

Four Ways to Revitalize your Women's Organizations

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Women's organizations, be they Women's Missionary Society, Atlantic Mission Society, Moms and Tots groups or Bible study, have served the church faithfully for many years. Today, many of these organizations would like to add new members, especially younger ones.

Here are four ways to revitalize the women's organizations or other groups in your church.

Have a purpose beyond yourselves.

It is vital to have an outward focus on local or global missions or ministries, not just an inward focus on meeting attendance. If your group raises funds, it is important that this money be dedicated to either local or global mission activities. Set a yearly goal. Here are some examples:

Local community mission projects:

- Food banks
- Youth programs
- Women's shelters
- Community needs/events

Global mission projects - see *Something Extra* or
www.presbyterian.ca/mission/somethingextra

Have a ministry in your own congregation.

It is important to show the congregation that your group also exists to serve the congregation. Here are some examples:

- Lead a worship service
- Host a coffee hour
- Host a program or event for the church
- Visit shut-ins
- Host a meal with a ministry or mission theme
- Or . . .

Do things to spiritually upbuild your members.

People who join groups want to grow spiritually and personally. Have fellowship opportunities where women can share spiritually and personally before each meeting and build Christian community.

Follow these sharing times with:

- Scripture readings
- Devotions
- Prayer
- Bible studies
- Mission studies

Resources for group building

Ice-Breakers and Heart-Warmers, Steve Sheely, Serendipity House, 1996

Jump Starts and Soft Landings, Steve Sheely, Serendipity House, 1997

Four Ways to Revitalize your Women's Organizations cont.

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Program Resources

Women's Ministry in the 21st Century, The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas, Group Publishing, 2004

How to Start and Sustain a Faith-Based Young Adult Group, Abingdon Press, 2002

Stories of Mission: www.presbyterian.ca/mission/index.html

Invite other women to participate in your group's mission or purpose.

Few people want to join a bureaucracy; they want to share in doing ministry. Have an open door policy for new members. Encourage each member to invite one new person, especially someone who does not attend your church, to the next meeting. Hospitality is a sign of a healthy group that doesn't exist just for itself. Evening meetings give more people the opportunity to attend.

Be clear with group members and newcomers so they understand the purpose of your group - friendship, outreach, congregational life, etc. People have different reasons to belong to a group at various stages of their lives.

Churches can revitalize their ministry and mission for the future by re-energizing their groups and organizations.

Small Groups for Women

Small groups differ from traditional Bible study groups or programs. They are relationship-centered rather than content-centered; they are group, not leader-driven and are primarily opportunities for a pastoral, not a teaching ministry. They are made up of three to twelve people who meet to explore some dimension of the Christian faith, and they can provide side doors for new people into the church. People find spiritual renewal and a sense of community in these groups, and they are provided with the opportunity to be heard, accepted and feel cared for.

However, there are challenges in small group ministry. There is the potential for cliques to form. Ideally, these groups are formed around a common interest and divide to form new groups once the study is completed. They should not be considered substitutes for the Sunday worship service.

Starting Small Groups - and keeping them going, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1995
It is an excellent all-in-one resource which explains how to organize and train leaders, and suggests resources for small groups.

Small Groups in the Church - a handbook for creating community,
Thomas G. Kirkpatrick, The Alban Institute 1995.

**For more information on other books and resources,
contact the Book Room at 1-800-619-7301.**