

RESOURCE 2

LEADER'S GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS TO DEVELOP PROFILE

Putting the Groups Together

The goal is to secure the participation of as many people as possible in the Discernment Process; even if the profile does not ultimately reflect exactly what one person wants, he/she has had a voice in the process. How this is best accomplished is going to have local variations. This exercise will take about one and a half hours. When you announce your plans, be sure people know that you want them to stay for the entire event, and that this is the way in which they can participate in and guide the Discernment Committee, so it's very important!

Self-Study Committees have had success with both of the following Focus Group plans; use whichever one best suits the culture of your congregation.

1. Schedule a series of "cottage" meetings, either in the evenings or on Saturday or Sunday afternoons, in people's homes or even in the church. Encourage folks to participate with people they don't know as well (call it a fellowship opportunity) and, where possible, encourage family members to attend different meetings—they benefit from the broader experience, too. If possible, limit the size of the group to eight participants, plus the facilitators. Twelve is the maximum number you should allow.

Or

2. Schedule a meeting on one or two Sundays immediately after the main service. Use an expanded coffee hour as a "hook" (in other words, more food!) and provide childcare for the youngest children. Give each person a number, randomly, to break the group into manageable "roundtables" for discussion. These discussions work best if groups are limited to eight to twelve people; members of the same family should be in different groups to encourage full freedom of individual expression.

In both of the above plans, two people working together should facilitate each Focus Group. At least one should be a member of the Self-Study Committee. You can help keep each other on track, help move the process along, and spell each other as "scribe" on a computer or newsprint. Be sure to identify in advance who will lead which portion of the Focus Group meeting so that you work together smoothly as a team.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Laptop computer, LCD projector and screen, or newsprint
Several magic markers; black is easiest to read
Pencils and small pads of paper, one for each participant

I. WELCOME AND PURPOSE (10 MINUTES)

Welcome the participants; encourage them to sit comfortably where everyone can see the screen or newsprint, and the leaders. Give any "housekeeping" information such as where the coffee is, or where the bathroom is located (especially important for "cottage" meetings).

Remind everyone why you have gathered: to gather information about your church today, and where you would like your church to be in the next three to five years:

The process we will use is a variation on something called "brainstorming." (Some, if not all, will be familiar with this process.) Brainstorming is a technique to pool the ideas of a group quickly. It is intended to involve everyone's participation. We will use this process to get your input on six specific areas of parish life, the four pastoral or ministry skills we believe to be most needed at this time in the life of the congregation, and, finally, a general assessment of where we are and where we want to go.

Hand out pencils and paper.

The reason for giving you pencils and paper is that you may well have a thought that you want to contribute, but it's on a different topic than the one we're on at the moment. Please write it down, so that we can capture it when we're on that topic, or get back to it at the end of the agenda.

II. THE AGENDA

You may wish to have the agenda projected on your screen or as the first sheet of newsprint, or you may wish to write it out as you speak. You may also want to hand out a copy to participants so they can see what is coming up.

- A. Ground Rules for Discussion
- B. Our Parish Life
 - 1. Ministry of the Laity
 - 2. Liturgical/Spiritual Life
 - 3. Educational Life
 - 4. Evangelism and Renewal
 - 5. Outreach
 - 6. Stewardship
- C. Gifts We Seek in Our Next Rector/Vicar
- D. Hopes and Dreams
- E. General Parish Assessment

A. Ground Rules for Discussion

- ♦ All ideas and thoughts are acceptable.
- ♦ There are no right or wrong answers.
- ♦ This is not a debate, but rather a free-flowing sharing of our individual thoughts. No analysis, comments, or criticisms allowed.
- ♦ Repetition is okay; it may spark a new idea. Ideas build on one another; that's fine.
- ♦ One person speaks at a time.
- ♦ Only questions for clarity are allowed.

As leaders, hold the participants to these ground rules. You may want to post them or hand them out. It is your responsibility both to control the group so that one or two voices do not dominate and to encourage everyone's participation.

B. Our Parish Life

As you introduce each category, make a brief statement or raise a series of questions that guide the ideas. For each of the six areas, ask the same two questions: 1) Where are we presently? 2) Where do we want to be three to five years from today?

1. Ministry of the Laity

Current: Where are we today? Do we have a variety of opportunities for lay ministry or not? Do we do any training for lay ministry? What do we do in our small group meetings— social, study, etc.? Where is our leadership focused? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to add or do differently? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

2. Liturgical/Spiritual Life

Current: What are our services like? How do we participate? What is our view of our prayer and spiritual life? How do we help our membership in this area? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to change and how? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

3. Educational Life

Current: What do we do now? When? What do we emphasize: scripture, Anglican studies, contemporary issues, etc.? When does our education take place? Is it mostly for children, or mostly for adults? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to change or add? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

4. Evangelism and Renewal

Current: Do we reach out beyond our church to bring in new people? How? Do we welcome new members? How? Who does the reaching out to newcomers? How? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to change? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

5. Outreach

Current: How do we interact with our diocese? How do we use our buildings and facilities? Do we support programs outside of ourselves? How well do we work with people in other denominations or faith traditions? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to change? Do differently? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

6. Stewardship

Current: Do our leaders teach and practice stewardship, including proportional giving toward the tithe? Does our stewardship include talents/gifts as well as financial stewardship? Who teaches about stewardship? How is stewardship taught? (2 minutes)

Future: What would we like to change or do differently? Where do we want to be three to five years from today? (3 minutes)

Summary

Does anyone have anything to add to any of the categories that you noted, but we didn't capture? (*Add as needed.*)

This is a good point for a brief break; people have been working hard.

C. Gifts We Seek in Our Next Rector/Vicar

List the twenty-one ministry skills identified by the Church Deployment Office on newsprint. (You can do this ahead of time.) Then clarify what each term means, if necessary.

- ♦ Administration
- ♦ Christian Formation/Education
- ♦ Church Growth/Development
- ♦ Communications Ministry
- ♦ Consulting/Transition Ministry
- ♦ Counseling
- ♦ Ecumenical/Interfaith
- ♦ Evangelism
- ♦ Leadership Development
- ♦ Liturgy
- ♦ Multi-/Cross-Cultural Ministry
- ♦ Music Ministry
- ♦ Outreach/Social Justice Advocacy
- ♦ Pastoral Care
- ♦ Preaching
- ♦ Spiritual Guidance
- ♦ Stewardship
- ♦ Teaching
- ♦ Theology
- ♦ Ministry with Youth
- ♦ Other

Ask people to make a checkmark or a dot by each of the six skills that are most important to them. (This exercise should take about ten minutes.)

D. Hopes and Dreams

Brainstorm for about ten to fifteen minutes (at most) on dreams and what you might do to get there. Brainstorming rules apply!

E. General Parish Assessment

Report results to participants.