

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

GUIDE AND RESOURCES



DE MUCHOS,
UNO
E PLURIBUS
UNUM

FÈ LADIVÈSITE TOUNEN
LINITE

FROM MANY,
ONE
CONVERSATIONS
ACROSS DIFFERENCE

合众为
一

DE LA PLURALITÉ,
L'UNITÉ
DE MUITOS,
UM

INTRODUCTION

“Conversation with others across difference is not just a nice thing to do. It is a spiritual practice of love in action.”

– Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

“From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference” is a campaign inviting Episcopalians and our neighbors to engage in one-to-one listening and sharing across the many differences that separate us. Echoing the Latin phrase on the U.S. seal – E Pluribus (“from many”) Unum (“one”) – and following in the footsteps of Jesus, we trust that the spiritual practice of conversation across difference can help to knit us all into a diverse, more perfect union.

In a cultural moment shadowed by pandemic, fractious politics, and deep division within families, communities, and nations, we have the opportunity as people of faith to partner in simple ways to celebrate difference, listen with curiosity, and promote healing. Each of us can make a difference.

It all starts with four simple questions:

1. What do you love?
2. What have you lost?
3. Where does it hurt?
4. What do you dream?

Anyone can join in these life-changing conversations, by engaging one on one, exploring the questions in small groups, and talking with people of different ages and backgrounds. In so doing, we begin to discover how our differences make us stronger as the human family of God.

Watch the videos. Sign up. Invite a partner. Have the conversation. Pray. Join in deeper conversation, practice, and learning. Help to form God’s Beloved Community.

HOW DO I ENGAGE?

1. **Explore this guide** or the “From Many, One” webpage at www.episcopalchurch.org/frommany.
2. **Reflect personally** on The Four Questions.
3. **Watch videos** of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and other leaders modeling brief, one-to-one conversations using The Four Questions (available mid-January 2021).
4. **Explore the Resources** to learn about conversation as a spiritual practice, set up your own conversations, and reflect well afterward.
5. **Sign up** and set a conversations goal.
6. **Have the conversation.**
7. **Pray** for your partner after the conversation.
8. **Repeat** with new partners.
9. **Contribute** to the “From Many, One” story space with a poem, prayer, reflection, or image inspired by your conversation(s), or with video/audio highlights or reflections (with your partner’s permission).
10. **Participate** in related efforts to take the learning, listening, and action further (see options under **Keep the Conversation Going**). And **celebrate the campaign** during Easter 2021 in a churchwide virtual gathering.

The body is not
made up of one
part **but of many.**

I Corinthians 12:14

Will you seek and serve
Christ in all persons,
loving your neighbor
as yourself?
I will, with God’s help.

The Baptismal Covenant

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

- **What do you love?** *What do you value? What will you struggle to protect?*

So much of human action and thinking is driven not by hate or anger but by the urge to protect what we love. By asking and sharing our answers to “what do you love,” each of us has a chance to name and to hear what matters most to us and why. It’s harder to argue when we start from what we love.

- **What have you lost?** *What keeps you up at night? What has been lost in your community? What do you miss?*

People across the spectrum understand the experience of loss: the loss of money, jobs, status, national identity, cultural identity, a sense of security, a sense that they matter, etc. By asking and sharing our answers to “what have you lost,” we become curious about what each of us has lost, what we’re grieving, and perhaps what we’re trying hard to get back.

- **Where does it hurt?** *How have you been wounded by life? What makes you angry? How or where do you feel that pain and anger?*

Regardless of our race, gender, age, ballot choice, earnings, or location, we all know what it is to hurt. By asking and sharing our answers to “where does it hurt,” we become curious about how each of us has been wounded by life, by others, and by social forces, instead of assuming “others” are fine and only I or my group is hurting. We offer up our experiences and learn to offer one another compassion.

- **What do you dream?** *What do you hope for the future – for yourself, your family, your community, and your nation?*

We all dream of a better world, as we imagine it from our own personal perspective, but we don’t get to hear or share that vision very often. Instead, people often assume that their own ideal picture of life, community, and society is shared by everyone or that certain others can’t possibly want the same kind of future they do. By asking “what do you dream,” we become open to hear and share each other’s dreams for our families, communities, society, and ourselves.

No one has ever
seen God; if we love
one another, God lives
in us, and God’s love
is perfected in us.

1 John 4:12

WHAT'S THE POINT?

As individuals, we may find conversations like these help us with “engaging others, knowing ourselves.” Through sharing across difference around simple questions, we can...

- Acknowledge the differences and divisions in our families, communities, and nation.
- Be open to understanding and collaborating without insisting we're the same.
- Practice disagreeing without dishonoring.
- Live the [Way of Love](#) as we BLESS by listening, sharing, and honoring God's presence in one another and as we GO across borders of race, class, ideology, region, age, and experience.
- Find language to name what is hopeful, challenging, and loving in our everyday lives.
- Learn to create hospitable, respectful, generous space for others to share their stories.
- Notice God showing up in the spaces between us.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2:1, 4

As a Church, we can offer a faithful perspective and tested practice for knitting deeply divided communities into a diverse, more perfect union. Together, we can...

- Counter the current culture of retribution, punishment, and “othering,” and instead honor difference, curiosity, and relationship.
- Reknit the fabric of families, communities, and a nation fractured by pandemic, racial reckoning, and politics.
- Practice the ministry of reconciliation, that is, the spiritual practice of seeking loving, liberating, and life-giving relationship with God and one another across the many borders that separate us, and striving to heal and transform injustice and brokenness in ourselves, communities, institutions, and society.
- Teach intentional listening and “StorySharing” as part of living the [Way of Love](#).
- Forge the [Beloved Community](#), where all people may experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God, and where the flourishing of every person (and all creation) is the hope of each person.
- Point individuals and groups toward ongoing efforts that support learning and engagement across difference (such as [Braver Angels](#), [Civil Discourse](#), [Love God-Love Neighbor](#), [the Difference Course](#), [Sacred Ground](#), [PrayOnMLK](#), and [the People's Inauguration](#)).
- Be true to our core Anglican values. Our tradition was born in the fires of conflict between religious and ideological factions. Anglicans have a unique calling to adapt, listen, hold tension, and bridge fierce convictions.

TIPS FOR CONVERSATIONS ACROSS DIFFERENCE

As long as you're listening and sharing with honesty and intention, there is no "wrong" way to have a conversation. Here are some tips, principles, and common questions about having conversations across difference.

How is this different from any other conversation?

- You might understand this as a "one to one": an intentional, well-framed conversation between two people (it can also be in a small group, but not everyone feels comfortable sharing with more than one person). By saying it is intentional, we mean it is not casual chitchat.
- This conversation works best without "talkback." That means each person shares uninterrupted, and each person gets equal time to listen and to share. Imagine there's a stick each of you holds when it's your turn to talk. If you're not holding the stick, you're listening and being present to the one who has it.
- This is just a beginning. If you feel you've only scratched the surface, find another opportunity to go deeper (see partner opportunities under **Keep the Conversation Going** on page 9). Or simply invite your partner to meet again.
- You have a chance to practice openness and curiosity, celebrate difference, and seek God in the presence of the other person.

Are there guidelines for listening and sharing effectively across difference?

- Lean into curiosity and wonder about the other person and about your own story.
- Try out active, engaged listening. Keep from thinking about your response and simply listen.
- Commit to listening deeply without judgment – no rejection, approval, or comparison.
- Resist the urge to steer toward agreement and commonalities. Let God take care of the outcomes. You show up for the conversation.
- Recall that we're all made in God's image *and* that God made us with wondrous diversity. Listen for where you hear God in the other person, including and especially in difference.
- Practice confidentiality, not secrecy.
- Tell your own story and your own experience from your own perspective using "I" statements. Self-correct when you hear yourself say "we" or "they."
- Offer generous hospitality. What physical gestures or signs indicate full attention and appreciation to you? Offer these to your partner, as appropriate.
- Honor cultural differences. If your partner's culture discourages direct eye contact or "close-talking," then adjust your practice. It is OK to ask, "What can I do to make sure you feel heard?"
- Wait out the awkward silence without responding too soon.
- Give yourself time afterward to consider how you feel about what you heard.
- Only interrupt to ask clarifying questions when you don't understand a word or reference, or to invite your partner to go deeper (e.g., "I'd like to picture this. What did you see?" or "Please, tell me more.").
- Mind the clock. It's tempting to ignore time or to allow one person do a majority of the sharing, but honoring each other's time – and making time for each person to speak and listen – is an important part of how we honor God in one another.
- Consult "Tenets for Civil Discourse" (iam.ec/cdtenets) for a brief summary of practical conversation guidelines.

If you love those who love you,
what credit is that to you?
But love your enemies, do
good, and lend, expecting
nothing in return. Your reward
will be great, and you will be
children of the Most High.

Luke 6:32, 35

How should I structure my conversation?

Keep it simple and intentional. Below is one suggestion you can use or adapt, or you might create your own outline. Remember that having some structure gives you the space within which to speak the truth and connect authentically. Having no structure or too much structure can make it tougher to share well.

- Open with prayer (see **Prayers** on page 8) or an expression of gratitude for this time together.
- One person invites the other to start sharing. Pay attention to sharing your talk time and listening time – both talking and listening are important gifts for each partner to receive.
- Begin with the first question: “What do you love?” Feel free to use the different phrasings of each question on page 2 of this guide, if your partner needs a little extra prompt.
- Reverse and let the other person do the sharing/listening.
- Continue this back and forth with the remaining questions: “What have you lost?” “Where do you hurt?” “What do you dream?”
- Alternatively, you could give one person a block of time (10-15 minutes) as the speaker, while the partner focuses on asking each of The Four Questions and listening deeply. Then switch roles and give that partner the chance to share for the same solid block of time.
- Close with a simple prayer or gratitude.
- If you wish, invite your partner to follow up or continue the conversation in different ways.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 22:37-29

How do I invite others into a conversation like this?

- Look around your circle: family and friends near and far and regular acquaintances (e.g., work colleagues, schoolmates, neighbors, or volunteer partners). Many of them are eager for respectful, mutual conversation, even across differences.
- Be genuine in your invitation. For example, you might say, “Our church has launched an effort to have conversations across difference. We’re listening and sharing in individual conversations with each other and with a friend, family member, or colleague, because we want to listen, share, and learn from each other and form more loving communities. Would you join me in a conversation? We could meet soon, for not more than half an hour.”
- Before you meet with your partner, spend some time alone exploring your own experience and story.

Can we use it in our church?

- Use Coffee Hour or Formation time to place people in pairs for conversations across difference. Zoom makes it easy to set up breakout rooms for two.
- Use The Four Questions with your Vestry or other ministry groups, again sending folks into pairs to share with each other.
- Create a one-month “From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference” campaign in your church.
 - Invite people to participate.
 - Create a board online or on the wall outside the sanctuary with the names of members who agree to participate.
 - Invite people to arrange to have conversations with others on the list.
 - Encourage them to do at least two 30-minute conversations within the month.
 - Welcome people to reflect afterward on what it was like for them.
- Invite another church or faith community to join your ministry in conversations across difference.

Can we have these conversations among youth and teens?

One-to-one conversations should be peer to peer, and therefore youth to youth, not adult to youth. Or engage in small group conversations with several youth and one or two adults present. Adults should follow the same rules mentioned in this guide, unless they are serving as non-participating facilitators to help youth stick with the method. Consider suggesting some journaling to help youth engage and reflect after a conversation has taken place.

Other than these caveats, youth and teens should use the same guidelines for good conversation that are given throughout this guide.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AFTER THE CONVERSATION

After you have had your conversation, take some time to journal or find some quiet space for reflection. Consider questions like these:

- What made you say yes to having this conversation?
- What stood out for you?
- Where did you hear your conversation partner's love?
- Where did you hear your conversation partner's loss?
- Where did you hear your conversation partner's hurt?
- What dream did your conversation partner share?

- What love have you experienced?
- What have you lost and how did it feel to share that?
- What hurt did you share and how did that feel?
- What dreams did you share and how were they received?

- What will you take away from this conversation?
- Having had this conversation, how will your thoughts, words, actions, or understanding change?

- What did you learn about the other person? What did you learn about yourself?
- What "gift of difference" did you receive from this conversation? What had you simply not thought of before? How did it broaden your own horizon or worldview?
- What gift do you hope your conversation partner received from you?

PRAYERS

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking.
– Hymnal 1982, #694

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be aligned with your love, O God, our strength, our courage, and our freedom. Amen.

May we speak with love
Hear with empathy
Question with kindness
And comment with curiosity.

May our time together
Expand our understanding
Of each other
And of you, O Lord.
Amen.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

– Prayer attributed to St. Francis, Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

A Prayer Before Conversation

God of Love, be with us as we come together for holy conversation. Help us to listen and share with kindness, curiosity, and honesty. Open our hearts, ears, and minds that we may better understand and receive what is shared. Guide our words that we may speak our truths in love and humility. Bless this conversation that we may draw closer to one another and closer to you. Amen.

A Prayer After Conversation

Gracious God, we thank you for this time of holy conversation. As we depart from one another, help us to remember what we have heard and experienced that it may inform how we receive others and understand ourselves. Continue to open our hearts and minds that we may honor your presence in every member of the human family. Amen.

“Will you strive for
justice and peace
among all people, and
respect the dignity of
every human being?”
I will, with God’s help.

The Baptismal Covenant

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- **Level 1: Simple Conversations**
 - Conversations Across Difference: Keep having these conversations within and beyond your circles
 - [Braver Angels: With Malice Toward None](#): Simple small group conversations designed to connect “red and blue” Americans around mostly secular topics
- **Level 2: Conversations and Learning Across Difference**
 - [Civil Discourse: Make Me an Instrument of Peace](#): Five-session curriculum from the Office of Government Relations and Department of Faith Formation for bridging partisan divides, learning from others, and enlarging the sacred space for debate
 - [The Difference Course](#): Five-session course on following Jesus in the face of conflict and seeing transformation through everyday encounters, produced by the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Reconciliation Programme
 - [Love God-Love Neighbor](#): Episcopal Migration Ministries’ training in welcoming work through community organizing, awareness, advocacy, and relationship with refugees and immigrants
- **Level 3: Deeper Reckoning Around Difference and Racial Identity**
 - [Sacred Ground](#): 10-session film-based dialogue series for small groups to learn and reckon with U.S. racial history and their own racial identity, and to share stories on sacred ground – especially useful for engaging White communities and crossing barriers of class and ideology
- **Level 4: Related Campaigns for Healing, Prayer, and Action**
 - [Pray on MLK](#): Nationwide evangelical-led campaign organizing groups dedicated to racial healing to take specific actions on January 18, including sharing conversations and meals, forming a “wall of prayer,” and hosting “hope rallies”
 - [The People’s Inauguration](#): The day after the presidential inauguration, groups and individuals recommit to healing and building a nation with liberty and justice for all. Features “The People’s Inauguration: Becoming America” digital event, as well as teach-ins, artist offerings, concerts, vigils, and home rituals – organized by Revolutionary Love Project and Valarie Kaur

So God created
humankind in
God's image;
in the divine image
God created them.

Genesis 1:27

ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND DIALOGUE RESOURCES

- [“From Many, One: Conversations Across Difference” website](#): Features more materials relating to this guide and resource document
- [Beloved Community StorySharing Guide](#): A simple guide with models for sharing stories and practicing reconciliation that can be used in congregations, one-on-ones, adult education, retreats, etc.
- [Tenets for Civil Discourse](#): Brief summary of practical conversation guidelines
- [Civil Discourse Curriculum](#): Standalone resource for bridging partisan divides and learning from others
- [Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves](#): Lutheran guide to daily encounters with diversity
- [Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference \(berkeley.edu\)](#)
- [Called to Transformation](#): Episcopal learning for individuals and groups in communication about personal gifts and community needs
- [“Where Does It Hurt?”](#): Krista Tippett’s interview with Ruby Sales from the *On Being* podcast
- [“The Revolutionary Art of Listening”](#): Stephanie Spellers’ TEDx Talk
- National Institute for Civil Discourse ([NICD](#)): [Engaging Differences Key Principles and Best Practices \(arizona.edu\)](#)
- [Conflict Transformation](#): Essay by John Paul Lederach on peacebuilding skills and turning conflict into conversation
- [America Inside Out Series I - White Anxiety with Katie Couric](#): An episode of the series in which Katie Couric examines how anxiety in the white working class has impacted divides in America