



Hosting and Facilitating Community Groups

Mitchell Road Presbyterian Church, January 2016

Being mindful of the Grace, Love and Welcome of our Lord Jesus Christ

From Romans 12: *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

... Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The following are key principles for ALL public speaking at MRPC, but specifically in Community Groups, as a Host or Facilitator, please reacquaint yourself with these essentials:

- 1) **God-centered** throughout: Sacred, transcendent, with joy and accessibility. Biblically-based. In your ethos, show not only belief in truth, but love for truth.
- 2) **Grace** that abounds. All talk, even sin talk, should express optimism and hope because of grace – and because of a standing and identity that is *in Christ*. Lead with a personal repentance and faith, acknowledging the difficult realities of life with the hope we find in Christ.
- 3) Everything must be **intelligible, intriguing, and winsome** to non-believers (folks not following Jesus). Assume non-Christians are sitting in the room with you listening to every word you say. Assume MRPC folks have taken the risk of inviting their friends, and are depending on you to speak and lead in such a way that they say to themselves, *“This is exactly what I longed for my friend to hear, and it was exactly how I longed for them to hear it.”* Non-Christians should leave sensing that you (the Facilitator and/or Host) get them, care for them, and respect them.
- 4) **Discipleship** focused. Our definition of Discipleship here at MRPC is, “Experiencing Jesus’ Love for Me in Community, Loving Jesus with all of Me, and Growing in this Truth to Share Him with Others.” Following Jesus should include all of these aspects and not just a portion.
- 5) **City-positive**. Demonstrate respect, never scorn, for the City in which we live. Look for opportunities in your leading to celebrate the good, the common grace that exists in Greenville and beyond – even as you critique things that are broken in the culture. Look to Paul’s example in Acts 17, speaking to Athenian intellectuals. Be in tune with



the fact that Greenville (and MRPC) is filled with wealthy and poor, academics, creative, healthcare professionals, business people, as well as homemakers, and blue-collar professionals. Build bridges with our Greenville neighbors as you lead. Move out as a Group into the Greater Greenville Area with mercy, as you serve those in need.

- 6) **All-embracing.** Take great care to build bridges especially with those who may sense that it might be a challenge for them to break into a church like MRPC; for example: singles, young couples, people who are not affluent, non-MRPC families, non-whites, non-Christians, those who have been away from church for a while. Avoid stereotypes of all kinds. Do not assume that everyone is from a traditional family or from the same political perspective (use words like *homosexual* or *republican* very carefully). Don't assume that everyone is familiar with church, the Bible, or Christianity. Seek to build bridges through Christ between people who come from different backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives. When mentioning events or holidays that are people-group specific, speak to those not included in a manner that draws them into the conversation and acknowledges their presence.
- 7) **A-political.** When speaking as a MRPC leader, take great care to maintain a posture of neutrality when it comes to politics (parties and/or issues). Think, Kingdom of God! Thy Kingdom come!
- 8) Be **conversational**, verses stiff/formal or overly dramatic. In your speaking, imagine yourself to be in conversation with a group of friends sitting around a living room or dining table together. Personalize things in your tone.
- 9) **Prepare the environment.** Help the Host to ready the home in such a way as to remove distractions and create an environment that communicates that someone considers others' needs before they even arrived. Look around the home and ask, "Is there anything on display that someone might find offensive?" A warm greeting at the door sets the tone for the evening. Being mindful of children and pets is a gracious way of creating space for others as well.

I am excited to begin 2016 focused and purposed on Christ, His Church, and reaching out to the people of this world in a variety of ways. Join me, as a fellow Host and Facilitator, as we consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together...encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Peace to you in Christ,

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