

You can't fish for people without **BAIT**

www.uccny.org/CastingYourNets/ Fall 2010

Welcome to your newly reformatted Casting Your Nets support guide. Four times each year, your CYN Steering Committee offers direction to help you grow CYN in your church. Written and edited by Rev. Lex Liberatore stpaulunited@verizon.net

CYN Annual Meeting 2010

"We've been waiting for you."

I have often told my congregation that even though all church signs read, "All Are Welcome," the reality is far less certain. If churches had to adhere to "truth in advertising" rules, all church signs would have an asterisk next to the word "welcome." So, it would read,

All Are Welcome*

*Except the following people...

Rev. Dr. Laurinda Hafner put a fine line under this point in her remarks at the CYN Annual Meeting this past October in Schenectady, "I was doing some supply preaching," the Pastor of Coral Gables, UCC told 74 people from 19 New York Conference churches, "... I was running a little late, so I parked my car and headed for the front door. It was locked tight. I began to panic, thinking I had either missed the service or had gotten the place confused and that another church was waiting for me. I ran around to the back, which was pretty dreary, overrun with weeds and trash, to see a series of three doors! I began to try each door, feeling like one of "The Three Bears." The first one was locked as tightly as the front door. The next door kind of gave way, but still did not open. Finally, the last door flew open when I gave it a good, strong yank. I made my way through a series of dark halls until I ran across a woman with a nametag on that said, "Greeter." I introduced myself... and then said, "By the way, your front door is locked." She looked at me like I was meddling and said, "Well, yes, if we open it, someone might come in."

Coral Gables, UCC's church sign has all the information you'd expect to find, times of services, disability access etc. There is one line that stands out from all the usual church fare. One line which speaks about a congregation that has spent time intentionally considering the Gospel, their neighborhood and the call to truly be ready, willing, and able to welcome whoever God sends through their doors. "*We've been waiting for you.*" No asterisks needed on their church sign; "welcome" means welcome. The congregation has taken the time to get ready, for they "do not know the day, or the hour, that Jesus will return." Hospitality is a key element of a vital church - one of the pillars of the Casting Your Nets program. Hospitality means open doors, ready hearts and willing minds to entertain all manner of God's people. To say to our neighbors, and anyone who comes through our doors, "We've been waiting for you" is more than an outreach strategy: It is never done in a vacuum, apart from all the other aspects of a vital church.

Laurie told us this kind of radical hospitality is not an option for followers of Jesus. "My friends, that is our mandate for hospitality - simply, and clearly - because we are the church! And so we open our hearts, our lives, and... our faith community to others and say, 'Come on in and make yourself at home - you are welcome here. There is room for you here. We've been waiting for you.'"



Laurie Hafner emphasizes a point at the CYN Annual Meeting, October 23rd in Schenectady.

Hospitality isn't just about signs or materials - real hospitality is a state of mind. As Laurie told us, "I remember so well an ice cream social we were hosting... I noticed strangers coming in from the neighborhood, from the streets. There, around those tables in the Fellowship Hall, the hungry ate with the well-fed; street people swapped stories with homeowners. The sick and lonely laughed together with the healthy and the rich. People of different language spoke of common cares and life experiences. As someone said to me, 'We really should do this more often.'"

"The wolf shall live with the lamb... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord." Isaiah 11

Hospitality is more than having doors that open easily or throwing a great party, expecting folks you haven't met to wander in (and better yet, want to stay!). Casting Your Nets is about creating an attitude of radical welcome with *each other* first - before you open your doors. It's about understanding how God is calling your church through the Gospel and celebrating it every Sunday. CYN is about identifying life-changing, hands-on ministry that your members can get excited about doing together. It's about generously living, relating, and financially supporting all of it.

Laurie's church bulletin states: "We invite you to come and be part of our community of faith, to be blessed by God's grace in our midst... to grow spiritually and to find welcome at God's table... to share your gifts so that we all can become full persons."

Ask yourselves: Are the doors of our church truly open, or are we afraid someone might actually "get in" ... especially US?

"Behold, I have set before you an open door." Revelation



Snapshots from the Weekend

Experiencing the CYN Retreat

To deepen commitment and prepare for a vital future, CYN churches participate in a series of three in-house retreats. This year mini-retreat experiences were offered, including sampling **Mapping Your Service Area**, led by Rev. Bonnie Miller of Chatterton Hill UCC. The world around our churches has changed, and we haven't kept pace. If we really want to be vital again, we must look around with fresh eyes. Creating the map helps identify your church's "footprint," where your members live, to discover areas where you don't have any members, and identify resources to build relationships with hospitals, schools, and other organizations. **Mission Insite**, a new tool to help analyze your area population is available without additional charge for CYN member churches.



Uplifting Worship

For Lucy Pullen-Werner, CYN Steering Committee member, "Each of three worship experiences were uplifting. Friday evening we (got physical and creative) by molding clay. Saturday evening we 'experienced' communion. Sunday morning we (joined with our host church, Emmanuel Friedens) and shared in a baptism and looked through a window (*Jen Mazur leads above*) to see the world as others see it."

Who is Our Neighbor? : Mission

Upstate Regional Conference Minister, Rick Cowles and Chatterton Hill UCC members, Paula Jenkins and LaVerne McGarrell helped frame an understanding of mission around the question "Who is our neighbor?" from the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10*). All churches do good things in the name of Christ. Too few take the time before the doing, to explore and identify the mission they are uniquely called to be doing. Such focus on Biblical reflection as the first step in a process toward discovering the kinds of hands-on mission a church should be about, results in exciting ministry that members own, around which community is built and neighbors take notice.



Our Host Church Models Hospitality!

Before Laurie Hafner spoke a word, this year's host church, Emmanuel Friedens, already had it "going on." From arranging accommodations, to planning and serving meals, to offering local information, directing guests through their building and offering full welcome to all, this church knows that hospitality is not something we "do," but something we "are." If you missed this event, you missed a chance to see what we mean when we say, "CYN is not just five disconnected 'pillars,' but five interrelated core areas (Fellowship, Worship, Invitation, Generosity and Mission)." Missed this year's event? Visit Emmanuel Friedens some Sunday and see for yourself, or call Upstate CYN Consultant, Marcia Tolman (*see below*).

CYN Regional Winter Meetings Are Coming Feb - March 2011

Just in time to help you plan those Lenten season CYN events. Maybe you'd like to have one or more CYN retreats. Maybe you'd like to plan an introductory CYN Sunday to share the Good News of CYN with your entire congregation. Perhaps there's a special ministry, worship, hospitality project or plan you'd like to deepen. The CYN Regional Winter Meetings are just the thing to get last minute direction, information or initial focus needed to make your next step as a congregation come together.

Look for the *Constant Contact*® emails for more information. Aren't receiving our email updates? Let Lucy Pullen-Werner know at lucypullenwerner@earthlink.net - she'll sign you up.



Head spinning from post-retreat information overload? Stuck on what's next? Need a hand?
Your consultant is just a phone call or email away!

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