

Do What You Do Well!

Dr. Kennon Callahan- a North American expert in growing churches and teaching about stewardship- said the **TWO most important characteristics** of an effective, successful, sustainable, vibrant, and Christ-centred church are:

- 1) **a strong sense of MISSION** (that means Who needs our ministry? And How can we serve them?) and
- 2) **strong shepherding**

Now the best way to determine what your **mission** should be is to begin a **Visioning** process- which you are doing today. ☺ And we are going to do an inventory of your **shepherding** by looking at all the ways your church offers hospitality. Hospitality is another way of saying shepherding. Other words are ministry or serving.

People don't come to church for committees. They come for **community**. They don't attend because they want programs. They want to **belong**. (Once they feel they belong, then they *may* show interest in the program or serving on a committee.)

Hospitality- This word may first bring to mind Coffee Time after church but other examples of hospitality include visiting new parishioners, shut-ins or the sick or the nursing home, offering home communion- all that visiting where you listen more than you talk, and support more than advise. Those are shepherding tasks we sometimes think are the priest's job, but, in truth, they are **all our jobs**.

Other ways of shepherding or offering hospitality include church suppers, receptions after funerals, offering Sunday School or a children's activity, Prayer Circles, Moms'n'Tots. These are just a few. I'd like you to shift your thinking of hospitality from being a service you **should** offer ☹ to it being a **creative, welcoming act** in which you are Christ's representative. That means it is a privilege and enjoyable for you the giver and also for the receiver ☺.

Take 5 mins.- get a paper/pen and **list all the ways your church offers hospitality-** all those **outward and visible signs of good shepherding**. Try to see your church through the eyes of a newcomer. Don't talk to your neighbour because you'll have that chance soon.

Take another minute and add your inward and invisible acts of hospitality. e.g. prayer, acceptance, forgiveness- Ooooh, that's hard! ☹ Forgot about those, eh?

(Have you noticed any ways in which your church clearly is NOT hospitable? E.g. Lots of stairs? no washroom? nothing for children? small print bulletin? ☹)

Take 10 mins- find two other people- preferably not from your own church- and share your lists. Can you add any of their hospitalities you didn't think of?

10 mins.- FLIP CHART - List ways of shepherding from triads.

Has this sharing given you any ideas?

Dr. Callahan assures us that all research and experience shows that **if you strengthen your Mission or if you strengthen your Shepherding** (hospitality) your church **offerings will increase**. Also research has shown- if a parishioner **experiences** good shepherding, then their **perception** of other church experience is better too- e.g. the sermons are brilliant and the music sublime! ☺

The more people feel they **belong and are getting their “shepherding” needs met,** the **more they will take interest in the needs of others and take ownership of the needs of the church.** When that happens they are more likely to make their monetary offering to the church in a different way, in a **different spirit-** as a thankful gift from the heart rather than a dutiful pay-if-I'm there. They are more likely to re-evaluate their relationship with God and respond in kind.

Now return to your small groups (and then your churches) and consider these three questions:

- 1) What act of hospitality do we already do well in my church?**
- 2) What act of shepherding/hospitality could we improve?**
- 3) What new act of hospitality could we try?**

You can take this whole exercise back to e.g. your Council or ACW or Men's Breakfast Group. Even the 3 last questions can provoke good conversation. It leads into the Mission question... which leads into Visioning. ☺ This is **all** about Stewardship.