



# Wrestling with the Big Questions

*To bring together and build collaborative relationships in order to transform and advance the Episcopal Church's ability to embrace its educational mission more deeply*

## Small Group Scribe Report

### Session II: Hospitality in Teaching & Learning (Saturday afternoon)

#### 1. What have you heard or learned that you find especially important in relation to the mission of this consultation?

Group A:

- Hospitality must be sincere
- Hospitality grows memberships
- People come to church because they are asked – but they need to feel welcome once they are there
- Sometimes the best acts of hospitality are not perfect – but we try

Group B:

- The key is institutionalization of hospitality as a core value, as in Quakerism or Buddhism
- Intentionality and preparedness to welcome those who are engaged in what God has stirred in their lives
- Hospitality is not present when there are spoken and unspoken rules of exclusion and acceptability
- Need to listen to children/youth

Group C:

- Embrace others' stories – 'old testaments' – learn the stories
- How can we use power and privilege to help?
- Be more flexible on Sunday mornings – scheduling as well as program
- Leaders need to know how to extend hospitality. Be intentional.
- Learn why we are here – be intentional about hospitality of the heart – extend this hospitality to people and to God
- Be aware of people & reinforce hospitality

Group D:

- Looking at the models we use – how they can be adapted / altered to accommodate different needs and ways of learning multiplicity of models
- Being able to learn from each other
- Includes "food"
- Be aware of the need for traditional models for those who are comfortable with that - men, older people
- Listen to audience's needs – be able to adapt
- Being able to listen (and use) what you don't expect
- Being able to speak your heart
- Develop caring communities – meet people where they are

Group E:

- Church – not really a safe place for doubts
- Community – both good and bad becomes barriers when we welcome
- Hospitality (based on trust) – involves coming out of your comfort zone

Group F:

- Important having someone to study and walk with while paying attention to what the Holy Spirit is doing
- Learning is an on-going process
- Discover questions that lead to deeper knowledge & love of God/Christ
- Mystery about learning
- Importance of small group / intergenerational learning
- There are multi-facet ways to learn

#### Group G:

- Hospitality
  - Should be extended to all people, not to just the ones we know
  - Crosses denominational lines
- It's important to honor the validity of incorporated cultural traditions
- Sometimes the community becomes so closed that it's difficult to welcome others
- Our liturgy can be warm & welcoming and full of hospitality
- Prejudging others and relying on popular stereotypes decreases the possibility for communication and relationships
- Even when we're "giving," we can be receiving enormous blessings
- Providing safe spaces for conversation and sharing can add deeper dimensions to working relationships. Confidences and respect are vital encounters.
- The hierarchical system can be very inhospitable
- We learn hospitality from watching and receiving
- We need to be culturally sensitive and enter into relationships as equals
- We need to be hospitable to others as professionals
- We need to respect and honor the learner

#### Group H:

- Stories of hospitality: places of trust, cultivating an arena for learning, being held in prayer, mentoring, walking a faith journey together,
- Stories of inhospitality: gender/age/sexual orientation/race; being shunned for beliefs, marginalized

#### Group I:

- When is our church safe?
  - Mutual respect
  - Together – companionship
  - Honoring gifts
  - Invitation
  - Reflect back what we have experienced
  - Be authentic
  - Mutual places
  - Open our homes for things
  - Meet where you are – not where you want to believe you are
- When are we not safe?
  - Having those "habits" that only we know that can trip up the stranger
  - Excuses vs. lip service vs. lifestyle
  - Systemic issues: altar guild is for the retired women only & much more
  - Attitudes & filters – personal and the community's
  - Inadequacy / fear & shame / exposure / vulnerability

#### Group J:

- Care for what church is and can become hope for transformation
- Manner of sharing – nonverbal & verbal presence
- Are people invited or ignored?
- Hospitality is not only for newcomers – making room for each other

#### Group K:

- Hospitality is about practice of being open

- Hospitality is accepting people who show up broken
- Hospitality is putting our baptismal covenant in practice

Group L:

- Two in our group were not welcomed – nor were their ministries – because select groups controlled everything, and new ones were not included
- Some people had been ostracized because they have spoken the truth against the authority of the “church’s truth”
- The Episcopal Church has welcomed some who were able to find their voice due to warmth, personal touches, and encouragement
- The welcome to the Eucharist (insist on it) in the Episcopal Church is important to many – intentional welcoming ministries can be very successful`

Group M:

- All of us are engaged in addressing hospitality in a variety of ways and are working at it
- There is pain in the process – hospitality has its costs
- We are fighting against the culture – we must keep our authenticity – being open to death and resurrection of all things

Group N:

- Hospitality does not insist on having its own way
- Sometimes the feeling of safety to be bold in challenging authority – when it is wrong comes from naivety
- “In hospitality” is when people are not aware of differences, do not care about them, or refuse to listen

Group O:

- Meet people where they are. Ask what they need. Anticipate it if you can.
- “Let go” defensiveness, fear, the need to be right, respectability, certainty, judgementalism, violence
- “Put on” genuine love. Respect the ministry of the baptized
- Be willing to be educated ourselves. Be vulnerable and even naïve. Expect the unexpected. Remember that God is at work.

Group P:

- Everyone has stories of inhospitality/exclusion. It was shocking how this experience was common to all across practice of ministry / order of ministry / job description
- First impressions and peak experiences of hospitality really matter to us. Being able to witness “I know how good it can be” carries us in times of inhospitality
- Children, people of color, women – those of us who have been treated as other (or who advocate for others such as children) tell stories that can really reveal our inhospitable practices

Group Q:

- Title III places the responsibility for Christian formation on the Commission on Ministry – Education is for all the baptized.
- The CoM is the largest and most ferocious gate keepers of theological education – blocks continuing formation
- The fallacy still exists that you have to be ordained to have a ministry – discernment committees need to help people figure out what they are called to do
- Welcome people to participate fully in the eyes of the congregation regardless of age

Group R:

- Get to the point where people can be able to share – be more hospitable and welcoming to others
- Deep listening requires space where fear is acknowledged
- We learn from others – not the experts – we are the experts
- Always allow time for inclusion
- The traditional approach to church in experiential
- Obstacles to hospitality are also obstacles to diversity

Group S:

- If the church can cultivate acceptance of difference, it doesn't mean we have to agree. The "pull" to "protect things" (history of community, doctrine, people, tools) makes hospitality more difficult (a lack of graciousness)
- Until we make a home for differences, we will continue to have unresolved conflict/exclusion
- Challenge – to teach people to make room for others – hospitality
- Importance of balancing "holy discomfort" (that comes with risk-taking) with FUN and celebration and working together on common projects. People who have fun and dialogue with each other are less interested in fighting

Group T:

- We are not paying attention to the things that matter
- The tension of receiving all people
- How do we deal with the people who we might choose not to be with
- There is a thread of divine providence that weaves through all traditions

Group U:

- Don't make assumptions that those with whom we disagree are not faithful, faith-filled Christians. Hospitality also means welcoming those who are "the enemy"
- Take each others' faith/being seriously enough to honestly disagree and to say "no" to one another and still forebear with one another in love and hospitality

Group V:

- Hospitality doesn't mean eliminating all boundaries and certain disciplines
- How are we intentional as people of God?
- When you are feeling marginalized, it often involves situations of in-authenticity

Group W:

- "Precious mystery of the other" – places where the hurt & harm has been is where it's not harmful
- We need to redefine the role of leader (not just top down)
- The community organizing model has a lot to teach us
- There was a theme of hurt feelings, of people feeling treated as other – both through isms (gender, race, class, sexual orientation) but also theologically different
- Hospitality is inconvenient. It must overcome the barrier of our unwillingness to step outside our comfort zone

Group X:

- Times when we were disrespected – shut down – We need to teach hospitality (no assumptions)
- Children were wonderful vehicles to teach hospitality
- Hospitality related to healing / thanking others – sacramental way to offer thanks
- Practice hospitality – incarnate – what it means in our mission statement – are we know to practice hospitality?
- Teach hospitality – incorporate into our purpose and show people how it is wanted and needed

Group Y:

- Listen with unshakeable faith – do not judge
- E-mail can create a safe space to respond with love and affection
- Resistance to change – out of fear leads to brokenness – evasion / insecurity leads to brokenness
- To thy own self be true – must authentically love yourself

Group Z:

- Being open to new things
- Can't be enough said about creating an open, safe space
- If we have safe space, everyone must have a voice – and be heard

Group AA:

- The church must be honestly open to the diverse range of life styles and needs that folks bring to our shared life
- All that we do in our life together must be revelatory. As we reach out to the stranger, we ask, "Who are you? Who are we together? Who is God among us?"

- There is a mutuality in the art of hospitality – we extend the gift of welcome to the stranger; that gift of welcome and care often comes back to us
- Expect to be changed by the encounter with the stranger

Group BB:

- Hospitality means:
  - Recognizing that the “other” may be the presence of Christ in our midst
  - The power of relationship, because people are starved for presence
  - Taking time to find what the “other’s” experience of the divine has been
  - The feeling of belonging, which comes from discovering common beliefs, experiences
- When we told our stories this morning, it was important and powerful. That creates a hospitable environment – can’t do that unless you’ve experienced it
- We must be careful not to marginalize children – do we really welcome each one of them to the table?
- Our common ground is that we are looking for ways to express our faith
- We need to feel safe enough to take risks, because that’s where transformation happens

Group CC:

- Church is not a safe place to be if you’re vulnerable
- Unsafe: not okay to have questions, to be different, to be “other”
- This church is (liturgically) unsafe: shuts down people, makes them uncomfortable, not okay to risk, tell the truth, there is a hidden agenda (not here to restore you to God – but to become a pledging member!)
- There is an assumption that we are of one mind; not allowing differing ideas

Group DD:

- Openness to questions and development of relationships are crucial to hospitality
- Communities must be intentionally open to “strangers”
- Responsibility for hospitality is the job of everyone in a community
- Hospitality is something that needs to be self-regenerating and deeply ingrained in the fiber of the community

**2. What practical implications does this (what you’ve heard or learned) have in relation to the mission of this consultation?**

Group A:

- Ask on a regular basis, “Are we hospitable?” and “What can we do about it?”
- Make book juggling easier
- Attitude of hospitality is more important than anything else – all the rest is details
- Examine our barriers to hospitality

Group B:

- Intentionality to transform the institution – it takes a ??? of 10 years.
- It must become embedded in the community can’t be done by an individual
- Risk taking essential
- Celebration of diversity continually creates hospitality and an environment of acceptance

Group C:

- Begin with leadership (Bishops, clergy & vestries) – educate them
- Need leadership to buy into the program – not just lip service
- Lots of listening
- Formation aspect of vestry meetings to teach / reinforce hospitality

Group D:

- Create place where obstacles are broken down; where “types” can find what they need. Making things (programs accessible, groups, classes)
- Provide purposes for hospitality – some leadership and direction is needed
- Avoid stagnation

- Challenge – how to get people “in” hospitality without leaving them where they are (what has been learned? How has growth occurred?)
- **Needs to be addressed:** What are the needs of the small church? (not being able to do things for all people – multiple programs, etc.)
- Create networks that are trustworthy – lay leadership

Group E:

- Knowing scripture – explore bible studies
- Dealing with conflict in a positive way – seems it as positive

Group F:

- Learning how to talk with people we love about what is central to us
- Notice and explore further learning on how to reflect faith

Group G:

- We need to be clear of our own expectations of others and have a common understanding of our task
- People should be respected for who they are and not for the position they hold
- It’s important to honor people with a clean, warm environment and with crayons that aren’t broken
- Intergenerational events can have a positive impact on formation
- Look for the teachable moments, wherever and whenever they occur

Group H:

- Intergenerational, diverse activities, use all senses
- Create an understanding that Sunday is the being (feeding) of the ministry for the rest of the week

Group I:

- Importance of building community with the education time
- Have flexible boundaries to keep circles from excluding others
- Draw circles different and in new ways – draw more circles that overlap
- Pay attention to the multiple ways people learn – multiple intelligences
- What you do – do well, because it matters!
- Intergenerational activities to help us reclaim the child
- Don’t expect only clergy to do the invitation – raise up leaders
- Check our language & methods for the points of access we have – “us vs. you” / “welcome vs. hospitality” / “invitation vs. active”
- Find our persona passion and share it
- Do it outside the structure of the church – forget “school” formats – focus on the non-school approach
- Remember that our guests/visitors are mainly attending for worship – the teaching is in the sermon – there is a need to strengthen sermon skills to be authentic – great preaching will bring great teaching!

Group J:

- Make more intentionality around “taboo topics”
- We need to be intentional about building relationships and opportunities to share and learn
- Recognition of who we are and aim towards congruence with what we say
- Teaching hospitality – allowing our community to experience hospitality
- Obstacles: architecture, practice, need for leaders and others to be vulnerable

Group K:

- We must acknowledge that there will be casualties; people leaving
- Sometimes we must let go when people are dissatisfied! We must/should help people to find what works for them – lovingly say hello

Group L:

- We need to teach hospitality and drop assumptions – find discernment of gifts
- A church does not create those spaces where one can be hospitable to oneself. We need to.
- Warmth and hospitality are very important factors that many look for – and inclusion into ministry and activities. The church should be a “mother” and embrace all who feel like sinners

- Must create a process of inclusion of all . . . (priests) must have hospitality in the heart
- A dream: Church needs to be more creative – a Eucharist that includes storytelling or sharing after the sermon that includes personal story
- Congregation separated into groups like this (consultation) so that sharing can take place through the healing of storytelling

Group M:

- Design curriculum with all different modalities in mind – children and adults
- Design curriculum that teaches cultural diversity
- Safety in small groups – this model would be helpful in the church
- Replace hierarchy with mutuality in our relationships
- Practical ways to stay together when we are transformed
- Are we really using our Baptismal Covenant at the center of congregational life and ministry?

Group N:

- True open communion at Eucharist for all people who want to grow closer to God
- Opening access of educational opportunities to all people – especially those who are not “visible” (e.g.: those who live in nursing homes, those whose cognitive abilities have degenerated)
- Consciously creating a culture of hospitality that welcomes all questions, doubts, and expressions of faith or fears itself creates deeper community

Group O:

- Create communities across generations
- Pray towards the hope of conversation towards those who differ from us, even while we take care of our own business
- Create circles of trust and opportunities to work and talk together

Group P:

- Invitation – Many people’s stories of hospitality include having been invited individually and intentionally
- Safety – We were conscious of space (where children sit, worship, “where is it is not safe to sit at clergy conference”) and language in creating hospitality – or NOT creating with hospitality (examples of what we called “marginalized language”)
- Inclusion – We liked being asked to contribute our gifts (examples – being asked to acolyte as a teen, being invited to make tortillas in a Salvadoran home). The importance of “seeing people who look like me” in leadership; a priest asking of an allergic child, “if not bread, what can we have?”
- Formation for leadership – The hospitable (or in hospitable) practices of parish leadership really matter. We want leaders who want to serve our congregations, who visit parishioners in their homes

Group Q:

- We need to welcome everyone to Communion
- Rubrics in the Prayer Book need to be changed to be more hospitable
- Education is not valued in the church as it is not valued in our cultural society

Group R:

- Be creative with music, liturgical dance, arts in order to be inclusive (diversity)
- Be aware of obstacles that keep people (especially youth) away
- There is resistance to change
- Episcopalians don’t articulate who they are
- We need to try to see our world as an outsider
- Language of liturgy (fraction, sequence hymns) is exclusive – we are always using insider language in our liturgy – confusing for non-churched and newly churched people
- We should be focused on “Who is Jesus Christ” and “Why should I care?”

Group S:

- Teach group dynamics in churches – systems models that invite whole selves into conversion
- Practice deep listening and sense of “Christ born and re-born” as a way of walking in life that creates safe space to err and be redeemed

- Teach kids they are valued and have responsibility to and for community – that the church “belongs” to children and they are full members – curriculum is less important than participation
- Take seriously the spiritual experiences of children – key to have a place to talk about it; people need it; a place to explore their perceptions and intuition if the divine and teenagers wanting to explore faith (those with no parental models) need a forum
- Don’t tell – ask! (to reveal) – Just bring the questions to the table

Group T:

- What is my role in creating/fostering a community of faith?
- Explore faith through Bible reflection – how scripture intersects our life
- Continue to work on ways to be hospitable to others’ faith journey

Group U:

- Equipping people for discipleship
- Children need to be fully integrated into worship and service opportunities, even governance. Inter-generational education/formation is good
- Give families a way to connect and learn during the week
- True hospitality, breaking bread together, can bridge great differences
- Listen beneath the words to one another. Hospitality needs to be made explicit
- There needs to be a new vocabulary to describe formation
- We still need to know the stories

Group V:

- How do we break down the fences? Modeling hospitality on every level.
- How do we go beyond where we have been? We need help with this!

Group W:

- There is a false dichotomy between process learning and content learning. We need to do both but it needs to take place in a safe, inviting process
- We need to risk that wisdom can come from the community so ask people if they are getting the formation they need instead of just imposing programs on them
- Inclusiveness must be made explicit. Sometimes we need to make our attempts at inclusivity apparent so they become teachable moments for others to learn from this model
- The process model can be threatening than a lecture model for many listeners. We must be able to work within that tension as Jesus did and all the Incarnation to happen.
- We must find ways to overcome that many people do not want to invest the time to do what is described above

Group X:

- We must tell people they are missionaries – each one is a missionary – bring someone to church
- Need to value ourselves and what we do know – need to acknowledge people; must tell them who we are when they come to church
- Give people freedom to let “it” go – Free people up to interpret faith in creative ways
- Invite people to participate in specific activities

Group Y:

- You cannot heal a broken trust relationship. We have an opportunity to reconcile and change the relationship; ask for & giving forgiveness is hospitality
- Do not be afraid. The flowers in the desert
- How do we be hospitable to those with whom we disagree?
- Structure can or cannot work; needs to fit the mission

Group Z:

- Parental support of young people or someone to reinforce what they need
- To be “real”
- Training for educators in a variety of ways
- How do we tell our Episcopal story?
- Are there ways that we can communicate that the Episcopal Church is welcoming? How do we communicate that?

Group AA:

- Our actions and our words of welcome need to match. Avoid mixed messages.
- Don't expect our education programs to meet everyone's needs
- We need to appreciate and understand how our youth communicate with one another using various technologies and use those technologies effectively

Group BB:

- To be hospitable we need to be attentive to different physical needs. Also needs of time.
- We need an "intermediate" level offering between the basic (Alpha, Via Media) and the daunting (EFM, DOCC)
- How do we make everyone responsible for creating the environment of hospitality? For making sure no one's falling through the cracks?
- We need to learn how to become aware of others, uncover where the barriers are, what baggage they may be carrying

Group CC:

- Education needs to be less narrowly defined
- Power/authority should be shared by all (rather than power/hierarchy based)
- We need to figure out what our parishioners need and offer "practical spirituality"
- Model vulnerability – be this place – see how they love one another
- Give people the basics so that they don't feel stupid (language, liturgy, how to get involved, etc.)

Group DD:

- Identification & dismantling of barriers to hospitality (e.g.: language, community secrets, judgmental behavior)
- Importance of developing intentional small groups to undergird conversation and relationships
- Awareness of fear as a motivation for conflict
- Find ways to equip people to struggle with truth, certainty, life questions

**3. Is there anything else that has come up in your conversation that needs to be shared?**

Group A:

- Our scribe is very good! (they told me to write this!)
- The new thing that our goal is not to be identical, but to be diverse and respectful of the diversity
- Our goal is Jesus who embraces community. It's hard to move from an individual relationship with God to a community relationship with God

Group B:

- Anglican way of both/and potentially allows us to do something other traditions can't

Group C:

- Discrimination is taught in the home
- Knowing – understanding various backgrounds (histories) is key to hospitality

Group D:

- Seeing hospitality – ecological

Group I:

- Lack of knowledge about who we all are – know your audience – the church does a poor job understanding who is in the pew
- Find a real way that clergy can have doubts/challenge/etc. in a safe place. There is a real need for circles of trust for them
- Trapped by a 3-hour block on Sunday – are we?
- Biblically – maybe we just "wipe the dust from our feet"

Group J:

- How do we define who's inside and outside?

Group L:

- Priests must learn how to create a space to nurture the spirit – practice prayer and study of Word; then we would not all complain so much – transformation could then happen!

Group O:

- Trust people, take their gifts and the call seriously
- It's not our church anyway! Keep a sense of humor

Group P:

- Conversation about SIN. In high school, the sin was being different. In church camp (or whatever a hospitable gathering may be) the sin is exclusion

Group Q:

- What is the link between hospitality and empowerment?

Group R:

- What separates church from social worker?

Group S:

- Obstacles to hospitality are ignorance of one another, shallowness, Pollyanna, idol-making, fear

Group U:

- In an affluent, rushed world, where much is “out-sourced and professional” we need to create a safe place for “amateurs” (parents, etc.) to model, teach and share their faith
- We may be asking too little of our members in formation activities

Group V:

- We are a church with a structure and the structure needs to empower
- We need to figure out how to empower all the people

Group Y:

- We need to be able to receive hospitality as well as give it
- Gift of time

Group Z:

- “The Book of Daniel” TV show – even in the midst of all the dysfunction there is still hospitality

Group AA:

- The experience of being marginalized can help us know how to welcome the stranger
- People come through our doors with a desire for connection; with a curiosity about God

Group BB:

- Transformation is by definition “unsafe”
- It is difficult to find “oxygen” in an environment where lines are being drawn and orthodoxy is being challenged/defended

Group CC:

- We need to teach about how people learn best!
- We need to help people have “best learning” experiences
- Trust circles
- We must not let authority figures to shut down questions
- Education can’t be too narrow – we learn as we worship, do outreach, stewardship, pastoral care, etc.

Group DD:

- Our behavior needs to be more in line with our signage (The Episcopal Church Welcomes You . . .)