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How to Organize a UUCF Chapter
Notes from the webinar, Oct 25
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Access the recording here: https://youtu.be/kmngkG_hBx4

- I. Define “UUCF Chapter”
 - a. Several people have asked whether there’s a required form or name for a UUCF Chapter. For instance, does the group need to identify as “Christian.” The short answer: no.
 - b. Here are questions:
 - i. Will you identify as Christian or as something like “Jesus Study Group.”
 - ii. Will you organize within a Congregation or—more broadly—within a Cluster of Congregations?
 - c. Only key trait: is operating within the Venn Diagram of Christianity and UU-ism, and has affiliation with the UUCF!

- II. Why
 - a. Define Purpose: why would you gather a group?
 - b. Important to clarify purpose first.
 - i. If what you really want is to celebrate Christmas without changing the words to the hymns, could be that working with a local minister can get up a small service.
 - ii. If what you want is a brief class on Marcus Borg book, that, too, is a different undertaking than an ongoing group.
 - iii. If you want to argue with the Humanists or Pagans (!), that, too, is different. So, figure out why.
 - c. Asking “Why” might look like imagining possible outcomes.
 - i. If things really worked well, and all barriers were removed, what would be true? What would be happening—within people? Within the group? Among the congregation? Out in the world? Think in concentric circles, from within, to among, to beyond.

III. What

- a. Once you've defined "why," think about the form.
 - i. Is it a one-time conversation?
 - ii. A short-term class?
 - iii. A project?
 - iv. Or is it, really, an ongoing group?
- b. Is it important to be in your congregation, or could it be part of a cluster?
 - i. With cluster, might be slower with decision-making and formation process—many cooks in the kitchen.
 - ii. But with cluster, might also offer critical mass.
- c. Group culture
 - i. Is it a study group, where skepticism is ever-present, and the interest is in deconstruction?
 - ii. Or is it a devotion group, with prayer and communion, and other modes of vulnerability?
 - iii. Intended group culture might affect how you invite and include

IV. How

- a. Define. Define in conversation with others. If you don't have 2 or 3 others also imagining this undertaking, pause—is this going to be sustainable?
- b. Notice other similar groups in cluster or congregation
 - i. How do they form?
 - ii. To whom are they accountable?
 - iii. What makes them work?
 - iv. What is their decision-making process?
 - v. It's helpful to be aware of congregational or cluster process and culture. One congregation may have very rule-bound, orderly groups; another might be looser in culture. Be familiar with formal steps to forming a group (e.g. "Shared Ministry Agreement")
- c. In your congregation, what already exists that you could build on?
 - i. What strengths and traditions are already there?
- d. Talk to a minister; if a cluster, contact all relevant ministers, so they are not surprised by your efforts.
 - i. Ministers look to the health of the system; they are your partners, who can advise and promote; and yes, they can be gatekeepers.
- e. Design short-term commitment
 - i. Worship service around a holiday: Maundy Thursday, Christmas, etc. (Work with a minister around priestly functions in a congregation.)
 - ii. Offer a showing of "Living the Questions."
 - iii. Convene a discussion group of "Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time."

- iv. Design a 3-part class (maybe a minister would help)
 - v. Go to another church, Christian, and have lunch afterwards to discuss it. Informal.
- f. Promote First Event (low-commitment event)
- i. Facebook event (invite “friends”)
 - ii. Church newsletter
 - iii. Direct invitation (difference between “inform” and “invite”—so you want to do both). With minister, you can go through directory, and figure out people to ask.
 - iv. This is all low-commitment. So you’ve got your dream defined, but this Phase I, you are just letting people dip their toes in.
 - v. If Cluster, ask minister if they will contact other clergy in area, and introduce you. When they introduce you, ask for contact information of administrator and anyone they can think of who’d be interested. That gets the minister’s approval, but gets them out of the way, so they’re not a bottle-neck.
 - vi. Hold event—class, etc. Take names and email addresses.
- g. NEXT, for a second meeting, invite people to a formation inquiry meeting.
1. Yes, you know what you want to do. You know WHY. Put the WHY in the invite; don’t necessarily put the HOW.
 2. Because you’ve mingled with folks, you know them.
 3. Heresy: you might not invite everyone to show up. You might invite 5 people who seem like potential leaders; wise friend said “skeptics can come to the second meeting.” Look for health. Look for diversity.
 4. Think: do you want to pray at the meeting? Could be a prayer you read? Could be spoken. You can try intimacy in prayer.
 5. Follow up with an email. Ask them to invite 2 people to come to the next meeting. Assign different people tasks to do. People who have a little job will feel more buy-in; you’re creating a shared culture. (friend who poured lemonade at church)
 6. Good to jump into the activity—the study, the devotion, the service--WHILE also tending to the sustainability, with institutional questions:
 - a. How will you make decisions
 - b. Leader focus—is this a gathering around a leader (in which case, talk to minister and negotiate) or is this a shared leadership? Neither bad, but different
 - c. How will you communicate
 - d. How will people join (or can they, etc)
 - e. How will you be accountable to congregation?
 - f. How will you know if you’re doing what you wanted to do—review, monitoring? (Can be informal)

- g. What about covenant—how to make it, keep it, restore it?
- h. What does partnership look like—with other chapters, with the UUCF?

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