Politics in Church?

Overview

In Living Room Conversations, a small group of people (e.g. 4-7) come together to get to know one another in a more meaningful way. Guided by a simple and sociable format, participants practice being open and curious about all perspectives, with a focus on learning from one another, rather than trying to debate the topic at hand.

The Living Room Conversation Ground Rules

Be Curious and Open to Learning

Listen to and be open to hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration and learning. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking.

Show Respect and Suspend Judgment

Human beings tend to judge one another, do your best not to. Setting judgments aside will better enable you to learn from others and help them feel respected and appreciated.

Look for Common Ground and Appreciate Differences

In this conversation, we look for what we agree on and simply appreciate that we will disagree on some beliefs and opinions.

Be Authentic and Welcome that from Others

Share what's important to you. Speak authentically from your personal and heartfelt experience. Be considerate to others who are doing the same.

Be Purposeful and to the Point

Notice if what you are conveying is or is not "on purpose" to the question at hand. Notice if you are making the same point more than once.

Own and Guide the Conversation

Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation by noticing what's happening and actively support getting yourself and others back "on purpose" when needed.

Though feedback is consistently positive, some people are concerned about managing people that dominate the conversation as well as off-topic, or disruptive situations during the Living Room Conversation. We offer these tips:

- Everyone shares responsibility for guiding the conversation and is invited to help keep the conversation on track.
- The group can decide to keep track of time in some way to help people remember to keep their comments similar in length to others. Soft music when the time is up is a great reminder.
- If an area of interest has arisen that has taken the group off topic, ask the group if they would like to set aside the new topic for a separate Living Room Conversation.
- If someone is dominating, disruptive or has found their soapbox, respectfully interrupt the situation, refer to the Ground Rules and invite everyone to get back on track with the current question
- If the group opts to shift from the format of the Living Room Conversations, please provide us with feedback for future learning. There are many ways to have a great conversation! Thank you! feedback@livingroomconversations.org

Living Room Conversations is an open source project. Please use, share and modify with attribution to www.LivingRoomConversations.org

Rounds/Questions: The Living Room Conversation Starts Here
Politics in Church

The First Amendment of our Constitution states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…" Under the Internal Revenue Code, 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. In light of this amendment and regulation, and in the context of the political division in our country, how do we conduct ourselves as people of the Gospel who are also responsible citizens?

Round One: Getting Started / Why Are We Here?

- What interested you or drew you to this conversation?

Round Two: Core Values

Answer one or more of the following:

- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?
- What would your best friend say about who you are and what makes you "tick"?
- What are your hopes and concerns for your community and/or the country?

Round Three: What are your biggest concerns about Politics in Church?

Remember that the goal of this Living Room Conversation is for each participant to listen to and learn about the different opinions within the group to see where you might share interests, intentions and goals. Answer one or more of the following questions:

- What does separation of Church and State mean to you on Sunday morning?
- How and where do you want to talk about the pressing issues of our communities and country?
- What does "political" mean to you?
- What does "social justice" mean to you?
- What church experience affirms your faith and helps you live into our Baptismal Covenant promises in your daily life?
- Has there been a time when you've seen merit in a position you disagree with?

Round Four: Reflection

Answer one or more of the following questions:

- In one sentence, share what was most meaningful / valuable to you in the experience of this Living Room Conversation.
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on this topic?
- Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?

Round Five: Accomplishment and Next Steps

Answer both of the following questions:

- What is one important thing you thought was accomplished here?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing – Thank you! Please complete the feedback form to help improve Living Room Conversations.

Living Room Conversations is an open source project. Please use, share and modify with attribution to www.LivingRoomConversations.org

LivingRoom Conversations

Host & Participant Feedback Form
Please complete following the form, AND TAKE PICTURES OF YOUR GROUP!

Turn into your host or take pictures and email them to feedback@livingroomconversations.org

Host, Location & Topic:

_____

1. Before it took place, how did you feel about this conversation? (check all that apply) ❑ Nervous ❑ Not worried at all ❑ Excited	**3. Did you learn or become aware of something valuable during the conversation?** ❑ Yes ❑ No
2. How do you feel now that the conversation is over? (check all that apply) ❑ My fears were confirmed ❑ I am relieved it's over ❑ It was more enjoyable than I expected ❑ I was grateful to be a part of it ❑ I really enjoyed the conversation	**4. How do you feel about these kinds of conversations in the future?** ❑ I want to co-host with my friends. ❑ I would enjoy doing another in the future. ❑ I would enjoy getting involved in lots of them. ❑ I would rather not have these kinds of conversations again.

5. Which of the following statements apply to your relationship with other participants after the conversation? (Check all statements that apply)

☐ I feel closer and more connected to them	☐ I feel more distance between us
☐ I know them more personally	☐ I don't know them any better
☐ I like them more	☐ I like them less
☐ I see more goodness in them than before	☐ I don't see any more goodness than I did before
☐ I see more common ground now	☐ I see less common ground now
☐ I understand where they are coming from more	☐ I am more confused at where they are coming from

Comments _____

Thank you for helping us learn about how the Living Room Conversation process worked for you! If you have any further feedback or a quote we can use, please write them on the back side or send us a note at info@LivingRoomConversations.org

We are conducting research on the impact of Living Room Conversations. May we contact you for more information?

Name _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

❑ Yes! Keep me updated on Living Room Conversations. We will only send you email updates if you check the box.
❑ You have permission to use my photo in materials for Living Room Conversations.
❑ You may share my email with CivilPolitics.org so I can participate in an online survey about my experience here.

Living Room Conversations is an open source project. Please use, share and modify with attribution to www.LivingRoomConversations.org

Privacy statement: Your contact information, including name, email and phone number will be used only for the purpose of gathering your feedback, unless boxes are checked above to receive additional communication.

Living Room Conversations is an open source project. Please use, share and modify with attribution to www.LivingRoomConversations.org