Orientation activities

This section contains two types of activities designed to help the participants in a prayer experience to become comfortable with one another and begin the formation of a community, at least for the limited time of the experience. The "icebreakers" are a collection of informal, relaxed games which assist a group in "loosening up" to begin entering into the program of the retreat. The "getting-to-know-you" activities are ways to help participants establish bonds within the group. Both sets of activities contain exercises which planners could adapt for the purpose of forming smaller groupings within the large retreat group.

Icebreakers

The first step in a group's progress should be the breaking down of barriers that might keep the members in their separate shells. The following suggestions might be of help in groups that are too stiff.

1) All stand in a circle facing in. An object (coin, ashtray, balloon) is passed around and around behind each person until the leader gives a signal. Each person caught holding the object at the signal must withdraw until there is a winner.

2) Play a child's game or recite a nursery rhyme acting out the motions.

3) Let everyone determine a characteristic motion such as giving the victory sign or pulling one ear. Then have the group sit in a circle and, together in rhythm, slap their knees once, clap once and give one click of the fingers. The leader gives her own sign and one other person's. That person responds with his own sign and another person's. The game goes on until someone falters and breaks the group's rhythm.

4) All in turn follow an imaginative leader who determines motions, things to do and say for each member of the group.

5) "Great Sneeze": Divide the group in three. Practice with the first division to say "Ka-hishi," strong and loud; with the second "Ka-hashi"; with the third, "Kahooshoo." At the count of three, create the effect of an enormous sneeze.

6) "Human Frog Pond": Divide the group into four groups with each doing the following:

Group 1—high-pitched voices, saying fast, "tomatoes, tomatoes";

Group 2—high-pitched voices, saying fast, "potatoes, potatoes";

Group 3—normal voices, saying at medium speed, "fried bacon, fried bacon";

Group 4—low voices, saying intermittently, "ga ga glub, ga ga glub."

7) "Roman Mob": Divide the group into three sections, each saying the following:

Group 1—"This way, this way";

Group 2—"Walla, walla";

Group 3—"Rhubarb, rhubarb."

8) "Laughing Control": Form a circle. The leader throws a handkerchief into the air and laughs till it falls to the floor. Everyone must laugh with him or her and stop when the hanky hits the floor. Anyone laughing at the wrong time is eliminated. The last one left is the prize grouch.

9) The first person writes a sentence on a sheet of paper and folds the sentence so that it can't be seen. Each remaining person writes a sentence and folds the paper until all have contributed. The "composition" is then opened and read.

10) "Purse-Wallet Relay": The group is seated. Ask everyone to get out purse or wallet. Group is divided into two teams (A and B) which compete against each other. Leader has a list and asks for the articles below. As soon as anyone can produce the article called for he or she holds it up overhead and scores for that team.

Suggested articles:

1960-69 penny	Band-Aid	nail file
postage stamp	rubber band	house key
driver's license	book of matches	safety pin
calendar	receipted bill	Social Security
used ticket stub	letter	card
Kennedy half-	student ID	photo of a
dollar	comb	relative
picture of a frog	calorie chart	gum

11) "Birthday Buddies": Divide the group as follows: persons whose birthday occurs between January and March belong to the "duck team"; persons whose birthday occurs between April and June belong to the "cat team"; persons whose birthday occurs between July and September belong to the "cow team"; persons whose birthday occurs between October and December belong to the "sheep team"; at the signal each person starts making the noise