

# COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING

## FACILITATOR GUIDE

### **Introduction: What you will find in this guide**

- Formation Objectives/Learning Goals
- Community Agreements/Norms for Group Conversation
- About Facilitating: Preparation and Session Tips
- Appendix
  - Sample copy for Newsletter or Social Media
  - Additional Resources

### **Formation Objectives/Learning Goals**

- To review and become fluent in the work of Episcopal Relief & Development's mission and vision regarding the four priorities
- To consider, with other community members, faithful ways to participate in the work of healing a hurting world
- To practice compassion and solidarity, in witness to our global neighbors' realities

### **Community Agreements**

The following group conversation norms help to facilitate a safe environment for people to process their thoughts and feelings, together:

- Speak your truth, respecting other people's truths
- Share openly only what is comfortable and appropriate
- Feel free to remain silent or say, "I pass"
- Speak briefly and to the point; give others a chance, too
- Speak from your own perspective using "I-statements"
- Pay attention to the impact of your words; speak responsibly
- Pay attention to your own reactions and responses
- Notice when judgmental or defensive feelings arise
- Avoid interrupting, crosstalk, or side talk
- Be willing to be surprised and to try on new ideas
- Maintain confidentiality

## About Facilitating: Preparation & Session Tips

### Before the session:

- Browse the Episcopal Relief & Development website, noticing priorities, demographics, and personal stories. (Detailed descriptions of the three priorities are found under *What We Do* on the home page. Disaster response and resilience is found under *Integrated Approach*.)
- Familiarize yourself with the overall scope of the organization as well, so that when presenting the four areas of priority, you have a sense of how they fit together.
- Send out reminders a few days before the session, and again on the day of the meeting. Include clear instructions for when and how to meet. (For online sessions, copy and paste the invitation link into the email.)
- Invite participants to download and print the slide handout for personal note-taking in the session reminder email. You can drop the link into the chat, at the start of online sessions, as well.  
**There are four PowerPoint presentations that are also saved as separate PDFs**
- Review the slides for each session and become familiar with the discussion material. (Remember: You are not expected to be the expert in the room, only to be conversant with the material covered, so that you can facilitate conversation skillfully.)
- Test the links. If you are facilitating online, practice sharing your screen. If at church or in someone's home, you will need a slide projector connected to your computer.
- Slides with specific prayers and reflection questions (for youth and adults) are included in each session. Select the slides that relate to your Community of Learning.
- Pray for your small group and for each individual before each session.

### At the session:

- Arrive at sessions at least 15 minutes prior to the event, whether online or onsite.
- Arrange a circle of chairs and set out candle, handouts, pens, and nametags for onsite sessions. (If online, post the handout and an invitation to light a candle at home in the chat.)
- Begin and end in prayer, as directed in the slide deck.
- Allow for silence and spaciousness in the conversation. You might say something like, "We're going to take a minute of silence to think about the question, and then we'll share."
- Pay attention to who is speaking and who has yet to speak, noticing non-verbal cues as well. If you notice that one person has spoken often, you can open out the conversation by asking questions like, "Is there someone who hasn't had the chance to share yet?" "Who else would like to contribute?" (Ask questions to keep the conversation going or allow space for silence, as needed.)
- Try to balance the conversation between head and heart, asking questions like, "Is there a spiritual dimension of this new learning for you?"
- Watch the time: Be mindful of the time allotted for discussion; you might give 5-minute warnings between activities.
- Claim your authority to gently redirect the group to the community agreements, when needed.
- Remember: The greater goal of small group work is to build relationships with others and with God.
- Get the conversation going then step back to observe, enter and direct the conversation, when necessary while keeping time.

## Appendix

### Sample Copy for a newsletter/social media

This 4-session curriculum is intended for small group gatherings, online or onsite. The objective is to help participants to grow in awareness of and desire to serve the populations and priorities aligned with the mission priorities of Episcopal Relief & Development. Children, Women, Climate and Disaster Response and Resilience. As a faith formation curriculum, it offers group support and invites participants to grow in imagination and empathy, while applying new learnings in daily living.

### Additional Resources

Invite participants to deepen their learning at sites such as these:

<https://www.artsy.net/>

<https://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/>

<https://www.youtube.com>

<https://www.ted.com/talks>

<https://ecva.org/>

<https://pickmeuppoetry.org/>

<https://allpoetry.com/>