Support."
- c. Have participants stand close together in a circle. (6-16 persons is best, but this can work with up to 20. If you have a large group, have smaller teams create webs simultaneously.)
- d. Give the roll of yarn to one person. Have that person tell one role that he or she
- e. Share the purpose with participants.
  - i. Purpose: To help visualize the power of individuals and the power of church communities in building strong hospitality and relationships.
- f. Comment on all the acts of individuals and that hospitality is working all together to make a strong church web of support.
- g. Tell the group that the church community has 10 new people that want to come and join their church. Have teams quickly come up with a church name for their web. Now, toss the balloons on the web and challenge them to keep them supported and lifted up. If a balloon falls on the floor leave it there. We have lost that person and one day they may come back.
- h. Now, tell the group that anyone born in January, February, or March has done their fair for the church. They can now stop building a strong church community and drop their part of the web.
- i. Teaching Questions: *Have persons return to their work groups to answer questions.*
  - i. What does this show about the power of individuals?
  - ii. What happen when some people decided they had done enough (stop participating)?
  - iii. What does this show about the power of a church community?

- iv. What would it take to create a strong church web of support for all youth, young adults, adults and seniors members?
- v. What will you remember from this exercise tomorrow?

**C. What Does the Bible Say?**

- a. Hospitality is a mark of Christian discipleship, a quality of Christian community, a concrete expression of commitment to grow in Christ-likeness by seeing ourselves as part of the community of faith, “not to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28) Explain that by us practicing hospitality, we become apart of God’s invitation to new life, showing others around us (in our communities) that God in Christ values them and loves them.
- b. Hospitality is all through scripture. We begin this journey in Deuteronomy. God reminds the people of Israel to welcome the stranger, the sojourner, the wanderer. Why? “For you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19). Remind the group that we were once all strangers to this faith. We were the outsiders. But, now we are apart of the team of Christ. We have the rich resources of meaning, grace, hope, friendship, and service.
- c. Ask the group if they remember who first invited them, encouraged them, received the, and helped them feel welcome. (take about two examples)
- d. Move to slide 5 of the power point and ask someone in the group to read the first scripture reading from Matthew and then follow with someone else with reading of Hebrews.
- e. Bishop Schnase says, “we would change our behaviors toward strangers if we lived as if we really believed this!” But, in Matthew 18:5 Jesus teaches us, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” Hospitality gives us sight to people as Jesus sees them and seeing Jesus in the people God brings before us.
- f. Explain the Jesus’ hospitality extends beyond a nice smile “cordial” welcome that we offer someone as the come into the church on Sunday morning. But, rather we are to have a active hospitality. Romans 15:7 says, “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” The grace that we receive in Christ places upon Christians the joyful gift and challenging task of offering others the same welcome they themselves have received. (Refer to Hebrews 13:2)
- g. Now, move to slide 6. Share with the group that hospitality has been with us since the beginning of the Methodist movement. Many Methodist practiced hospitality in ways that were so radical in their time that many traditional leaders found their activities offensive. John Wesley our founder preached on the roadsides, open fields, to cold miners, factory workers, the underclass, the poor, the rich, slaves, etc. Wesley invited everyone into community and nurtured in them a sense of belonging as he started the classes and societies that requested accountability, support and care.
- h. Wesley believed that before people ever consciously come to faith, they have a inner desire for relationship to God and his people. By God’s grace, people may be more ready than we realize to accept the invitation and initiative of Christ that comes through gracious hospitality.
- i.

**D. What is Radical Hospitality (Part 1)**

- a. Write the word “radical” on newsprint. Ask participants what comes to mind when they see this word. Allow a few responds. Refer to slide 8 of the power point. Radical means “drastically different from ordinary practice, outside the norm.” When we say radical don’t think different, wow, out of control; but rather think about people offering the

absolute utmost of themselves. Using their creative juices, using their energy to offer the gracious invitation and reception of Christ to others.

- b. Churches that practice radical hospitality offer a surprising and unexpected quality of depth and authenticity in their caring for others. These strangers (newcomers) sense:
  - i. That these people really do care about me here.
  - ii. They really want the best for me.
  - iii. I am not a number or an outsider at this church.
  - iv. I am being invited into the body of Christ with them.
- c. Bishop Schnase shares that the word radical intensifies expectations and magnifies the central importance of this invitational element of our life in Christ. Radical hospitality goes to the extreme and we do with a joyful heart not superficially, because we know our invitation is the invitation of Christ in a dying world.
- d. Now, write the word “hospitality” on the newsprint. Ask participants to share what comes to mind when they see this word. Then share slide 9.
- e. Bishop Schnase shares in the book an experience that he had when he was serving a particular congregation. This congregation wanted to deepen its understanding of hospitality, growing beyond the practical steps recommended by books on evangelism, assimilation, and visitor follow-up. They had the techniques right – helpful signage, accessible parking, trained greeters; but they wanted to extend this hospitality further. In evaluating their posture of hospitality, they talked honestly about the greatest gifts they had received through the church from their relationship with Christ and considered honestly, without boasting or any negative spirit of pride, what had been the greatest contribution each of them had ever made to the up building of the body of Christ.
- f. Then Bishop Schnase asks the members to think about another contribution that they may have made or should seek, the answer was “invite someone else or helping a newcomer feel genuinely welcome so that she or he receives what we have received.

#### **E. Break**

- a. Allow participants to have at least a 5 – 10 minute break.

#### **F. What is Radical Hospitality (Part 2)**

- a. Many times we forget that we are the “hospital” and we offer spiritual medication. Refer to slide 11.
- b. Inviting people to church doesn’t mean that we pound them upside the head with the word of God and the “oughts” and “should.” Some people will begin to recognize their needs, and they will search for the meaning, for others and for God.
- c. Let’s talk for a minute:
  - i. How is your church doing? Is worship attendance increasing or decreasing? Is membership trending older each year or getting younger with the addition of new members? Is the number of classes, studies, services, and missions increasing or decreasing? (Allow groups to answer some of these questions)
  - ii. If your congregation has experience this they are not by themselves.
- d. Our biggest problem is not that people are getting up and leaving the church. The problem is that members simply grow old and die, and no one takes their places. The church has a “front door” problem rather than a “back door” problem. People are not entering into the life of our churches at a rate that matches or exceeds the number maturing and dying.
- e. To be a vibrant, fruitful growing congregation requires a change of attitudes, practices, and values. Good intentions are not enough. Too many of us want: more young people,

as long as they act like old people, more ethnic families as long as they act like the majority in the congregation.

- f. We can do better. It takes practicing and doing radical hospitality – and all the redirecting of energy and resources and volunteer time that comes with this. Church leaders can't keep doing things the way they have always done them. Little changes have big effects.
- g. Refer to slide 12. Allow some discussion time for the groups before moving to What Can We Do also have them share.

#### **G. What Can We Do?**

- a. Risking something new creates a buzz and a stir in the community that strengthens participation in all other ministries of the church. Word of mouth is still the most important form of human communication, and trust me when people talk about a church as a place that makes them feel special, welcome and loved, they will tell someone else about it.
- b. Now, share slide 13 with the group. Ask for a reader. After you have finished the short story have some discussion.
  - i. Could that really happen to visitors in our church?
  - ii. How many of us have had that experience?
  - iii. Have you ever arrived at a church, entered and felt a sense of lostness?
- c. Share with the team a quote from Bishop Sally Dyck, "for the visitor or the person who is searching for spiritual help, 'This Sunday is the only Sunday that counts.'" Some stores request that "secret shoppers" come in the store and test the salespersons and other employees on sales, etc. What if we begin to have "secret church members?" The Rethink Church kit has a full two-three page sheet just based on a church visitor coming in and taking a quick assessment of the church.
- d. In order for churches to aspire to have radical hospitality we must ask the following questions.
  - i. Refer to slide 14.
- e. A church changes its culture one person at a time. How many of you came to the workshop about being an effective leader? In the presentation there was a video of a movement. It started with one person and then others came. With prayer we can make a difference.
- f. Share with the group examples of what churches have already done.
  - i. Simple, Easy, Safe Ideas
    - 1. Teach a lesson on hospitality to every Sunday school class; make the church lawn attractive; clean, check, repaint, and repair outdoor playground equipment; clean, update, light, or repaint the church sign; plan social events specifically to encourage inviting visitors
  - ii. More Challenging Ideas
    - 1. Send a team to visit another church that excels in hospitality, meet with their pastor and lay team. Ask, learn, borrow ideas; Reach out to single moms and dads with a study group with great childcare at a time that is most helpful. If it doesn't work, make changes and try again.
  - iii. Big, Bold, Audacious, Scary Ideas
    - 1. Invite an evaluation on all systems for inviting, welcoming, and following-through with visitors from an outside consultant or a pastor with expertise; study the demographics of your area and your church

and recommend a long-term strategic plan to reach a wider section of the population.

**H. Thank You**

- a. Thank participants for coming to the Healthy Church Workshop. Have the group form into one large circle, holding hands facing outward.
- b. Give the closing prayer.