

INVITATION TO A CARD PARTY

By Rev. Lisa G. Vaughn

Whether it is a wild hand of Tarabish or the speedy play of Cribbage, we Maritimers love a good game of cards.

This spring our Diocese rolled out a new kind of playing deck – Faith Sharing Cards. Boxed sets of 52 plasticized 2 X 3.5-inch cards with official crests and questions, were distributed to every parish at our Synod gathering in May. Each with a different question, the cards provide opportunities for parishioners and their friends to engage topics about God, worship, prayer, faith, healing, etc.

Faith Sharing Cards can be used in a variety of ways in all kinds of settings. For example, an ACW gathering could have each woman randomly choose a card and each would answer their question. A men's breakfast group could decide to choose one question and everyone respond to that question from their own unique perspective.

The fun activity can take place during an after-Sunday coffee hour, before a church meeting begins, at dessert time during a family meal, or even as a Facebook challenge of the day. Several clergy are encouraging congregations to respond to faith questions during sermon time. Others post them on their PowerPoint announcements or publish in the weekly bulletin. Discussion groups with question cards can be organized over lunch hour at work, at the daily Tim Horton's coffee break, over a cold one at the pub, or between periods at the hockey game.

There are no rules to Faith Sharing Cards. However, there are two highly recommended principles:

1. Remind people that there are no right or wrong answers. Everyone's responses are uniquely valid to their experience, thoughts and opinions.
2. Honesty and vulnerability are encouraged. We grow together in mutual trust, supportive care and deeper in faith when we authentically share what is in our hearts.

The aims of Faith Sharing Cards are to help us as growing disciples to develop a vocabulary and comfort level around talking about our spiritual perspectives. Anglicans typically are not used to articulating our deeply held beliefs. Practicing will help each of us sharpen our ideas and feelings about faith for ourselves, encourage and build up others as we hear one another's stories, and also prepare us for potential conversations with non-Christians. Being a people shaped by God's mission, we strive to "always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15)

Another great way to use Faith Sharing Cards is to host gatherings with interested non-active church people - friends, neighbours, co-workers, family - who wish to explore spiritual things themselves. One Diocese uses faith sharing questions at monthly dinner parties so guests can dive deeper and consider faith questions about God for themselves.

Printable copies of these Faith Sharing Cards can be downloaded free from the Diocesan Website – www.nspeidiocese.ca . Go to 'LEADERSHIP' drop-down bar for 'VSST & Task Groups' to 'Healthy Parishes'. Click on the pdf link (To print on card stock [heavier] paper and cut up).

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