

# Ideas for Planning an Event

## A Focus Group Event

When your church is ready to revise, revamp, recreate or start an organized women's group, it is best to have an event that will uncover the needs of the women of your church. Conducting and hosting a focus group can be one of the most important tools to ascertain the needs and concerns of a community.

The current leaders, or where there is no group, a committed core of 4-6 women, should do the following:

- ❖ Invite, face to face, by phone, email or evite, the women of your church to a Focus Group Event. Make sure to convey the purpose of the meeting, which is to get their honest input in order to recreate, redesign or start an organized women's ministries group.
- ❖ Plan a meeting at a time convenient for most women that includes some time for fellowship and refreshments. The discussion should not last over 90 minutes.
- ❖ Invite someone who is not a member of your church to facilitate the meeting. You might contact someone from the diocesan or provincial organization or a neighboring church. You want someone who does not have a vested interest in the outcome of the gathering.
- ❖ Have an easel, markers, paper and pens available.
- ❖ Provide nametags so that the facilitator can see the name of each participant.
- ❖ Include a person to record notes of the focus group. Provide the note keeper with discussion questions, etc. prior to the meeting so they will be able to easily follow the progression of the meeting.
- ❖ Greet each group participant as they arrive.
- ❖ Have everyone gather as a whole group and explain the purpose of the meeting. Open with a short icebreaker activity. (An icebreaker activity is provided in this handout). Have the rector or vicar present to express support for this effort and to welcome everyone.
- ❖ The facilitator should always introduce herself to the entire group. The facilitator should be friendly, open and honest.
- ❖ The facilitator should set ground rules at the beginning of the meeting. Ground rules should include some of the following:
  - ◆ Be respectful of each other.
  - ◆ Agree to disagree.
  - ◆ No talking at the same time.
  - ◆ Raise your hand before sharing a comment.

- ❖ The role of the facilitator is to listen very carefully to the comments of the participants. In order to avoid any miscommunication, it's a great idea for the facilitator to summarize any comments for the sake of accuracy and clarification. It's extremely important for the facilitator to:
  - ♦ Maintain control of the group
  - ♦ Not argue or disagree with participants
  - ♦ Avoid leading participants towards preconceived ideas
  - ♦ Maintain a neutral position at all times
  - ♦ Encourage active communication and interactive discussion
  - ♦ Make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to share
  - ♦ Discourage side conversations
  - ♦ Be genuine; participants can identify fakeness
  - ♦ Use humor, it helps to relax the group
- ❖ Once the focus group has ended, remember to thank participants for attending.
- ❖ Before leaving the session, make sure that there is a group to take the results, publish them, and work toward implementation.

As a leader of women's ministries... It is important to remember that your goal is to serve, not be served. Christ will honor your efforts, especially if you are open to your sisters in Christ and willing to make changes that are necessary to build a stronger community of women in your congregation. Pray and work with others as a team who feel called to this ministry. Work hard, pray for guidance, and trust that God will use you in special ways, sometimes beyond your understanding.