

OTHER THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

PURPOSE

Introduce ANY ONE of these themes for dialogue

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

- To understand the role/impact of that theme in our lives
- To expose participants to the different understandings of practice and belief
- To reinforce the significance of personal narratives to identity formation, to strengthen one's personal identity, sense of belonging to a community, and to focus on mutual commonalities and shared values

PROCESS

Welcome by co-leaders and host Welcome /Introduction, sharing of good and welfare, purpose is to discuss the significance of interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism

- Explain the theme and how everyone is entitled to their own opinion
- Reinforce our goal of learning from each other and expanding our horizons. In listening to and taking in the story of another we are participating in an act of compassion.

CHOOSE ANY ONE TOPIC:

1. Discovery of the sacred/divine/formless/God/enlightenment/superior power How and where do you encounter the sacred/divine/formless/God? What sorts of experiences have you discovered to be part of this journey of encounter? Do you experience a call or movement to or yearning for intimacy with "God" or with the someone or some entity beyond ordinary human experience? In light of this, are you called to a specific spiritual path?

2. Prophets/sages/ancestors/saints Are such persons important in guiding you toward becoming who you are called to be? Do any such persons within the religious tradition offer inspiration for living life, care for the world, creating relationships of justice, peace? How do you relate to these prophets/sages/ancestors or spirits?

3. Revelation

What is the role, if any, of revelation in the embrace of your religious tradition? What are, for you, the main beliefs in your religious tradition? What do you experience as the basis for your beliefs? Are there intermediaries for revelation and for the interpretation of revelation?

4. Meaning of human life

What is the "creation story" – the story of how the world and all life began – in your religious

tradition? What does this story say to you about the meaning of human life? What does it say about how human life is to be lived? What is it that you sense humans hope for? What limitations do you find humans face as they strive/journey to attain that for which they hope?

5. Writings/oral traditions

What are the main scriptures or texts spoken of in your religious tradition? What importance do they have in your life? What is your ongoing relationship to the writings and oral traditions? How have your interpretations of these writings and oral traditions changed or matured over time?

6. Wrongdoing

What is your understanding of wrongdoing? If sin is a concept in your religious tradition, share your own understanding of it. What do you believe wrongdoing or sin is in relation to God/the sacred...? How do you see wrongdoing or sin in relation to yourself or others? How do you understand sin in relation to societal realities? How is one forgiven in light of sin or evil for which one is responsible?

7. Full life cycle-spend EACH MEETING ON ONE LIFE CYCLE COMPONENT: Pregnancy, Birth, Preschool, Commitment Ceremonies, Puberty, Engagement, Marriage, Divorce, OR Death What is the significance of each (XXX-for example pregnancy) for you as a member of your religious tradition? What specific practices/rituals do you follow? What is the meaning/background behind these practices/rituals? How do you participate in this? How did you learn of these practices?

8. Hope

What in your religious tradition gives and sustains your hope in the face of personal loss, oppression or rejection? And in the midst of chaos and evil in the world? To whom or what do you turn when you are overwhelmed? As a member of your religious tradition, what do you see as positive or hopeful in the world? How is the acknowledgement of a transcendent reality (sacred/divine/formless/God/superior power) related to movement toward a better situation for all people and all creation?

9. Role in the world

What is your experience of the world? What is your analysis of the state of the world in the light of your experience? What is your personal response to your experience and analysis? Do you believe that the actions of individuals matter? How do you regard the most vulnerable persons in your society and throughout the world? What is your relationship with them? How do you hope to ultimately attain salvation/paradise/enlightenment/nirvana...? What does your religious tradition promise you? What further personal growth do you hope for?

10. Community and relationships

With whom do you share community? What religious beliefs and/or practices contribute to the formation and sustaining of your community? Do you see your religious group as community? In

what sense? When differences or splits occur in your community or among communities, how are they reconciled? Do you see your community as separate from the world or as part of the whole? How do you perceive your religious community in relation to communities of other religions?

11. Structure and leadership in the faith/religious community

How is your community of believers organized? What and who “holds together the experience” of the people of your religious tradition as community and as a faith tradition (i.e. holding common beliefs, worship traditions, et cetera.) Who exercises power? What kind of power do they have? What is your role in your faith community? What is the significance of your role?