

Exploring Congregational Life Resources

(45 minutes)

Aim

To introduce the Congregational Life resources by inviting participants to role play the type of planning that can help churches use *Seasons of the Spirit* resources for the greatest benefit.

Preparing for the workshop

- ! Gather the following materials:
 - Congregational Life sample
 - Cross
 - Green cloth
 - Candle and matches
 - Small table
 - Bible
 - Arpillera poster
 - 3-4 posters that say, “How, then, shall we live?”
 - *Seasons of the Spirit* samplers
 - Cards to divide up the group into the three sections – “Learning,” “Worship,” and “Service”
 - Pencils
 - Items to decorate three planning areas as follows: children’s books and art supplies for an education center; music books and instruments for a music center; Bibles and books for a pastor’s study
- ! Set up the room into the following areas:
 - Gathering Center and Large Group Area
 - Place a green (for the season after Pentecost) cloth over a small table. Arrange the cross, the candle, and the Bible on the table. Put enough chairs for the expected number of participants in a circle around the table. Evenly distribute index cards marked with “Learning,” “Worship,” or “Service” on the chairs. Post the signs “How, then, shall we live?” around the room in sight of the gathering area.
 - Break Out Centers
 - Create three areas around the room for small groups to gather. Decorate one to look like an education planning center, one to look like a music planning center, and one to look like a pastor’s study where worship and service planning might take place. If possible, place enough chairs in each area to accommodate roughly one-third of expected participants. (If you don’t have enough chairs or space, people can move their chairs to those areas when they break out into small groups.)

A. Gather (10 minutes)

As the group gathers in the chairs around the center table, light the candle and welcome them to the season after Pentecost. Invite them to imagine that they are the planning leaders for a single congregation, coming together for some advance coordinating around worship, learning, and service experiences for the congregation during the last portion of this season, the weeks directly preceding Advent. Show them the planning section of the Congregational Life sample and lead them through the gathering portion of this resource which is designed for just such a group of congregational leaders to help them focus on the season as a whole.

B. Engage (20 minutes)

Move into planning groups for each area of congregational life. Invite the participants to move to the area that corresponds to the card they found on their seats: “Learning” (education planning center), “Worship” (music planning center), or “Service” (pastor’s study). Provide enough *Seasons of the Spirit* samplers for each person to bring one to the small groups.

Ask the groups to imagine they are planning church activities for a single week – the last week in the season after Pentecost. Examples of Congregational Life resources for this Sunday are in the Sampler. Ask the groups to identify ideas and experiences included in this section of the sampler for their area of focus.

Move into mixed planning groups. When some specific ideas have been identified for each of the areas, ask the whole group to reorganize into three new planning teams so that each includes education planners, music and worship planners, and service planners. These groups represent the leadership teams that might come together for weekly planning in a local congregation, bringing these various aspects of congregational life together. Ask these congregational planning teams to develop an integrated week of experiences for the congregation. Have the groups report to one another to demonstrate the variety of combinations and new ideas that can emerge from this coordinated planning.

C. Reflect (10 minutes)

Invite participants to reflect on what they discovered in the Congregational Life resources and how they experienced the style of coordinated planning that the resource encourages. What do they imagine this resource enabling their congregations to do?

D. Bless (5 minutes)

Ask the participants to leave with the theme for the week they have just planned fresh in their minds by inviting them to read the posters around the room out loud in unison: “How, then, shall we live?” Bless them to go forth to live this important question of discipleship.