



## ECC Church in a Box

### **Suggested Agenda for Your First Meeting (or an agenda to be stretched out over several meetings)**

1. Introductions
  - a. Each person gives their name, and
  - b. An answer to a question, e.g., “What brought you hear?”
  - c. Note:
    - i. If there are 6 people sharing 5 minutes apiece, that will be 30 minutes. So think about how long you would like this to go on.
    - ii. A good amount of time here is fine because you are building community by this simple step.
2. Agreement about Future Meetings and General Functioning
  - a. Ask if everyone can agree on, for instance, the following simple format and, if not, how they would modify it.
  - b. Time:
    - i. Determine day of week
    - ii. Determine start time and end time?
    - iii. Decide how often to meet. Weekly? Bi-weekly? Monthly?
    - iv. Note:
      1. Getting everyone’s buy-in lets participants know that this is their group, not the leader’s. The leader facilitates and leads the group, but does not own or dominate the group.
      2. Suggestion: let the end time be somewhat flexible, e.g., the meeting might last between one hour and one and a half hours; more than that *might* be too long and discourage people from returning.
  - c. The Eucharist
    - i. Eucharistic Liturgies are readily available on line from a variety of church traditions. Here is an example from our tradition. [hyperlink to a liturgy of ours]
    - ii. The Presider:
      1. As the group develops over time, it is natural for it to choose its own presider. This may be someone from outside or inside the group. It is important that they be someone both gifted and credentialed for this role. (History has shown that uninspired and uneducated clergy do not do well at building a mature church.) Finding the right person may take time.
      2. At first you may want to invite available priests to lead the Eucharist, perhaps on a rotating basis. This will allow you to experience different styles and personalities to see what works for your group.
      3. If there are persons available who are gifted and have the right education but are not ordained and whom you are sure you want to call forth as a priest, consider beginning a conversation with a larger church body you respect about ordination for this person. You may address questions along these lines to [the Office of Presiding Bishop, Ecumenical Catholic Communion](#).
    - iii. Scripture Readings and Group Homily
      1. Use the scripture readings for the week, available at [The Text This Week](#) or at the [US Catholic Bishops site](#). Note: following a “lectionary” (3 year cycle of



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readings) allows one to experience almost the whole bible every three years. It also postures us to listen to what the Spirit has to say rather than to pick a reading that might be what we want to hear.

2. Have a different person read each reading.
3. After the readings are finished, let the group share what struck them personally. “What do I hear in this for me/for us?” Avoid reflections that are too heady.
4. You may want to choose someone who has a good background in Scripture and who is inspiring to give a brief homily before the group sharing.

### d. Leadership

- i. There may already be one person who takes the initiative and leads the group.
- ii. That said, it is good in a *small* group for group decisions or buy-in to be the standard with the main leader being a kind of facilitator (which is what “president” really means, one who presides).
- iii. Rotating group facilitation can sometimes be a good way for the group to experience the variety of leadership/facilitation skills that attendees bring. It will most likely be easier for the group to choose a leader if the difference in leader-styles is demonstrated in that way.
- iv. As the group grows, it is often natural for a smaller group of leaders to take the time to make decisions together, but always allowing for input from the larger body when practicable. In large groups there needs to be a balance between everyone having ownership and experiencing empowerment and practicality and efficiency.
- v. The kind of servant-leadership that a group expects from its pastor and the group’s willingness to trust that leadership will determine the call that is given to the pastor when that time comes.

### e. Refreshments or a Simple Meal

- i. Consider alternating the task of providing food and drink to engage more **people.**

### f. Periodic “Business Meetings”

- i. A short “business meeting” from time to time can be a good idea. This meeting can be about whatever the group may want to decide upon.
- ii. From time to time the group can ask itself at such a meeting how things are going general and what it might like to do differently.

### Tips

1. We suggest you have a flexible agenda, knowing where you want to guide things without forcing them. Agendas keep meetings moving in a constructive direction. They structure the possibilities for people to come together in a positive way.
2. The host should avoid “preaching at” the invitees, and instead should let the stories of the attendees emerge. The knitting of those stories will bond the group.
3. It will help if the leader is a good listener who can “draw others out.” (See separate handout for the skills of appreciative listening.)
4. The group may eventually want to try Lectio Divina, an ancient, tried and true way to read the scriptures communally to great effect. Information is readily available on the internet. (Choose a reputable source of course.) Look for suggestions for a group form of this type of prayer.
5. A simple meal is another way of grounding the gathering in the art and gift of graced human connection.