



<https://livingroomconversations.org/>

*Living Room Conversations connects people within communities and across differences through dialogue to build trust and understanding.*

This website contains information and guidance designed for engaging conversations. Here is a selected list of topics to build trust in elections and each other:

- Listening Courageously
- Anxiety & the Election
- Polarization
- Politically Correct and Healthy Communication
- Trust in Elections
- Does My Vote Really Matter?
- Faith in Politics
- The Golden Rule in Politics
- Politics: Can We Talk?
- The Politics of Immigration: Laws & Human Dignity
- Political Peace Building

EXAMPLE: Attached is the facilitator guide for the “Listening Courageously” ZOOM Discussion Event as adapted by St. Bart’s Peace & Justice Ministry and Incarnation Lutheran Church Love Committee.

St. Bart's Peace & Justice Ministry and Incarnation Lutheran Church Love Committee Present

## **“Listening Courageously” ZOOM Discussion Event Bridging Issues that Divide Us Wednesday, August 25, 2021**

### **Welcome from Facilitators:** (5 minutes)

Thoughts: Collaborative community event; a conversation rather than a debate or even a discussion; envisioned as continuation of several such conversations into deepening discussion over time.

### **Opening Prayer:**

**Introductions:** Why We're Here (~10 minutes) Each participant has 30 seconds to introduce themselves.

~ Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

**Conversation Agreements:** How We'll Engage (~5 minutes) These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.**
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.**
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.**
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.**
- **Be purposeful and to the point.**
- **Own and guide the conversation.**
- **Turn to wonder - wonder why someone said something**
- **Hold grace for yourself and each other.**
- **Keep Confidentiality. Other people's stories are not yours to share.**

**Question Rounds:** What We'll Talk About Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

**Round One:** Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min) Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

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

**Round Two:** Exploring the Topic -- Listening Courageously (~40 min) Facilitator reads the following:

“Courage is the most important of all virtues, because without courage you cannot practice any of the other virtues consistently,” Dr. Maya Angelou said. When you think of being courageous, you might think of facing a common fear like the fear of heights or public speaking. Facing fears like these involves discomfort and uncertainty. We might wonder if the potential benefits will outweigh the potential risks. But why might it take courage to listen? How might listening to different points of view make us feel vulnerable or at risk? And what are the possible benefits?

We will send you into breakout rooms. In your breakout room, each person can take ~2 minutes each to answer one of the following questions without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- What does “courageous listening” mean for you? Describe any times you have listened or been listened to in this way. What happened?
- What fears, if any, do you have about how you will feel or what you will say or do when listening to people whose beliefs or experiences differ from your own?
- How do you feel when there are silence and gaps in conversations? What are the potential benefits of giving a conversation breathing room?
- What are the potential benefits you might receive from listening to others with differing beliefs or experiences?
- What, if anything, are you willing to do to overcome fears about listening to those with different beliefs or experiences?

**Round Three:** Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min) We’d like to know from your perspective why you think others might want to join us in these conversations. So, if you’re willing, we invite you to use the chat to share your thoughts. We’d like to encourage more people to participate. Anything you put in the chat will be used anonymously.

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

**Closing** (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! Contact Jill or Nancy with your thoughts and suggestions.
- Sacred Ground will start toward the end of September – watch your email for more info about this.
- We are pursuing having another film discussion prior to the start of Sacred Ground. We will keep you posted.
- Join us for more conversations!