

PHASE 1 HISTORY DAY by Mort Ward

Mail a letter from wardens emphasizing the importance of attending.

Arrangements are made for coffee, donuts, bagels, juice etc. on arrival and throughout the morning. Supplies include newsprint size Post it pads, markers, etc, an area to display all of the newsprint sheets as they are completed, etc. Seating is auditorium style. Get a helper to post finished pages. Lunch is ordered or prepared in advance as I prefer not to have members away from the meeting working in the kitchen. Appoint a clerk to record what is written on the newsprint. The same person can also write the synopsis. Vestry reads the synopsis with the wardens to check for accuracy before making it available. Tell everyone that this document is not for publication. It is an internal document for the congregation's use only and for the new rector. Make it available for reading by members in the office but do not distribute it. You may also wish to choose a Sunday between services to read the synopsis to those who wish to hear it and for those who could not attend. Explain the ground rules and solicit perceptions from them as well. Have the clerk amend the original document accordingly. Where narratives may differ state simply:

"Some people say....., but other people say....."

A. Introduction

1. Thank You! Your valuable gift of your time is substantial.
2. Welcome. Rest Room locations if in an unfamiliar space, breaks, cell phones, etc.
3. Are there any pressing matters to be dealt with?
4. Prayer

B. Some instruction about Perspectives:

1. What we experience depends on what we can see from where we are standing, therefore no one can experience exactly what another person sees or experiences.
2. What we can all agree on; "Everyone here wants the best for St. ----- Church." Agreed?

(Write this on one sheet of newsprint that will be visible during the whole day.)

C. Ground Rules.

a. "We are not looking for "truth." (Write this on the sheet above.) This is not a history like a history book. This is a collection of people's perceptions. We are here to listen to and to tell to each other our stories.

b. Since we recognize that everyone stands in a different place, everyone's story will be different. Therefore "Other people's perceptions are O.K." (Write this on the page above.) It is his or her experience and therefore it is not debatable by anyone else. Will everyone agree to this understanding? If not, this exercise will not work. (Get this agreement before continuing.)

c. We all will tell our own story. We will not speak for any one else. "We will use "I" statements." (Write this also.)

d. Common rules of courtesy; interruptions, sounds positive and negative, etc.

D. An introduction to systems thinking:

a. Relationship of shower handles to the water flowing from the showerhead. Get examples from them of parts of a shower's system.

b. There are many things at work which we do not see that affect events.

c. Everything is connected, even when it is not at all obvious.

d. Look for patterns in St. -----'s story. They indicate systems at work.

The History

1. Origins

a. Before the congregation was formed; geography, environment, culture, economy, faith communities already present, etc. (Some may be able to tell stories of this time. Second hand stories may be O.K. for this section.)

b. Why was this congregation formed? Who formed it? Who led it? Stories?

2. History by terms of Rectors or Vicars:

1. What was going on during this time (rector's term); nationally, locally, congregationally?

2. What happened during this time that you liked?

3. What happened that you wish had not happened?

Summary

1. Acknowledge their successes, particularly in the face of the tragedies. Congratulate them. God has been and is still at work there. Other comments as the Spirit moves.

2. Announce when you will read the synopsis to the congregation.

3. Other matters

4. Thanksgiving prayer.

Additional notes:

Some will have to be gently reminded of the ground rules at first. This is a new way of thinking for many.

Be focused but light handed. Keep the stories on the track of the questions.

Respect all opinions. Write key points on newsprint, using their own words whenever possible.

Note obvious system patterns as they evolve and encourage them to do the same.

10 minute (no more!) breaks about every hour or so. 1/2-hour for lunch.

This exercise is not recommended in an atmosphere of high anxiety.

It is recommended that the facilitator be trained in systems and mediation skills.