

Convening – This I Believe, How About You?

Saturday, March 13, 2021

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Standing Invitations

The Friday Fellowship practices convening skills grounded in commitments to curious inquiry, courageous dialogue, and creative responses to systemic challenges and injustices. Modeling and leading conversations that invite rest, reflection, reckoning, and relationship, Friday Fellows listen in as they learn forward together. This convening tool moves those gathered through an intentional process that remembers, first, the work of building relationships ready to hear, hold, and honor the work at hand.

Thank you for stepping into this convening with one another. Please read this full guide in advance and note adaptations made since Seminar One. As you find your way together, spend time exploring how you plan to move through these invitations. The floor is yours! *Practice makes possible.*

Session Specific Invitations

Step One: *Calling In*

As we return, let's go back for another: *Who are you shaping up to be today?* Consider naming what it means to hold this particular conversation. *How much time do you have? For what purpose?* By way of return, consider lifting up your answers to one or more of the following. Before you begin, consider whether you will move around the circle or invite Fellows to speak into the conversation when and as they are ready. Please hold space until everyone has called themselves in. Welcome, Fellows!

Who are you shaping up to be today?

What does "here" feel like today? Is there a "there" on the horizon you remain curious about?

Step Two: *Centering*

When groups come together, especially those convened intentionally across lines of difference, hearing a shared invitation and holding space for quiet reverence sets a tone that carries. Please read your "This I Believe" essays/stories out loud to one another. After each person has shared, pause. Can you manage two or even three minutes of silence? *What might you hear in the spaces between each word?*

Step Three: *Core Values*

As you find your way back into conversation, will you meet this silence with the fullness of your own voice? It is time to call in the values you both bring to and anticipate from this convening. The list of P words has grown since we last met. It will keep growing, and you are always welcome to call in values not yet listed. As you call in a value that matters to you, consider its

meaning. What does this value mean to you? How is it present in your life and community? Please share how you hope this value will be present in this circle. (Note: This is a modified combination of Steps 3 & 4 from last seminar.) If someone claims your chosen word or value first, consider calling in the unexpected. *What needs to be named and claimed in order to proceed?*

Pacing matters	Perspective matters.	Practice matters.
Pain matters.	Personhood matters.	Pranayama matters.
Palpitation matters.	People matter.	Praxis matters.
Pandemic(s) matter(s)	Place matters.	Prayer matters.
Passion matters.	Play matters.	Presence matters.
Patience matters.	Pleasure matters.	Pretext matters.
Patterns matter.	Poets matter.	Process matters.
Participation matters.	Politics matters.	Promise matters.
Patriotism matters.	Pondering matters.	Prophets matter.
Pause matters.	Position matters.	Protest matters.
Peace matters.	Positionality matters.	Purpose matters.
Performance matters.	Possibility matters.	Pushing matters.
Permission matters.	Postage matters.	Remembrance matters.
	Potential matters.	Palpitation matters.
	Power matters.	

Step Four: *Conversing – This I Believe, How About You?*

With fellows called in, stillness centered, and values named and claimed, a conversation can proceed. Before you continue, take a look at the clock and balance the remaining time with the invitations that follow. *What will you take up together? What will hold to a later conversation?*

“The membrane between belief and disbelief is much thinner than we think.” (Susan Harding)

It’s time to keep meeting one another with hearts wide open. Life and leadership happen across all kinds of diving lines. Will you meet one another there? I believe we stand to benefit from courageous engagement with the many things we both share and the things (people and places, stories and systems, too) that separate us from one another. I believe that our foundations will grow with us. This afternoon’s paired conversations invite you to listen for both shared beliefs and the important places where your foundations diverge.

It could be that your stories already offer rich and ready examples of difference for you to consider. It might be that you need to excavate deeper to find a line at which difference is both palpable and powerful.

The invitation is to lean into a membrane (or a moment or a movement) where beliefs collide – yours, mine, ours. In the venn diagram of so many relationships (here, there, everywhere/self, story, and system/past, present, future) difference is always present but rarely welcomed as honored guest. See where you lead and land together.

What does it take to surface difference—on your own and with others? What kinds of difference or disagreement are you discerning in this pairing? How does difference serve and shape both belief and believer? What happens when your belief is someone else’s stumbling block or even millstone? How do you feel and act and respond when your gospel truths are not shared by others?

Step Five: *Clearness Check*

Convenings can deepen our awareness, challenge our knowing, and invite both individual and collective reckoning. As you begin wrapping up your conversations, pause. Can you quiet hearts and minds to reflect on what has been said and offered? Once you’ve held two or three minutes of silence, invite someone in your group to raise the following question. This is not a rhetorical flourish. Please hear, together, this cornerstone of our convening process.

Are we clear to close?

Being clear to close does *not* require consensus or completion. Instead, it signals a personal engagement with the fullness of a conversation. Often, convenings can bring up work we each have to do in our own lives. These learning and teachings are not reason to hold up a closing. Instead, if there are lingering questions that need to be asked or learning that needs to be named and deepened *with this group*, please take the time to honor unfinished business. If your group is not clear to close, sit with one another to name and honor what needs saying, hearing, and doing. You will not be able to step into substantive work at this time, but you might note if and when and how the conversation needs to continue.

Please hold space for everyone to find clearness before you pivot to closing.

Step Six: *Closing*

Much like a beginning or a return, a closing is its own work. *How will you exit this conversation together?* You might choose to end by speaking a gift or a learning into the circle. You might choose to lift up a question you will take with you. However you close, be sure to name and honor gratitude for time spent with intention and integrity.