Training Exercise for Identifying Listening Filters and Owning Biases (Role Play Cards)

Dyad Listening (20 minutes)—The purpose of role playing is to become aware of our own listening filers and biases and to become more comfortable with listening to people around touchy subjects or to people with different views than our own.

Divide the group into dyads with people who don't know each other well, if possible. Pass out the role play cards and explain that people will be "taking on" different personalities. Give people a minute to read their "identity before beginning the process.

Round 1 (1 minute)—Listening Filers and Biases

⊕ Give each person a chance to explain their worldview to their partner, based on the card they were given. Take turns listening and talking.

Round 2 (5 Minutes)—From Where I Sit

⊕ Invite people to read the "problem" on the other side of the card.

⊕ Give each person 2 minutes to interview their partner about the neighborhood, asking and responding in character, using their new identity.

Round 3 (2 Minutes)—Reflect

⊕ Invite the groups to reflect on what they learned from sitting in another person's chair.

Card #1

Description:
Middle class white Christian man or woman who has been a faithful member of a local congregation. You have given a lot of money over the years, not to mention time and energy to the ministry. You no longer live in the neighborhood but love your church.
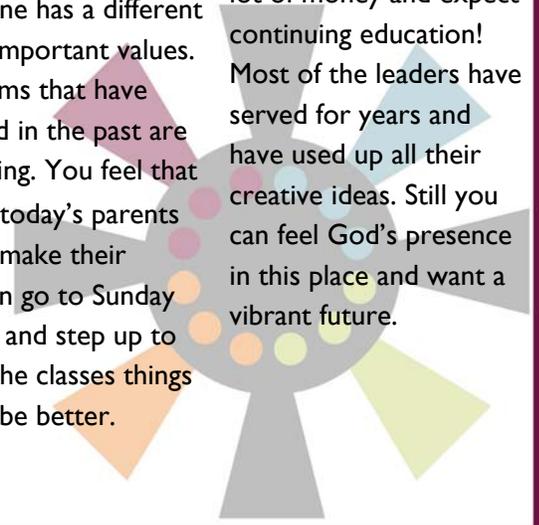
Mindset:
You are alarmed at the decline in your congregation. There is a shortage of young adults and few youth and children. You struggle to talk about your faith to your own children. You want something to change but you don't want different worship styles and new ways of making decisions.

Problem:
Your beloved pastor is retiring and transition is inevitable. People fear losing what matters most to them but everyone has a different list of important values. Programs that have worked in the past are struggling. You feel that if only today's parents would make their children go to Sunday School and step up to teach the classes things would be better.

The financial writing is on the wall. At the rate the congregation is going, you will be out of money in 10 years or less. New pastors cost a lot of money and expect continuing education! Most of the leaders have served for years and have used up all their creative ideas. Still you can feel God's presence in this place and want a vibrant future.

Card #2

Description:
Middle class Latino Christian parent who is not active in a congregation but wants to raise their children in the faith. You have family in both this country and Central America though you have been in the US since birth. You live near several congregations that don't seem relevant to your lifestyle.

Mindset:
You are tired and working hard to financially support your family while sending money to others. You want to pass on your cultural values to your children. You worship in your home but have not found a congregation that feels sincerely welcoming. You want to make a difference with your life but have no time for committee meetings. You feel frustrated with the systems in most institutions.

Problem:
It is getting harder to make enough money to support family in two countries. Your marriage is struggling under this pressure. You are struggling with traditional gender issues too. You believe God will provide but it's hard to remember to trust without the encouragement of a church home. You believe your kids should be learning the faith like you did and could use help with being a Christian parent.

You think about going to one of the neighborhood churches but even though you speak English, you sure wish you could worship in Spanish—your faith language. A lot of your friends are having similar challenges. Your heart is breaking over the immigration issues facing your friends—where is God in this? You love being in community with other Christian families and feel you could be stronger if you were more connected.