

# 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.

## ECW Planning-Handout #1

Directions: Gather in small groups of three persons. Take a few minutes in quiet reflection to consider the questions below. Allow each person in the group 5-7 minutes to share her responses to the questions with the other persons in the group. The object of this exercise is to get to know each other as sisters in Christ. Sharing from the heart asks merely for acceptance. Love each other by thoughtfully listening without giving advice or responding with your similar story.

Time allotted: 25 minutes

Tell the group some highlights from your life journey – where you were born, grew up, schooling, employed positions, current family situation.

What brought you to this church? What have you found in this congregation that brings you joy? How has being a member of this congregation challenged you?

Share with the group an event, moment, or period of your life when you realized a deepening of your faith and spiritual formation.

Do you have an awareness of a spiritual gift that God has given you, and if so, what is it?

## ECW Planning-Handout #2

Directions: Jot down some responses to the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers. They are valid because they are born out of your own experience. You will be sharing your answers with the whole group.

Time allotted: Personal reflection – 10 minutes    Group sharing – 20 minutes

1. List 5 words or phrases that reflect your image of Episcopal Church Women.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

2. What was it about ECW that would draw you in to participate?

3. Describe what you need the ECW at this church to be for you.

## ECW Planning-Handout #3

Directions: Answer Part 1 by yourself. Part 2 – Share your answers with each other. In Part 3, work together to come to consensus.

### Part 1 – 5 minutes

What do you think are the three greatest needs of the women of our church that can be addressed through the work of the ECW? (Keep in mind the other activities going on in the parish. Duplication of activities may create less participation. Think in terms of addressing the needs of women that are not being met.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Part 2 – 5 minutes

Every member of your group needs to share her answers to Part 1. Jot down some notes on the back of this sheet of each other's responses.

### Part 3 – 15 minutes

As a group, come to consensus on the three greatest needs of the women of your church that can be addressed through activities of the ECW in the coming year. These will be reported back to the whole group.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# ECW Interest Survey

## National Episcopal Church Women Meeting Workshop

Listed below are some of the many types of activities in which ECWs participate. Read all of the activities in a category and then number them in the order of your interest in participating in that type of activity with 1 being of the most interest.

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Small group Bible study that meets regularly.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Small group spiritual/personal growth study with various study materials that meets regularly.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Prayer vigils held for specific purposes.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Quiet Days - often led by outside speakers, lasting 3 to 5 hours (sometimes quiet required, sometimes not!) for spiritual growth and meditation.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Spiritual Growth Retreat - going away to an overnight location and being led by an outside speaker with emphasis on prayer, worship, spiritual growth.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Personal/Self Discovery Retreat - going away to an overnight location and being led by a trained team of outside speakers with emphasis on personal growth and self-discovery
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Other kinds of retreats - going away to an overnight location, often with an outside speaker coming to lead part of it, with emphasis on a variety of activities, some fun, some just restful, some crafty-creative, etc.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Field trips - to short destinations to visit historic churches, churches of other faiths, to see Christian drama presentations, to hear speakers at other places.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Host at XXX - visiting speakers with emphasis on: (check if interested)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ personal growth
  - \_\_\_\_\_ personal/self discovery
  - \_\_\_\_\_ outreach ministries in the world
  - \_\_\_\_\_ dramatic Biblical/Christian presentations
  - \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

OUTREACH (ministries we do outside the walls of our local church)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Be a part of a group of women who commit a full day or two to a task helping some cause in the community like Habitat for Humanity, re-paint a local food shelter, clean up an elderly woman's home, etc.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Be a part of a group of women who commit regularly scheduled time to help some cause in the community like a women's shelter, food pantry, etc.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Do a single fundraiser that requires minimum planning and preparation and give the funds raised to an outreach concern. (example: dinner, bake sale, garage sale, etc.)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Do a fundraiser that requires significant planning, preparation and commitment of time and give the funds to an outreach concern. (example: bazaar, thrift shop, gift shop, etc.)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Be a part of an ECW event that focuses on an outreach concern and in some way gives aid to that concern. (example: baby shower for a pre-natal clinic, toy shower for children's home, gathering clothes for the poor, etc.)
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Have an ongoing craft project that benefits an outside agency. (example: make rape crisis kits for local hospitals, make lap quilts for Ronald McDonald House, make emergency toiletry bags for women's shelter, etc.)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Your ideas:

## INREACH

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a one-time event fundraiser to purchase or contribute to something necessary for this congregation or building.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a long-term fundraising event to purchase something expensive for the church.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Do a handwork project for this church such as hangings, banners, kneelers, etc.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Do Chrismons for a Chrismon tree to be used at Christmas for this church.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Participate in an organized ministry to provide meals for persons at XXX.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Have a party just for fun and fellowship. (example: slumber party, dinner party, etc.)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Go out of town together with no serious agenda. (example: to a B&B, go antique shopping, see the wildflowers, go to a museum, go to a play)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Have speakers come in to do demonstrations such as cooking, flower arranging, etc.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Host a party for the whole church, theme party, dinner party, etc.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Your ideas:



YOUR COMMITMENT

Please check all applicable phrases:

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to see a revitalized Episcopal Church Women group at XXX, and I will support it in spirit, with my prayers, and by participating as I am able to do.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not think we need an organized Episcopal Church Women group at XXX at this time.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in participating on a design team (4-8 women) that will work this year to determine the structure and function of the ECW organization and will plan the activities for next year. I am willing to make this a one-year commitment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would consider taking on a leadership role for a single event planned by this group next year.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am not able to be a leader, but I make a good "worker bee." Please call on me to help with individual tasks.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to make a limited number of telephone calls.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to help in the following way: (your description)

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.