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One-to-One Conversations with Community Leaders

The goal of One-to-One conversations is to **connect with people and groups in your community** in what may be a new and different way for you individually... and as a congregation – **so that you can learn about ways you can walk with people in their daily lives, living out Jesus’ commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself.”**

It may be that even thinking about talking with total strangers, or even folks you know just to see, may take you out of your comfort zone!

It’s important to remember that ministry is about building and maintaining relationships with others, in order to learn about their lives, their work, their hopes, their challenges.

Jesus spent ALL of his time interacting with people wherever he went... in fact, he didn’t only make it his business, it WAS his business. Read through the 4 Gospels and notice what Jesus is doing over and over... he is engaging with people and then teaching his disciples about those interactions.

Think of “One-to-Ones” as intentional conversations where you are interested in and politely yet genuinely curious about what the other person is living through.

It is true that some people like to talk, and some don’t... but **every one of us is called to serve God in living out Jesus’ example through our interactions with others.**

Meeting someone on the street, in a restaurant or store, or at their door can change our perception of who they are, change the course of their lives, change the course of our ministries, and even change the course of our own lives! Remember that the end goal of Christian ministry is to participate in God’s work of changing lives

It isn’t rocket science!

- Be politely and genuinely curious about people and their lives – but don’t pry... there is a fine line here.
- Respond in a caring way to what people say to you
- Pay attention to what you see around you - the surroundings, a person’s body language, their demeanor - and you can use it as clues as to what include into the conversation.
- If it is appropriate to the situation, ask if you can pray for them or tell them you will pray for them, and call for God’s blessings on them. And then in the next few days actually DO it... pray for them and ask God to bless them!

How can you start?

- Pray for courage and the right words as you talk to people
- Pray for the ability to discern through that conversation what God is calling you to do – be open to what possibilities the conversation might open for you or your congregation’s ministry
- Imagine yourself unconditionally loving the person(s) you are talking with. Speaking to someone from a stance of unconditional love changes the dynamic – people can feel your genuine interest in their lives.
- Use active listening – listen more than talk – Listen for the story that the person is telling you and don’t make judgments – it’s their story and their own reality.
- Ask open ended questions (those that don’t elicit yes or no answers) –
 - Example: “What do you like about that?” vs. “Do you like that?”
 - Encourage people to explain what they mean so you can best understand their reality – “tell me more” or “say more about that”

Sample starter conversation for representing your church:

- We are from Agape Lutheran Church around the corner... we want to learn more about our neighbors and how we can better serve this community.

Or if you alone meet someone as not part of a team or group – note that this is on a more personal basis:

- “How long until you go home?” (at the grocery checkout at night)
- “You have beautiful flowers on your porch”.
- “I see that you walk every day too!” (after several chance encounters)

Work up to questions like these...

- How long have you lived (worked) here?
- What can you tell me about the neighborhood?
- How do you see the community changing?
- What keeps you here? How do you feel about living here?
- In your opinion what could a church do to help out in the community?

Other possible questions you might ask...

- Where are you from (where did you grow up), how long did you live there?
- What was it like where/when you were growing up?
- What was your family life like?
- What brought you here?
- What do you do?
- What do you wish was different?

If the person wants to continue in conversation, or if you have met and talked with them previously:

- What do you do?
- Why do you do what you do?
- What do you like about what you do?
- What challenges do you face? What is the biggest challenge you have faced?
- What impact would you like to have on your community?
- How is that working for you?
- What is most important to you right now?
- How are you handling that?
- What role does faith play in your life?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- How did you go about accomplishing them?
- What did you learn in the process?

Through questions similar to these you might begin to discern:

- What makes them angry, sad, joyful
- Their ambitions and dreams
- What has been the strongest influence in their life's journey
- Why they spend their time the way they do – their values and priorities
- What are their challenges and concerns
- What are they passionate about
- What are their gifts, where they have the chance to utilize them

WHY SHOULD I (WE) CARE ABOUT THESE THINGS?

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AND THIS IS EXACTLY HOW WE BEGIN THAT TASK!

- We don’t know where any conversation will lead
- Be open and listen for God speaking to us in people’s conversations
- Follow God’s leading - pray, plan and begin to take action according to what you have learned through these and other intentional encounters!

ONE-TO-ONE REFLECTION JOURNAL

With whom did I speak with?

What is her/his area of self-interest?

Talents or gifts she/he has to offer?

Stories she/he told which give an insight as to current/past life issues?

How did my/our conversation seem to impact her/him?

What might be the basis of a follow up conversation, collaboration or relationship?

Insights I had from this conversation? A leading direction as to what God might be calling me/us to do?