

2017 Annual Conference Holy Huddle Initiative Summaries

God calls us to be a courageous church:

- *Loving like Jesus*
- *Acting for justice*
- *United in hope*

Four of the five Holy Huddles at the 2017 Annual Conference dealt with the Initiative above. Below are the results compiled by the Implementation Team taken from the Holy Huddle recorders' notes. The Team is always looking for feedback. Please let us know your thoughts. Also, the Team would love to hear how you are using the Initiative in the church you serve. You can send your thoughts, questions, and comments to initiative@dscumc.org.

Holy Huddle #1 – Values

What would it look like to believe, to expect, that the awesome wonder of God will show up in all you do? How might your ministry change with that kind of trust and expectation?

1. We would be open to change and willing to risk without fear to take on new ministries.
2. We would be more inclusive, involving others inside and outside our community.
3. We would let go of control and restrictive structures that stand in the way of responding to God's call on us.
4. We would have greater hope, focusing on what we have, rather than don't have, to respond to new possibilities.
5. We would trust each other, understanding that God is in all of us.

Name some barriers to trust, or examples of broken trust/lack of trust, in your ministry setting or personal ministry experience. Then, name a practice or action you can do to help mend that place of brokenness or lacking trust.

1. Poor communication, not listening and not creating a safe space for dialogue.
2. Breaking of confidences, gossip, and rumors, dishonesty.
3. Lack of respect for the voices of all.
4. Misuse of power or control.
5. Fear of failure, change, lack of follow through, or negative consequences.
6. Encourage open discussion, affirm other viewpoints, find common ground and move forward.

Holy Huddle #2 – Courageous Church: Loving Like Jesus

What is the most courageous thing your church has done to be loving like Jesus?

1. Many of our congregations have expressed that they are courageous in outreach.
2. They have programs which connect to the community in what they feel are "risky" and daring ways.
3. Starting programs with food pantries, Family Promise, welcoming homeless, open conversations about LGBTQ inclusion, and a foster care program.

What is Christ calling you to do now that will take courage?

1. Getting people out of their comfort zones.
2. Creating methodologies for growth along with training and follow through.
3. Trust is a big issue. We have to build environments of trust.
4. Full inclusion of those who are in repressed and suppressed communities (homeless, drug/alcohol addicted, LGBTQ, etc.).

Of the six values mentioned earlier, which ones might your church need to focus on that will help shift the church culture from comfort to courage, from loving relationships with each other to building loving relationships with people in your church neighborhood?

1. Collaboration and boldness were the overwhelming responses of most groups.
2. Trust and compassion run a close second.
3. The groups have placed a high value on building relationships which will foster growth.

How might you help the church make the shift?

1. Search for those who are in need in our communities while living into our core values.
2. This should come from a place of care and compassion, not "telling someone what to do."
3. We should also look for new ways to foster "external" relationships while maintaining and building our internal relationships.

Holy Huddle #4 – Courageous Church: Acting for Justice

If resources were not an obstacle, what injustice do you wish your church would act courageously to end?

1. Homelessness:
 - a. The need for advocacy, reform, educations and better resources to eliminate homelessness and its causes.
2. Education:
 - a. Funding from preschool through college
 - b. Programs to meet the needs of foster, special needs and homeless children and youth
 - c. A system to prepare people for jobs
 - d. Advocacy for public education
 - e. Advocacy for students
3. Church as a community center:

- a. Offer job training, tutoring, after school programs, rehabilitation and recovery programs
- b. Ability to feed people 24/7, house people and facilitate life transformation
- 4. Hunger and poverty:
 - a. Advocacy for better allocation of wealth and resources
- 5. Medical and mental healthcare:
 - a. Ability to provide parish nurses up to a fully staffed medical clinic.
 - b. Funding for prescription drugs, dental programs, mental health clinics to ensure full coverage for everyone from children to seniors.

What are some steps your church can take to begin this process and courageously act for justice?

1. Partner with organizations, churches, and communities already doing work to address the injustices mentioned above.
2. Create and host education around issues and causes of injustice.
3. Learn and partner with the community to see what is needed.
4. Reach for the impossible, have faith and pray.
5. Get involved in legislative advocacy.

Holy Huddle #5 – Courageous Church – United in Hope

What does it feel like when your church is courageously loving like Jesus and acting for justice? What will it feel like to you and your church as this is happening?

1. There is a desire to reach out to others, to sacrifice self on behalf of someone else, to see another person with new eyes, to touch the lives of individuals we don't connect with normally.
2. It feels like inclusiveness, diversity and unconditional love for everyone.
3. There is an importance placed on impacting the local community with an outward focus.
4. It feels like hope when people want to make a real difference even if it is risky or bold.

How do we act in the present? How can you and your church live into this hope together so it can begin to happen, so your church can move in this direction?

(Many of the responses to this question repeat the thoughts above. What also came to the surface were some concerns:)

1. Fear is powerful. Contrary voices are loud.
2. Not everyone is on board, or honest about that.
3. People are not sure how to move forward to get started.
4. We need to find ways to quickly build trust and accountability.

Even with the concerns listed above, people spoke of hope and excitement in moving forward.