

Heart to Heart Workshop: October 26, 2010

Introduction: Lea Anne and Jenn Ramer. We live in Zurich, Ontario which is approximately 45 minutes north of London. We are both married, and have seven children between the two of us! Currently, we are both stay-at-home moms and love this time where we can be with our kids and make our house a home!

Heart to Heart is a women's ministry that began about 9+ years ago in Zurich at the Zurich Mennonite Church. Zurich is a small village of 900 people, 2 schools (public and catholic elementary) and four churches: Catholic, United, Lutheran and Mennonite. To clarify, the Mennonite church in Zurich is the church that we both attend and it not a conservative Mennonite Church. The area around Zurich is primarily farms, and a 15 minute drive to popular Grand Bend and Bayfield.

To begin with today, we are going to go through the process of how H2H was started, the challenges we faced, how H2H ministry runs, describe how a typical session of H2H looks like and then finally we'll go through how you can begin to setup a similar program in your communities/churches. Please feel free to ask questions as we go through the material. This information comes as second nature to us, and so we want to make sure that you all are clear about how this works.

About 10 years ago, a group of four women in the growing Mennonite church in Zurich began to identify the growing need for a ministry or program that would connect women within Zurich Mennonite Church, area churches and within the community. At that time, the only women's program/ministry in our church was a quilting group that met on Thursday afternoons. The group was mostly made up of women in their sixties and up and these four women who were in their late 20-30's didn't feel like that was something they wished to get involved in for various reasons. Some of these reasons being: they weren't interested in quilting, afternoons aren't a great time for young mom's to go out as that's the time that their children napped, and they longed to go deeper in their faith. The quilting afternoons also didn't reach out to women in the community – it was internally focused. So, they came up with a program that included four elements they felt were important to include: fellowship with other women, faith building and discipleship, childcare and it would need to be a relatively low cost to attend. This program they named Heart to Heart.

The first hurdle to pass was to get the churches' pastors to approve the program. Our pastors at the time were very excited about it and recognized the need for a program that would bring women together to grow spiritually, build relationships and provide women a small break from their children, knowing they would be well looked after. However, the pastors recognized a potential conflict that this new program could possibly have on the existing women's quilting group. Often new

exciting ministries meet challenges because people are resistant to change and thus you meet opposition. Some of the women in the quilting group did oppose this new ministry and thought that all the women should be coming out to quilt. It took a long process for some of the women to realize that the quilting afternoon did not fit with many women, especially young moms with children. It was important for this new group to have the pastors' support during this time and they continued to press forward despite a small number of older women who continued to resist accepting the new program. Just to be clear, the quilting afternoons were not replaced with H2H and that program still continues today. The group had no intentions of replacing the quilting group, only offering something else for the women who didn't fit in the existing one.

These four women were passionate about this new opportunity and began the first session, and they became the Heart to Heart Committee. The committee ended up funding the first few years of this ministry by tithing directly to this ministry. Our church also helped to fund this ministry for the first few years.

Questions???

Description of the program:

This ministry runs on Tuesday mornings, from 9:30 to noon. We run this ministry 2 times per year, in the spring and in the fall, for nine weeks at a time.

Tuesday morning look like this:

9am – committee members and study leaders meet to pray.

9:15-30am – women arrive, drop of children in our nursery, grab a coffee and head to their study class

9:30-10:30am – Bible/book study class

10:30-11am – all classes come together in common room for coffee and snacks/fellowship

11-noon – elective/craft/education/

Now to make this all run, we do the following:

About six weeks prior to the first day of the session, we have pre-registration. This includes advertizing by putting up posters in the community (post office, library, and grocery store), announcements at church, and email, and an ad in the local paper. We have a pre-registration date and have a gift bonus for those who sign up early.

Once the pre-registration date has passed, we order the study books that women have signed up for. Sometimes the study books take up to 3 weeks to arrive.

The first day of the session runs a little differently than we described just a second ago. We place one or two women at the door to greet the women as they arrive and direct them to either the nursery if they have children or into the gym. The women arrive at 9:30 and we have our snack/fellowship/introduction time first and the pre-registered women receive their study book and free gift bag. New women are registered and fit into a study class and choice and elective.

At 10am, we introduce the committee members, study leaders and elective leaders for this session. We also take this opportunity to describe how the rest of the Tuesdays will look for the remainder of the session. Then the women follow their study leaders to their classrooms. The first day typically ends early because the study leaders only do an introduction to the book and there isn't an elective time. Study leaders also ask women to pay for their study books (if there are women who cannot pay, we ask that they borrow them and return, unmarked).

Questions??

To make this program run smoothly, this is how we do it.

We have a H2H committee made up of 3-4 women, and designate specific roles/responsibilities to make it easier to get jobs done!

Study book coordinator: chose study books, order study books after pre-registration, find willing women to lead studies chosen, deals with any issues pertaining to study classes

Personal Relations (PR) – advertising, registration, communication between committee members and women who attend each session

Elective coordinator: choose electives, find elective leaders, attend to electives during session and sees to any needs/issues that may arise.

Treasurer: keeps accurate financial records, financial liaison between H2h and church, all receipts go through treasurer,

Nursery coordinator: finds child care workers (roughly 1 worker for 4 children), ensures that child care workers have an updated police check, purchase snacks for nursery, register children at the beginning of session, provide craft supplies, handles any issues regarding the nursery that may arise.

Set up/ Clean up Coordinator: comes early to setup (makes coffee, sets up tables/chairs and décor for coffee time), organises classes to help with clean up, ensures that snacks and beverages are ready at 10:30am for common fellowship time, responsible to ensure that the church is left the way it was found.

This committee meets approximately 4 times per year. Once before and once after each session. We discuss any issues from the previous session and begin

to plan for the upcoming one. When each member has a specific responsibility and job to do, it ensures that the planning/work gets done and it cuts down on the amount of times the committee has to meet. Committee members are asked on the committee by existing members and we leave it open for women to step down when they feel that it is time to do so. We look for godly women who have a passion for seeing women come together to learn about Jesus and to see women connecting with each other. We don't lock women into being apart of the committee for any such length of time, but rather allow them to lead as long as they feel like they are being effective and are lead by God to be there.

Funds: The average session for us costs approximately \$1500-1800. We have on average 45 women attending and have gone up to 65. Our biggest cost is child care, and we pay our workers \$35/ morning. We also have to pay for coffee supplies and any potential craft supplies and snacks for the nursery. In order to pay for each session, we have done several different fundraisers along with donations, which are tax-receipted as all monies runs through the church which has a charitable status. Also, we expect the women to pay for their study books, which are \$15-20, unless they are financially unable to do so. We always want to provide an environment where women can come regardless of their financial state. We also ask the women who are able, to donate whatever they feel lead to give. We have figured that it costs approximately \$55/woman for each session. This includes the price of the study book. Some of the electives/crafts have a cost for materials, and then women are expected to pay for that. However, we also like to offer electives that don't have a cost each session for those who can't afford to pay.

Fundraisers:

We have put together two cookbooks over the past 10 years and those have sold very successfully.

We had three perennials sales in the spring: the women and other church members donated plants, and we advertized the sale in the community and local paper. We made \$800 the first year, \$500 the second year and \$300 the third. Another idea is to have a soup and sandwich meal after a Sunday service, asking people to donate the supplies/food and then those staying for lunch donate money for their meal.

Giving back:

We began to see that the women coming really wanted to be pampered and served to! This was ok; however we also saw an opportunity for this group to reach to our community and abroad. One year, our church took a break or Sabbath from regular activities, and so we planned our electives/crafts in such as way that instead of the women taking home what they had make, we donated them to various organizations in the area. One elective was learning to crochet, and they crocheted baby hats and slippers for the Children's Hospital in London, pieced quilting was taught and the finished product was donated to the neighbouring nursing/retirement home, greeting cards were make and donated as well.

Every fall, we also incorporate another way for women to give back to those in our community that are less fortunate than most. Each study class has a plastic tote to fill for a needy family in the community with non-perishables, laundry and hygiene products and small gifts.

When our church had a flood in the basement, we had an abundance of funds in our account at that time, and we purchased a new stove to replace one that was not up to par in the church kitchen.

Questions??

A Step by Step Guide

Is there a need in your church and/or community for a Heart to Heart Ministry?

If you have answered yes to this question, we will be outlining the steps to assist you in getting a program similar to what we have in Zurich up in running. Please feel free to ask questions as we go.

The beginning process can look two different ways: either you are already in leadership role (pastor) and need to find workers to put this in place, or you are one of the passionate women (layperson) who are going to go forward today and present this idea to your church's leadership teams (pastor(s) and elders/board). Present this idea to your leadership as it is essential that you get your church's backing before proceeding. You also may wish to glean women from other churches to join the planning committee and have a joint effort from all the churches in your community. We recommend a committee of 3-4 women to help distribute the tasks efficiently. It may also be a good idea to give any other women's group/ministries in your church a "heads up" and explain what you are planning on doing and what the future plans are.

The second step is to investigate the best venue to hold this ministry. Our church is quite large with a gym, full kitchen, nursery and many classrooms to hold the different studies in. Of course, you may not have as large of a group, so a smaller venue may work just fine.

Third, you need to investigate if there are any funds available for your start up costs. You could arrange a "kick off" fundraiser or perhaps your church and other churches in the community could all pitch in to cover the costs. Monies need to be available to purchase the study books beforehand, coffee/tea supplies, and any items for the nursery (snacks, craft supplies). You will also need money to pay for your nursery workers each week.

Once you have a planning committee in place, you need to decide on a start date. We run a session in the fall, half way through September through to November. Our spring session runs after the majority of the winter weather is done, and begin the first Tuesday after March break and run through to May. Our sessions run for nine weeks.

- Choose the positions/roles each woman on the committee will fill, and sometimes one person may do several of these. In our committee, Jenn does both the study book coordinator and the PR, and Lea Anne does the treasurer and nursery and then we have others who fill the other roles.

Study book coordinator: chose study books, order study books after pre-registration, find willing women to lead studies chosen, deals with any issues pertaining to study classes

Personal Relations (PR) – advertising up coming session, registration, communicates between committee members, and women who attend each session via email

Elective coordinator: choose electives, find elective leaders, attend to electives during session and sees to any needs/issues that may arise.

Treasurer: keeps accurate financial records, financial liaison between H2H and the church, all receipts go through treasurer,

Nursery coordinator: finds child care workers (roughly 1 worker for 4 children), ensures that child care workers have an updated police check, purchase snacks for nursery, register children at the beginning of session, provide craft supplies, handles any issues regarding the nursery that may arise.

Set up/ Clean up Coordinator: comes early to setup (makes coffee, sets up tables/chairs and décor for coffee time), organises classes to help with clean up, ensures that snacks and beverages are ready at 10:30am for common fellowship time, responsible to ensure that the church is left the way it was found. Each study class takes a turn or several turns to cover the snack during our fellowship time. The women bring in items such as crackers and cheese, baked goods, and fruit and veggies. We have lately been asking the same women to also help with clean up at the end of the morning– washing the dishes, putting tables and chairs away. This way, everyone is taking a turn and it takes less responsibility and work away for the clean up person.

You need to meet as a committee and decide what study books and electives/crafts to offer for the upcoming session. We have examples of study books and electives that we have offered on a table here for you to check out at the end of the session. The study and elective coordinator need to then find leaders to teach. You will need to chose a pre-registration date and allow at least 4 weeks after that to order your books. Example: if our fall session begins September 21, then I will need to have the registration information out by August 10th or earlier and give a pre-registration date of August 20th. It helps to give an incentive to register early, and we usually offer a free gift bag if the women register before the cut off date. From these numbers, I can then order the books that I need. There may be people who register after the fact, as so then you have to arrange to have more books ordered. You may also have women showing up on the first day of the session and you will have to arrange for more books then as well.

Start your first session!! We find that the first day needs to look a little different than the remaining 8 weeks to allow for introductions, etc., so, feel free to follow this guideline:

The first day of the session runs a little differently then the rest of the rest of the session. We place one or two women at the door to greet women as they arrive and direct them to either the nursery if they have children or into the gym. W have our snack/fellowship/introduction time first and the pre-registered women receive their study book and free gift bag. New women are registered and fit into a study class and choice and elective.

At 10am, we introduce the committee members, study leaders and elective leaders for this session. We also take this opportunity to describe how the rest of the Tuesdays will look for the remainder of the session. Then the women follow their study leaders to their classrooms. The first day typically ends early because the study leaders only do an introduction to the book and there isn't an elective time. Study leaders also ask women to pay for their study books (if there are women who cannot pay, we ask that they borrow them and return, unmarked).

The second week until the 9th, you would run the program as follows:

9:00am – committee members and study leaders meet to pray

9:15-30 – women arrive, drop off children in the nursery, grab a coffee/tea and go directly to their study class.

9:30-10:30 – study class

10:30-11 – all classes come together to visit, have snack, fellowship

11-noon – electives/crafts run

We have been a group of women who have changed things and have grown over the course of the last nine years. We have been open to change and have adapted ways of doing things as the need to do so have come up. There may be things in our guideline that won't fit as well with your group, so please take the liberty to change things up and go with it!! This has worked very well for us, however we did have to adapt and change as the needs did.

If you have any questions after this session, we want to make ourselves available. So, we can be reached at jlr amer@hay.net or cjr amer@hay.net

Thanks so much for allowing us to present this exciting ministry to you!

All the best,
Jenn Ramer and Lea Anne Ramer