

DIVERSITY

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

by Arlo R. Reichter

PURPOSE

To help young people gain an understanding and appreciation for persons from other racial or ethnic groups by hosting a meeting and potluck.

PREPARATION

Gather Bibles, hymnals, paper, pencils, newsprint, felt-tip markers and masking tape.

Meet in advance with leaders from a church of another ethnic or racial group. Plan with them a potluck dinner in which participants bring foods representative of their culture.

Both church leaders should inform participants to bring a food dish and also family pictures or other items representative of individual racial or ethnic roots.

Prepare the meeting area with room for discussion, display of the cultural items and an area for storing and serving food items.

OPENING

As the participants arrive, have them display their pictures and memorabilia.

Allow participants from both groups to choose songs of their culture, with all joining.

State the purpose of the meeting and invite the participants to enjoy sharing during the meeting. If more than one language group is present, have translators at the

meeting. Encourage the use of all languages so everyone has the experience of hearing a different tongue.

Have the participants pair with someone from the other ethnic group. Direct the pairs to share their names and then show each other the family pictures and other display items. After about 10 minutes of conversation, have each pair join with another pair and then each share one thing they learned about the other's racial or ethnic group.

Within the foursomes, have the two from the same church list three things they think are important for the others to understand about their racial or ethnic group. Ask them to write these on paper. Then the two from the other church do the same. Have the foursomes share their items with the entire group and then write these on newsprint and post for all to view.

THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

The church leaders share three important things others should understand about their racial or ethnic group. These can be drawn from the items the youth have listed or be in addition. The leaders can also use this time to explain religious differences and similarities. Limit each adult to 15 minutes.

Encourage all youth to ask additional questions concerning racial or ethnic relationships and social conditions.

Ask each group to write on newsprint one thing it learned in the meeting and to suggest a concrete idea that can be done to bring future interaction between the two church youth groups. Ideas include: joint work projects, visit the other church worship service, view and discuss a film, or meet for another party or potluck.

RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

For the closing worship, have the participants form a large circle of chairs. Begin the worship by affirming the sharing of the participants and the learning which came from the event. Invite the participants to thank God for the sharing and for new friends and new understandings. Read Galatians 3:23-29.

Ask each person to think through the meeting and then complete the statement, "Tonight I thank God for . . ." After each response, have the group repeat,

"We thank God for you." Some responses are: new friends, a chance to share with people of different backgrounds, and leaders who help take risks to reach out.

Invite the youth to join hands. As the adults read each line of the following prayer, the youth repeat it:

We thank God for difference.
We thank God for each other.
We thank God for new friends.
Help us to be one in Christ.
Help us to be witnesses of faith.
Help us to be like Jesus.
Bless us, O Lord.
Strengthen us, O Lord.
Amen.

Enjoy the potluck and fellowship.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Intercultural resources and materials are available through many denominational groups. Contact your library or chamber of commerce for ideas. If you are unable to arrange the intercultural meeting, use audio-visual aids from denominational groups.