

Group Leader Instructions

Note: While we are trying to have consistency among all the groups, each group has the flexibility to adapt. In adapting, please maintain the spirit of this process. This whole process is designed to take 2 ½ hours.

Sharing the Meal (45 minutes)

- After getting dishes organized, and settling in, gather around the table.
- Invite someone to say grace over meal.
- Enjoy fellowship over the meal, being mindful of the *Practices*. If conversation starts to go off the rails, remind people of the *Practices*—we are here to practice a new way of talking with one another.

Conversation about Things That Matter (1 hour 15 minutes)

- Transition to the **Conversation** for the gathering.
- Read the *Baptismal Vows* together, and read the *Practices for Talking about Things That Matter* by passing the sheet around and having everyone read one.
- Invite people to share a story around the *Conversation Prompt* for the gathering.
- **Each person may take up to 5 minutes.** You don't have to use the whole 5 minutes, but we don't want people taking longer than 5 minutes.
- **Use the 5-minute sand timer to track time** for each person. You have two sand timers so that you always have one ready to start. Invite everyone to be mindful of the sand timer when they are speaking.
- Read the *Conversation Prompt* for the gathering.
- Remind people that we will simply be **listening to the stories without responding to them, not even clarifying questions.** We are trying to practice the skill of simply listening without reacting, positively or negatively.
- Tell the group that **after each person, we will hold a space of silence**, maybe 30 seconds or so, before moving on to the next person. The Leader may introduce the silence each time by saying, *“Let's hold some silence.”* Remind the group that someone may share something that brings forth a lot of emotion. In this case, holding this sacred silence with someone in pain *is* a response of profound empathy. We will honor the depth of emotion shared, not with our words, but with our attentive presence. While we cannot fix or resolve the pain another feels, attentive silence *is* the Word-made-flesh in our presence; we embody the presence of God and bearing witness to that presence with one another is powerful.
- At the end of the silence, **the Leader may signal it's time for the next person to share** by saying, *“As the Spirit moves...”* Your group may take turns by going in a circle, or individuals may speak as they feel moved to speak, in which case the Leader will have to track who has spoken and who has not. You may use the sand timer as a talking stick with the person desiring to speak reaching forward and starting the timer anew.
- **After everyone has spoken**, and after observing 30 seconds of silence after the last person, **invite the group to consider** this question for 15 minutes: *What themes did we hear?* Remind people to stay grounded in the *Practices for Talking About Things That Matter* and *not* to move into giving advice or feedback.
- After 15 minutes of conversation, move to **Noonday Prayer** or **Compline**

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Praying Together (15 minutes)

- Pray **Noonday Prayer** or **Compline** together. The Leader plays the role of the *Officiant*, and the others respond as *People*.

Getting Organized for Future Gatherings (15 minutes)

- **Take the last 15 minutes and get organized for the future gatherings.**
- Pick dates for future months.
- Pick a Host. The group may stay in this house, or move to another home. The Host is responsible for:
 - providing water, tea, lemonade, or coffee
 - emailing the group the week before the meeting as a reminder of the meeting and who is bringing what, as well as giving directions to their house
- Pick a Leader.
- Have people sign up for dishes.

Saying Goodbye

- Remind people that we have just lived out the first baptismal vow: *Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?*
- Look forward to next time!