



GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEEK DIALOGUE

These are suggested guidelines for dialogues in your local community. Each community is different, with different personalities and issues of concern, so these guidelines are adaptable to meet their particular circumstances.

THE DIALOGUE

One day, or even an afternoon or evening, may be selected during the Week. Those participating an actual dialogue may include members of the religious, political, academic, arts and business communities, and it is especially important to include youth. A dialogue could be made up of one panel presentation or several panels presenting different topics. It is suggested that the panels be no longer than 1½-2 hours with interaction between the panel and the audience. A moderator is essential to keep the program moving. If possible, try to avoid presenters reading long dissertations -- a short introduction with exchanges between the panel members, and then the audience, works well. We have attended a very powerful dialogue where 20-25 people sat in a circle, sharing their thoughts on how they can contribute to the culture of peace.

TOPICS FOR THE DIALOGUE

Following are suggested topics for Dialogue. No one community will have all of these forums or panels, and the topics can be modified to so that they are suitable for the expected audience:

- 1) Common Values. What are the values and ethical foundations that are common to all religions? For example, love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom are values that encompass the foundation of religions throughout the world. A discussion may encompass how these values, as well as history, beliefs and practices, be understood and appreciated by others while at the same time respecting the integrity of each religious tradition.
- 2) Everyday Religious Practices. Participants can speak about the prayers, ceremonies, rituals, and special celebrations that are part of their religious traditions.
- 3) Young Adults. Involving young people is an important part of the Week of Dialogue.
- 4) Global Ethics and Good Governance. How ethical and moral foundations and a more values based system can contribute to the modern institutions of government.

5) Religious Responses to Violence. Religions in many parts of the world are subjected to structural and physical violence. What strategies can be developed to transform structures of violence into structures of sustainability and peace.

6) Peace Education. The structures of peace education already exist -- how can they be strengthened and programs of peace education be initiated.

7) Community Partnership Building. A critical aspect of this process is to work toward implementing community activities that build on the experiences gained in Dialogue. Working together in community projects and engaging in community service activities together is an excellent way to bridge the misunderstandings that exist between religious communities and at the same time offering service to the community.

8) How can we better live together as part of the human community? Our world has become "smaller", with an interdependence that requires cooperation. The problems confronting the world are too great for each religious community to work in isolation. What are the joint approaches and common actions religious communities can take in such matters as the environment, social services, and human rights.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Courtesy and respect – a Dialogue is not a debate, it is an opportunity to listen and to share. The purpose of dialogue is not to raise unpleasant historical episodes. It is a platform on which people can freely meet to get to know each other, providing a forum to celebrate and honor the diversity of our understandings and beliefs. The dialogues are an opportunity to examine the common foundations that define our underlying unity.



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