

Difficult Conversations Within the Church

Written & edited by Micah 6:8



Throughout formal and informal conversations across the Nebraska Synod, Micah 6:8 has heard that congregations are struggling with having difficult conversations. While sometimes difficult conversations surround topics such as a lack of lay leaders, time, the color of the carpet, or the frequency in which Holy Communion is served, this toolkit will primarily provide topical resources related to the mission of Micah 6:8.

Micah 6:8 seeks to equip the congregations of the Nebraska Synod to live out their baptismal promise “to strive for justice and peace throughout all the earth.” We are made up of lay and rostered volunteers throughout the state, meeting every other month to focus on hunger, global mission, and justice ministries. While the topical resources will be focused on justice issues, the general guidelines for communication in the theological rationale may be of some assistance to you for whatever difficult conversation you would like to engage.

There are a few assumptions being made by the creators of this toolkit. First, we assume that people having difficult conversations are already in relationship with each other. Depending on the context of the conversation, this may not necessarily be true. The creators also assume that the conversations are taking place face-to-face. While online facilitated conversations are possible, this toolkit was not specifically designed with any tips for that scenario. Finally, we assume that these conversations and dialogues are important and necessary for the ongoing relevance of the Church in our world.

Theological Rationale/Bible Study

Our discipleship, being followers of Jesus Christ, is rooted most deeply in our baptism. When God claims us as beloved children in the life-giving waters of baptism, we are made part of the body of Christ and members of the family of God. As we grow from this watery, visible sign of God’s love and grace, we become active players or agents of change, participating in what God is doing in the world. In the rites of holy baptism and affirmation of baptism, several promises are made and one is to “strive for justice and peace in all the earth.” So when we intentionally enter into difficult or crucial conversations that touch on issues of justice, equity, peace, advocacy, and others, we are speaking and acting according to our baptismal call and promises.

Inspired by scripture, we are also people of the Word and the Word of God is at the very center of our faith. The gospel according to John starts out, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1) and then later, the evangelist writes, “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (1:14). The Word is not only something we read and hear, but we also taste and see in the holy supper and proclaim through word and deed. The Word influences the way we are in the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. So, apart from our baptismal call, why do people of faith talk about issues of justice? A short answer would be: because justice matters to God. Every time we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven,” (Mt. 6:10), we are putting ourselves in a posture for God to use us as the very answer to this prayer.

From a global Lutheran perspective, we engage in relationship with one another and our surrounding communities through conversation, service “with”, and care for our neighbor. In all of our vocations of living our Christian faith in the world everyday, we build relationships through conversations, engagement, caring listening and speaking, sharing stories and vulnerabilities, encouragement and support. Difficult conversations, be they local or global, connect your story and my story, your story and your neighbor’s story, your story and the stranger’s story as they are all woven together as part of God’s story. When we enter a space where difficult conversations can occur, we challenge our Lutheran history of quietism, which is not speaking up when an injustice is present for us or our neighbors and calmly accepting things as the way they are without resisting or working to challenge the injustice.

Might difficult conversations around touchy subjects be scary, or anxiety producing, or awkward, or taboo (ex. like not talking about religion or politics at the family gatherings)...YES, but we have to try. And while there are plenty of helpful tools, guidelines, and suggestions, there is no one way through difficult conversations, for we make our way through difficult conversations by having them, trusting that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Php. 4:13). May God be present with you and bless you in the midst of your conversations.

Guidelines for Communication

One struggle in our divided society is to get people with multiple perspectives to have a difficult conversation together. Personal invitation can go a long way in inviting different people to attend a conversation. With a small group, make a list of people you would like to invite, which may include age, race, and ethnic diversity as well as longtime members, newer members, and people you know have different positions on an issue. Make phone calls or approach those people personally saying something like, “We value your place in this community and your perspective on this issue. We want you to be a part of our conversation because...”

Other tips related to preparing folks for these conversations include thinking about your timeline before the conversation. For example, at least two weeks out from the conversation, announce that the conversation will be happening, the context of the conversation, and the logistical details (time, date, location, food, etc.). One week out, provide a reminder and perhaps a few starter questions to get people in a frame of mind to have a difficult conversation with others. Perhaps a third reminder a few days before is necessary, too. One of the messages that can be used in the preparation stage (and also in the ground rules and introduction to the conversation) is that there is no predetermined outcome in mind for this/these conversation(s). That will help people feel that they can more fully participate in the conversations and assume that their input will be valued. Finally, it is important to prepare people that these conversations may change them internally and that is not a bad thing.

No matter how prepared you are to have these conversations, there will likely be moments with very strong feelings. As a facilitator, anticipate that you and other participants might sometimes be uncomfortable. Providing some ground rules at the beginning of your conversations may help ease the tension. We’ve provided some ground rule examples from resources we know in the community to help to insert calm into these high stakes conversations, but bring your own intrinsic resources and skills to facilitating them also.

Ground Rules Examples

Listening Posts are held as a way to hear stories and identify common experiences. Listening Post ground rules include: *(facilitator notes are written in italics)*

- Every will be respectful of the opinions and ideas of others.
- Disagreement, as long as it is respectful, is welcome in these conversations.
- We are not trying to solve problems, so please refrain from offering advice or solutions.
- Everyone's thoughts are welcome and we have limited time, so each person should limit their initial comments during the introduction to 30 seconds.
- Your facilitator asks your permission to interrupt in order to ensure that everyone speaks, so that we can keep the meeting on time and focused on the agenda. Do you give your permission for this? *(facilitator asks each person permission to interrupt them; each person must give a verbal answer in the affirmative)*

Ground rules that Micah 6:8 adapted from Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High for our purposes when having our very own difficult conversations are: *(facilitator notes are written in italics)*

- "Start with heart"
- Assume good intent
- Be brave in this space, but also provide a safe space for others. Give others grace as they are learn through this conversation.
- We begin in covenant through our baptismal promise. *(Perhaps if this is a group that does not participate in baptism or is not comfortable with baptismal covenants, this would be a good opportunity to create a covenant together)*
- Mutual accompaniment--the facilitator will not abandon them in the midst of the conversation.
- One person will speak at a time, and only the facilitator has permission to interrupt to keep time and/or the conversation moving. *(This one in particular is requested of the group and agreed upon by the group before the conversation begins)*
- After each person speaks, take a two-breath silent pause to honor their words.
- Speak directly to the person to whom you are responding instead of speaking about that person in the group during a response.

Adapted from Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, and David G. Maxfield. Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High. Singapore: McGraw-Hill, 2012.

Ground Rules Examples

Another way to set ground rules for your time together is to create a Covenant. Use this Sample Covenant from the Frank Zeidler Center for Public Discussion as a starting point:

For our time today, we propose the following communication agreements:

1. I'll speak for myself from my own personal experience. I won't try to represent a group, and I won't ask others to represent, defend, or explain one either.
2. I'll avoid making "big statements" or sweeping generalizations, and instead connect my beliefs to my experiences and influences in my life.
3. I will listen for understanding, and refrain from criticizing the views of others or persuading others to adopt my views.
4. I will talk and make space for others to talk. I will not interrupt others unless I cannot or did not hear the speaker.
5. After the conversation, when I discuss my experience with others, I won't attach names or other identifying information (keeping confidentiality).

Grounding virtues for Civil Conversation as proposed by the Civil Conversations Project include:

- Generous listening: "...is about presence as much as receiving; it is about connection more than observing."
- Adventurous civility: "Civility, in our world of change, is about creating new possibilities for living forward while being different and even continuing to hold profound disagreement."
- Humility: "...is not about debasing oneself, but about approaching everything and everyone with a readiness to be surprised and delighted."
- Patience: "Human transformation takes time — longer than we want it to — but it is what is necessary for social transformation."
- Hospitality: "You don't have to love or forgive or feel compassion to extend hospitality."

Adapted from: <https://onbeing.org/civil-conversations-project/>

Topical Conversation Tools

Now that you are prepared with how to have a difficult conversation and ways to set ground rules for authentic (and enthusiastic) participation, here are some topical resources related to justice issues that can be of use as background information for your conversations. This list is certainly non-exhaustive, but is designed to be a place to begin.

- **Race**

- R.A.R.E. (Racial Awareness, Reconciliation, and Engagement) is a committee of the Nebraska Synod ELCA dedicated to energizing the church to combat the sin of racism. By increasing awareness about the history and nature of racism, creating opportunities for reconciliation, and promoting engagement among diverse people, we can better live out the command to love God and love our neighbors. Through grace we commit to the task of shedding our prejudices and participating in the rich blessing of human difference. Resources are here: <https://nebraskasynod.org/learn/rare-resources.html>

- ELCA Social Statement Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture (1993) calls the ELCA to confront racism, to engage in public leadership, witness and deliberation on these matters, and to advocate for justice and fairness for all people. <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Race-Ethnicity-and-Culture>

- **Economy, poverty, and possessions**

- Torvend, Samuel. Luther and the Hungry Poor: Gathered Fragments. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019.

- ELCA Social Statement Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All (1999) conveys ELCA teaching that economic activity is a means through which God's will is served for the thriving and well-being of humankind and the care of the earth.

<https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Economic-Life>

- **Food Insecurity**

- Buck the Trend: The current trend is to focus most of our attention on food relief efforts including canned food drives, feeding the homeless and packing meals. These things are important and necessary, but only one piece of the puzzle. Long-term change, which breaks intergenerational cycles of hunger and poverty, can only happen when we towards sustainable development and community organizing. This resource will give you ideas, big and small, on ways to do that as individuals, groups and congregations: <https://nebraskasynod.org/ministries/micah-68/hunger/buckthetrend.html>

- ELCA World Hunger has general and seasonal resources on many topics/root causes related to hunger and poverty. Find them here: <https://www.elca.org/Resources/ELCA-World-Hunger>

- **Immigration**

- ELCA AMMPARO: Welcoming Congregations & Guardian Angels Program have a number of resource documents available for individuals and congregations about how to connect to support migrant children and their families. <https://www.elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO>

- ELCA Social Message on Immigration (1998)

[https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Immigration \(English\)](https://elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Immigration%20(English))

[https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Immigration \(Español\)](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Immigration%20(Espanol))

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ImmigrationSM_Spanish.pdf?_ga=2.148383476.298494396.1565570813-141136082.1565570813

- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services has a wealth of information available on everything from history of refugee resettlement to advocacy action items. This link connects to resources for information about advocacy around immigration reform.

<https://www.lirs.org/immigration-reform/>

- Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska is a well-connected serving ministry of the Nebraska Synod. They accompany individuals and families through a wide range of transitions. Their work with the refugee and immigrant community is a beacon of light for so many. You can find out about their services for New Populations at: <https://www.lfsneb.org/service-type/new-populations/>.

● **Mental Health & Addiction**

- Look no further than our own denomination's social message on mental illness written in 2012: <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Mental-Illness> or (en español) http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Body_of_Christ_and_Mental_Illness_SPN.pdf?_ga=2.254174539.298494396.1565570813-141136082.1565570813.

- The church also has a social message on suicide prevention written in 1999 which can be found here: <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages/Suicide-Prevention> or (en español) http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Suicide_PreventionSM_Spanish.pdf?_ga=2.256913096.298494396.1565570813-141136082.1565570813

- Mental Health First Aid is an 8-hour course that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing mental health crisis. Find a course near you for adult or child mental health first aid: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/>

- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. They do this through funding scientific research, educating the public about mental health and suicide prevention, advocating for public policies in mental health and suicide prevention, and supporting survivors of suicide loss and those affected by suicide. Learn more- <https://afsp.org/about-afsp/> or find a local chapter <https://afsp.org/our-work/chapters/>.

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Nebraska has two types of Support Groups; Connections and Family to Family. The Connection groups would be the ones in which a person living with a mental illness would attend. The Family to Family support groups are for family members who are supporting a person with a mental illness. The Support Groups are facilitated by individuals who are living with mental illness or have a family member who lives with a mental illness. NAMI has a crisis line 1-800-950-6264 and line in which you can text. The NAMI text line is 741741 in which is monitored 24 hours a day. The NAMI Nebraska website is <https://naminebraska.org/>

- The Nebraska Resource and Referral website is very beneficial. This website has listings of organizations based upon what county or city you are located. <https://nrrs.ne.gov/usersearch> this website has many different categories for different types of organizations throughout Nebraska. There is everything from Adult Daycare to Transportation. You will be able to use this to assist you with looking for the resources such as therapists, legal assistance and financial assistance for your daughter for rent or a food pantry.

- Stephen Ministry training is one way to equip congregation members to provide one-to-one Christian care to people who are hurting. Additional information can be found at www.stephenministries.org.



- **Gender & Sexual Identity**

- Reconciling Works advocates for the full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Lutheran in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations and community. <https://www.reconcilingworks.org>

- The recently adopted (2019) Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action social statement can be found here: https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Faith_Sexism_Justice_Social_Statement_Adopted.pdf?_ga=2.254544008.1447375654.1569362229-2078903086.1566508839. There will be a version available in Spanish shortly

Advocacy Primer

During our conversations with congregations, the concept of advocacy came up time and time again. Advocacy on national levels, but even more frequently on state, local, and community levels. Because advocacy is important in the life of our Church, especially regarding justice-related issues, Micah 6:8 also felt it was very important to provide a primer on advocacy for those congregations that have interest.

The first step in advocacy work with the Nebraska Unicameral is to learn the process that an idea takes to form into a bill to become a law. Watch this fun video from The Coalition for a Strong Nebraska www.strongnebraska.org to see how a bill becomes a law.

Now that you know the process, you'll need to know where to look for information on what's happening at the Capitol. The official website for the Nebraska Unicameral is www.nebraskalegislature.gov. On this site you can search for bills that have been introduced. If you know the bill number of the piece of legislation you are interested in, you can search for it here. When you find the bill, you will be able to read it and see where it is in the process of possibly becoming a law. You can also search here to find the name of the Senator that represents your area. A list of all Senators and their webpages is found via the "Senators" tab, which for 2019 takes you to https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_list.php. Also on the "Senators" tab is a list of the Senators, their mailing address and phone numbers in a printable list - <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/pdf/senators/roster.pdf>. These resources will help you find and contact your Senator about issues that are important to you.

If you want to contact your Senator about an issue that you are passionate about, it is important to think ahead about what you want to say either in writing (mail or email) or by phone. Your message doesn't have to be long, but should include your name, a mention that you are a constituent of that Senator, the number and/or title of the bill you are addressing, the action you would like them to take (Vote "Yes," Vote "No", etc.) and a personal story about how the bill will affect you or other Nebraskans. You may reach out to Senators that are not in your district, which you would likely do to reach a Senator that is on a specific committee that is working on a bill, in which case you should note to them that you are a Nebraska resident.

If you found out about a bill from a local nonprofit organization or an advocacy organization, many of them will offer suggested wording to use when reaching out to your Senators, so use them as resources to help find the right words and to share the right message. The ELCA has wording you can use that are called “Social Statements.” ELCA social statements are teaching and policy documents that provide broad frameworks to assist us in thinking about and discussing social issues in the context of faith and life. They are meant to help communities and individuals with moral formation, discernment and thoughtful engagement with current social issues as we participate in God’s work in the world. Social statements also set policy for the ELCA and guide its advocacy and work as a publicly engaged church. You can find them here and use language from the statements that best address the issue you are working on - https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements?_ga=2.125192586.144823899.1565577460-407637749.1551279985

These processes are similar on local and national levels. If you desire to follow the ELCA’s advocacy efforts on a national level, you can sign up for alerts and information here - <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy>

Other Resources

Micah 6:8 wants to provide as many resources possible so that each congregation is able to find the best fit for their context. Use these resources as frameworks in having difficult conversations:

- **On Being: The Civil Conversations Project**

<https://onbeing.org/civil-conversations-project/>

“The word ‘civility’ may be complicated — but we can start having the conversations we want to be hearing. The Civil Conversations Project is an evolving adventure in audio, events, resources, and initiatives for planting relationship and conversation around the subjects we fight about intensely — and those we’ve barely begun to discuss.” See the ground rules section for On Being’s suggested grounding virtues. An additional resource from The Civil Conversation Project is the The Better Conversations Guide, which can be found at: <https://onbeing.org/civil-conversations-project/better-conversations-guide/>

- **Omaha Together One Community Listening Posts**

Omaha Together One Community was generous enough to share all of their Listening Post resources with us. Listening Posts are held as a way to hear stories and identify common experiences.

- **Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High**

The Micah 6:8 work related to difficult conversations began with a discussion of this book. It can be found online, in many bookstores, and in many public libraries.

Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler, and David G. Maxfield. Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High. Singapore: McGraw-Hill, 2012.



What is a Listening Post meeting?

What a Listening Post Meeting is:

A Listening Post is a gathering of 8-12 people in a person's home, congregation or school lasting for 60-75 minutes that gives the participants an opportunity to have a public discussion of the concerns and issues that families and individuals struggle with in the community. Topics for discussion can be selected by Listening Post planners to reflect specific circumstances, but should be broad-based. Listening Posts are not problem solving meetings, but are developed to provide an open, safe environment for sharing concerns and ideas about hard-to-talk about topics.

Each Listening Post meeting has:

- a host to offer invitations, set up the meeting location, and provide refreshments (at the end)
- a trained facilitator to lead the discussion and keep it moving
- a note taker to support the facilitator and the group with summarizing; a note taker should be a participant in the discussion
- a time keeper may be useful also
- participants -at least 5, not including the facilitator

Each Listening Post meeting has the following components:

Opening business: Begins with an overview of the purpose and process of the meeting, an opening prayer or reflection, "rounds" (a time of brief introduction from each person attending), and a review of the ground rules for the meeting.

Discussion: The majority of the time of the meeting is spent in discussion of a question (or two) developed by the planners. The question developed should be open-ended but specific enough to create a time for participants to share a specific story for their own experience and to listen to others. The intention is to listen and to use the discussion as a way to identify trends, key concerns, or common experiences that can point to potential areas to research which can lead to proposed actions.

Closing business: It is important to close the meeting by preparing (with the consensus of those in the meeting) a summary of what was heard and to offer invitations and avenues for participants to be involved in the future. *The Listening Post summary should be prepared at the close of the meeting and shared with the Listening Post organizer(s). The report may be used to do follow up meetings regarding the issues identified and also as a way to identify potential leaders or people with a passion/ deep interest in particular topics/ issues.

Listening Post Meetings provide:

- An opportunity to connect people in the community and break through some of the isolation that exists in society;
- a chance to identify some talented and interested new leaders in the congregation and community;
- a process for identifying potential issues on which to do research and propose action in order to improve our community and build the organization

What a Listening Post is NOT:

- a social visit full of chit chat
- a coffee or tea with elaborate hospitality
- an open-ended complaint session
- a lecture session by one or more participants
- a problem solving or therapy session

What forms/documents/resources are needed for each Listening Post?

- A sign in page for each meeting for gathering participants' information
- An agenda for each meeting participant that includes the Ground Rules
- A Listening Post summary sheet to be completed at the end of the meeting
- paper for the note taker and facilitator's use
- Name tags for participants

Organizers and facilitators should meet, if possible, immediately after the completion of the listening posts to consolidate information from the summary sheets, share their own take aways from the meeting so that the planners can identify next steps and assign follow up tasks.

Example Listening Post Agenda:

I. Opening Business (1/8 of meeting)

Welcome

Overview of Listening Post

Opening Prayer or Reflection

Brief introductions by each participant (rounds)

Ground Rules for the discussion

II. Discussion (3/4 of meeting)

Brief introduction to the question (Sample ideas)

State the Question: (An example)

What are the pressures you encounter as you seek to serve others and find ways to respond to needs in your community & the world?

(Not examples)-- How can we get more people to come to our church? What can we do about....?

III. Closing Business (1/8th of meeting)

Summary of what we heard

Invitation to sign up to become more involved with Micah 6:8 ministries

Closing Prayer

LISTENING POST SUMMARY

This summary should be prepared at the close of the meeting and shared with the Listening Post organizer(s). The report may be used to do follow up meetings regarding the issues identified and also as a way to identify potential leaders or people with a passion/deep interest in particular topics/issues.

Organizers and facilitators should meet, if possible, immediately after the completion of the listening posts to consolidate information and to identify next steps and assign follow up tasks.

Meeting Date: Congregation/Home/Town

Leader: Return form to:

Host Name(s) with Phone #:

General/overall reactions and most common issues identified by participants. Identify which participants were most interested in each of the major issues.

Issue

Persons Interested

2.) What interesting stories/experiences/creative ideas were shared and by whom?

3.) Who at the meeting seemed interesting, seemed to have energy for the organizing effort in general or some issues in particular? (Indicate issues when appropriate)

4.) Other comments about meeting. (Use additional sheet as needed)

A Sample Listening Post Experience, Annotated for Leaders for 75 minute session (TRAINING)

Included is a description of the facilitator's role, the ground rules and suggested question formats.

1. Welcome, Overview, Reflections, Ground Rules (10 minutes total)

OVERVIEW

The Listening Post meeting provides a safe and open opportunity for participants to share stories that are based on their experience of a particular concern or pressure present in their community. Planners for the Listening Post prepare a question (or two) that invites those in the meeting to talk and listen to each other respectfully and intentionally.

OPENING REFLECTION -- select a Biblical passage appropriate & include a prayer (1 minute)

EXPLAIN GROUND RULES (3 minutes) -shared by the facilitator as the small group session begins

- Everyone is asked to be respectful of the opinions and ideas of others.
- Disagreement, as long as it is respectful, is welcome in these conversations.
- Tonight we are not trying to solve problems, so please refrain from offering advice or solutions.
- Everyone's thoughts are welcome and we have limited time, so each person should limit their initial comments during the introductions to 30 seconds.
- Your facilitator asks your permission to interrupt in order to ensure that everyone speaks, so that we can keep the meeting on time and focused on the agenda. Do you give your permission for this?

2. Rounds/introductions (4 minutes)

Pass the sign-in sheet, begin the Rounds, modeling the type of answer sought: Ask each person to briefly (30 seconds) give their name and their position/experience in the congregation or community.

3. Stories and Discussion - (40 minutes total for one – three questions)

Facilitators lead a process helping everyone have the opportunity to participate. State the question and seek out people's answers. It is helpful to have the facilitator model a response by sharing their own story related to the question. The facilitator's role is to keep people focused on the question at hand, not getting too deep in the weeds about issues. Probe for stories and examples that clarify what is happening in the congregation around the concerns pointed to in the question(s). Create an environment where participants feel free to open up, ask questions and build connections with one another. Facilitate and guide a meaningful conversation among participants. Look for common themes that emerge as the conversation goes on.

GENERAL QUESTION ONE (about 15 minutes)

Tell us in about two minutes: What are the ways you are connected to serving the needs of others in the community? Tell us a brief story or give an example that will help us understand how this activity is working now.

GENERAL QUESTION TWO (about 15 minutes)

Tell us in about two minutes: What are concerns that you feel your congregation has about areas of ministry that they are not currently involved in? Tell us briefly what questions or challenges congregation members may raise.

After about 25-30 minutes of stories and discussion, the leader and note taker briefly review and summarize with the group the main themes they have discussed in the meeting.

So, from our shared stories and discussion, it sounds to me like the most common ministry(s) congregations are invested in are:

The most common concern we shared:

Are these accurate? We'll be sharing a summary with the other planners of this Listening Post and use this as a resource to identify potential common areas to explore further.

SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT A CURRENT MINISTRY/COMMUNITY FOCUS

(10 minutes)

This is an opportunity to provide information about a specific area of activity already underway related to the topics that prompted the Listening Post meeting. An example: Micah6:8 ministries of the Nebraska Synod developed a brochure highlighting key areas of focus related to gender issues, immigration, global accompaniment, and world hunger.

4. Closing prayer & final business (10 minutes)

Thank you for participating. This conversation is a valuable resource for our community that can lead to positive change. I will pass around the sign in sheet again. Please now note on the sheet any areas that you would like to get more involved in as we move ahead.

The Listening Post sign in sheet was designed as an excel page. I didn't copy that into this document. May be a better way to do that: Key information: Name, Home address, email & phone contact, areas of interest expressed-congregation.

It is important as a way to track participants and for leaders to do follow up contacts.



