

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS FOR CONDUCTING GO SPEAK: RECONCILIATION EDITION

If you are looking for more guidance on a range of issues that you may encounter in conducting Go Speak groups, find below:

- Some suggestions for organizing a number of groups in your congregation.
- A detailed explanation of and suggestions for holding silence during the storytelling.
- What to do if something out of the ordinary happens.

ASSIGNING AND CREATING GROUPS FOR GO SPEAK

How should I create groups for Go Speak?

When creating groups for Go Speak, several approaches can work.

- *Geographical groupings:* The benefit to this approach is that you might create intergenerational groups of people who live near one another. They may also develop new relationships with neighbors after hearing one another's stories.
- *Groups that are already constituted:* This approach can help deepen the relationships of people who share a common interest at your congregation. They may also have a set meeting time. It could create greater commitment to participate if they can take advantage of such a time.
- *Generational groups:* There can be an advantage to thinking about creating groups by generation. Talk with your clergy about this possibility—they will know whether this is the best approach for your congregation. Think carefully about intergenerational groups, too.
- *Mix newcomers with established members of your church community:* This approach can help incorporate new people and give them insight to the community and increase their sense of belonging.

Who can participate?

- This activity of sharing our faith is appropriate for all adults and mature teens, approximately 15 and over. Use your discretion when including teens in groups with adults.
- Another possibility is for youth groups to follow this process. The questions have been vetted and are completely appropriate for this type of gathering.
- This process is not conducive for a much younger group. If people who are participating have younger children, consider offering childcare.

Should we invite our clergy to participate?

By all means! We all have faith stories to tell and in this, we are all equal. We encourage you to invite your clergy to be part of this effort.

What about locations? Are there other suggested places beside homes?

Indeed. Feel free to have groups meet at your church, or a meeting room at a convenient business—e.g., at a Starbuck's or local restaurant. **There is one important consideration:** If you are meeting at your church, be sure to separate groups from one another so there are no distractions from other groups. If you are meeting at a public place, find one that has an enclosed meeting room that can be reserved. Above all, it is essential that each group feel safe to share their stories without someone outside the group overhearing them.

EXPLANATION OF AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HOLDING SILENCE WITH *GO SPEAK!*

Why is there an emphasis on silence?

First, sharing faith is an opportunity to *tell our stories* of God in our lives; it is *not* a conversation or a prepared speech. In order to create a safe space for storytelling, we need silence. It is truly a gift to one another to let *a* story be *the* story without comment or interruption. Silence gives the time and space for the storyteller to think and offers a sense that our story is not only heard but is really listened to.

Why is silence so important?

Go Speak! Sharing our Faith is a storytelling experience. We each have our own stories to tell of how God is active and present in our lives. Thus, listening is as much a part of this experience as speaking—as Bishop Anne wrote recently, “the even bigger blessing will be hearing someone else’s story. You never know; the story you share may be the story someone else most needs to hear!” Silence before, during and after a story is told ensures that it is heard and savored.

How do I set expectations about “holding the silence”?

- Talk about silence at the beginning. Give reasons why it is important. (See above question.)
- Remind people that in our ordinary interactions we do not have much silence and, thus, we tend to feel uncomfortable with it.
- Tell people that by experiencing the gift that silence can be, many people will develop a comfort level with it and be able to use it in other situations.

What are some things we might do to facilitate holding the silence?

- While there are few rules in this experience of sharing faith, holding the silence before, during and after a story is told is the primary one.
- One way to facilitate the silence is to ask the person who is telling their story to, in effect, control it. Once the cards are in their hands and until after they tell their story, they determine the amount of silence that feel right to them. When the storyteller has finished their story and allowed for some silence, they can say “Amen,” and then the next person selects a card and tells their story.

Our experience is that the silence unfolds naturally. As the storytelling continues, most people become more comfortable with it.

WHAT IF SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY HAPPENS? HOW DO I HANDLE IT?

What if someone wants to tell a story that goes on more than 5 minutes?

At the beginning, the group can agree the amount of time each person has to speak. Remind everyone that by doing this, you are respecting each person's story equally.

What if someone does not want to participate?

First, every person will select their own card. This ensures that each person decides what story to share. No one else can tell another's story. If a person decides they cannot tell a story at that moment, they can pass until later in the round. Once they hear others' stories they may feel more comfortable and be willing to tell one of their own. If this is still not the case and they continue to be reluctant, let it go.

What if someone tells a story and there is a need for pastoral follow up?

Do not interrupt or comment on the story when the person is finished. Let the story be told like all others.

*Do not try to respond to their situation. Similar to holding the silence, the person gives voice to their own story, and it is their responsibility to decide how to proceed to address the situation. **If the story includes any kind of misconduct within the church, give them the phone number for the Pastoral Response Team listed below.***

What if a teenager under 18 tells a story that includes an incident of physical or mental abuse?

We are required by law to report any occasions of physical or mental abuse of a minor child. You must make it clear in a group that includes teenagers that you are required to report any story of this nature.

If you have any question about this reporting requirement, please contact the *Pastoral Response Team* at 1 (877) 332-3394 and leave a message. Your call will be returned within 24 hours.