

Conversations in the Parlour Explained for Town Hall Meeting

Jim Harlock, Chair, Conversations in the Parlour Committee

At our Annual Meeting in January, Harold Remus indicated that he would volunteer to visit 10 members if 30 others members would agree to do the same. Less than half that number volunteered.

In early March, Harold was invited to meet with the Stewardship Committee to talk about his offer, and it was decided that if we could not visit the members, we would have them visit us in a series of small group meetings that came to be called "Conversations in the Parlour." We looked through the member list and picked out people to act as hosts, or invitees, or as leaven. The hosts would be members to organize and run each meeting. The invitees would be a mixture of members from active to inactive and the leaven would be members who we thought would be good at raising the interest at the meeting.

We had no difficulty getting members to act as hosts and this was very encouraging as they needed to put in time to attend a training session and to familiarize themselves with the format of the meeting. We also had no difficulty with the leaven people as we had volunteers and also some of the host couples said they would attend other meetings as leaven.

Where we had difficulty, was getting responses from the invitees. We sent out approximately 250 letters. Only four persons said they would attend. This was rather disappointing, but rather than give up, we assembled a team of phoners who agreed to call about 20 people each from the list of non responders. The phoners met with a variety of problems including outdated phone numbers, missing phone numbers, people not available or too busy etc. Many said they would call the church later if they were interested. Many messages were left on answering machines but not many replies were received. Many were just not interested.

On a positive note, we did find out about some illnesses we didn't know about. Some of the callers had very friendly, promising conversations. We received some donations from people after they received their invitations even though they didn't want to attend. One person updated her contact information and is meeting with the pastors.

We have been able to schedule three of these parlour meetings with about ten people attending each and hopefully more positives will result.

Harold Remus has put in many hours of work to develop this and he should be recognized for this. I would now call upon Harold to briefly explain the purpose and format of these parlour meetings.