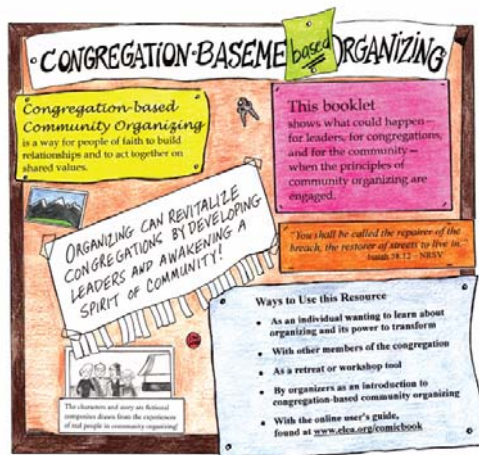


# Single House Meeting

For exploring the comic book...  
**HOPE AT WORK**

*This simple design offers you the chance to conduct a single-session house meeting that will accomplish some basic goals. You will provide participants with the opportunity to engage Hope at Work, which presents a true-to-life story of one congregation's experience participating in congregation-based community organizing. (For further background on congregation-based community organizing, see [www.elca.org/organizing](http://www.elca.org/organizing) ) This 90 – 120 house meeting engages participants in conversation, and does not take the place of a formal decision-making or planning process. (To introduce congregation-based community organizing in a larger setting, use the Hope at Work Introductory Workshop.)*



## Outcomes

Participants in this single session house meeting will be able to:

- Describe the fundamental philosophy underlying this form of ministry.
- Discern their own capability and volition to bring God's will to bear in their community.
- Make preliminary decisions about seeking further information or taking further action based in the principles of community organizing.

## Materials needed

To conduct this single session house meeting, assemble the following items:

- Copies of *Hope at Work* (one copy per participant) (To order copies, visit [www.augsburgfortress.org/store](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store). Search for *Hope at Work*.)
- Pads of writing paper, pens or pencils
- Low-impact masking tape or other means of displaying newspaper sheets
- Newspaper and water-soluble markers (with portable or stand-up easel)
- Bibles for participants' reference
- A comfortable, well-lit, well-ventilated setting with comfortable chairs, couches or floor pillows.
- A place or method of displaying newspaper sheets
- Laptop computer connected to Web site, [www.elca.org/organizing](http://www.elca.org/organizing) (optional)
- LCD projector and screen (optional)

## Schedule

This house meeting lasts about 90-120 minutes, which allows for a period of time to be spent on a significant number of matters or activities. You can adjust the number and duration of each part of this meeting to the interests and abilities of participants.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time</u>
Welcome and introductions/check-in	10 minutes
Prayer	10 minutes
Conversation 1 (Activity 1)	20-25 minutes
Refreshment break	15 minutes
Conversation 2 (Activity 2)	20-25 minutes
Conversation 3	10-20 minutes
Closing comments and prayer	5-15 minutes
TOTAL	90-120 minutes

## Detailed meeting plan

### Welcome and introductions/check-in

**10 minutes**

During this time greet participants by name and direct them to a place of refreshments or a comfortable chair. Distribute copies of *Hope at Work* to arriving participants. If necessary, ask participants to complete and wear name tags. When the group has assembled, welcome the entire group and begin introductions, using one of these prompts:

- Tell us your name, how you spend a typical week, and the reason(s) why you've chosen to be here.
- What have you learned about power (change, motivation, the movement of God's Spirit) during this past week? (For more information about the concept and practice of power, see [http://www.janethagberg.com/real\\_power.htm](http://www.janethagberg.com/real_power.htm).)
- Who has been persuasive in your life these past several days?
- What has surprised (heartened, humbled, emboldened) you recently?
- What godly good to you see being accomplished where you spend most of your time? How can you tell?
- What's started (or continued) to burn in your soul?
- What have you noticed this past week that might be important to this group?

### Prayer

**10 minutes**

Begin the meeting with a time of prayer. Your prayers might include gratitude to God for the people who have chosen to be part of these meetings, for wisdom and honesty in the conversations in this meeting, and for joy in service to God's will.

**Conversation 1 (Activity 1)****20-25 minutes**

The task for this segment of the meeting is to help participants see the entire process of congregation-based community organizing. You might begin the process in this first conversation with any of these prompts:

- In your opinion, how does change happen in society? In our congregation? In your own life?
- What, in your experience, are the ingredients for a successful program, one that accomplishes its goals effectively and efficiently?
- Why do you think that communities organize in the first place?
- How might this congregation already be an “organized community”?
- What kinds of power does this congregation possess in our community (locale)?

If you choose to use this time for an activity, consider these possibilities:

- Construct together a listing of matters in your community (locale) that require change. (Their size or scope may vary, but all of these matters continue to perplex or vex residents or members of this community.) Use the newsprint to record your answers.
- Divide into pairs or triads, and distribute Bibles. Challenge each small group to recall and find places in the Scriptures where groups of people organized themselves—with God’s help, of course—to change an unjust or oppressive situation. (HINT: The Exodus is a good example.)
- Conduct an oral presentation of the comic book, *Hope at Work*. Assign individual participants the presentation of several pages of the book, so that the entire book is assigned. After a few moments for participants to familiarize themselves with their assigned section, ask for readers to present their sections to the entire group in summary form. (Other participants can follow along, or simply listen to what is presented.)

**Refreshment break****15 minutes**

During this time participants engage in their *own* conversations, use the bathroom and partake of refreshments provided by the host or participants themselves. During this time you might want to adjust your choices for the remainder of the meeting, based on what has transpired so far.

**Conversation 2 (Activity 2)****20-25 minutes**

This “conversation” may resemble more a presentation-with-discussion than a true conversation among equals. If you choose this option, walk participants through the sections of the book, telling them what is taking place. They can follow along with your presentation by surveying the pages or sections you reference. Here is one simple outline to guide your presentation:

The problem presents itself as opportunity	Pages 2 – 3
Connecting with potential partners	Pages 4 – 5
Connecting to community organizers	Pages 6 – 7
Drawing in Hope congregation	Pages 8 – 13
The larger questions and possibilities	Pages 14 – 17
Wake-up call and another try	Pages 18 – 23
The action takes place	Pages 24 – 26
Summary, review and the future	Pages 27 – 29

If you choose to offer an activity during this time segment, consider the following:

Divide participants into pairs or triads, assigning each small group a section of *Hope at Work* so that the entire comic book will be explored. Ask each small group to read the section assigned to it, and then to develop answers to these questions: In what you have read, what seem to be the theological, philosophical, theoretical or practical foundations for congregation-based community organizing. How does community organizing connect with what Scriptures suggest or invite? After a few minutes, gather the entire group back together to report out what they have found. Use the newsprint to record comments. Save time for whole group reactions or questions.

### **Conversation 3**

**10-20 minutes**

This final conversation centers on the assets of this group and your congregation and helps participants imagine what congregation-based community organizing might look like in your setting.

Offer a short explanation about the basic concept of asset-based planning:

- An asset is a gift that's useful
- Use what you have to get done what God wants and
- The glass is always completely full, half with water and half with air.

(For further background for this explanation, visit the following Web address:

<http://www.alban.org/bookstore.aspx?id=5476&terms=the+power+of+asset+mapping.>)

Use any of the following prompts to facilitate the conversation. (It might be good to list participants' responses on newsprint sheets for reference.)

- Recalling any of your experiences with asset-based thinking or planning, what assets (useful gifts) for community organizing exist within this group?
- Because participants in this group are connected to other gifted individuals, what other assets could this group draw on?
- When it comes to community organizing, what are you good at doing? What do you like to do? Who do you know? What attitudes, skills or experiences could be useful? What did you used to be good at doing?
- What assets in this congregation or community might be hidden right now?
- What assets are "hidden in plain sight"?

Save a few moments for participants to analyze what patterns they see in the answers you have recorded on newsprint. What conclusions can be drawn, what possibilities given a name?

**Closing comments and prayer**

**5-15 minutes**

In your summary comments review the progression of thoughts through the conversations and activities of this one meeting. Share your own impressions of the capacities of this congregation to begin community organizing work together. Ask any participants willing to explore these matters further to remain for a few moments so that you can determine another time with them for further conversations.

In your prayer, acknowledge God's will for justice and mercy in the world, for the curbing of sin and the spread of God's good news in Jesus. Express your thanks to God for the Spirit's presence during this time together, and commend these people to God's care and God's mission in the world.

