

INFLUENCES ON MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: TELLING MY STORY

PURPOSE

To reflect on and share the sources and values of our own religious tradition or spiritual path, and to increase our awareness of the diversity and richness of that path.

To practice extending to one another a respectful, open ear and holding authentic conversations, as well as to increase our understanding and trust and build relationships.

PROCESS

1. Introduce the Session: Start with a brief dialogue session.

- How can we listen so that others can speak about their religious identity without fear or defensiveness?
- How can we speak about our own teachings and practices so that others do not feel we are trying to convert them?
- How can we remain centered in our beliefs while listening to others who are centered in theirs?
- What are some of the risks and difficulties that the group can identify?
- What principles of interaction would the group like to adopt to make this exercise comfortable for everyone? (See Section Two.)

2. Materials needed: Large sheets of newsprint or other paper, markers, paints, crayons or other art supplies; paper and pens for writing; easels, chart paper, and markers for capturing key points of small group or large group discussion

3. Allow quiet time and working space for participants to draw or write the answers to some of following questions of their choosing before they are shared with the full chapter in group dialogue:

- Visualize the spiritual story of your life as a river or another image that appeals to you (perhaps as a mountain, a road, a journey, a tree, or other image).
- What were its beginnings? What sources nurtured you along the path or fed its roots (e.g., teachers, parents, spiritual mentors, community experiences)?
- Have you followed a single path, or have there been multiple branches? Has it changed course?
- Has it been smooth or perhaps bumpy or turbulent? What difficult places have needed to be cut through or crossed over? Describe the easy and hard places, dams or rockslides, still places, steep or rushing times, floods, droughts, turbulence, warmth, or coldness.

- How large is the river? Is it narrow or wide? Is it deep or shallow?
- What is the river's relationship to its surroundings? Is it solitary or in company? Who are or have been companions and co-travelers along the way?
- What is happening for you right now in your story? What changes or growing edges? New intentions? Sketch in or describe a possible future.
- Looking back over your spiritual journey, what values did you keep or change over time? Can you identify one value that has been close to you the entire journey?

DEBRIEF

After each person has had time to reflect and answer the questions (30 minutes), ask everyone to regroup and to share their own river story. This is done by sharing their river and the answers to the aforementioned questions