

A Structural Framework For Dealing With Strongly Controversial Issues

Notes for Facilitators

2010-2011

Potential Timeframe for a Two-hour Hearing:

- 10 minutes for Welcome, Scripture, Prayer and Introduction
- 30 minutes of Questions for Conversation re: the statement
- 10 minutes for the facilitator to work with the group to summarize what has been said/the essence of what will be included on the reflection form
- 2-minute stay-at-your-seat break (ex., stand and sing a hymn together or 60-second stretch break followed by a 60 second time of silence and centering)
- 30 minutes of Questions for Conversation re: the query
- 10 minutes for the facilitator to work with the group to summarize what has been said/the essence of what will be included on the reflection form
- 2-minute stay-at-your-seat break (ex., stand and sing a hymn together or 60-second stretch break followed by a 60 second time of silence and centering)
- 15 minutes to consider how we can hold each other together as we acknowledge differing perspectives in the body
- 5 minutes for the closing

Guidelines for Facilitators of the Framework for Conversation

From Appendix B of *A Structural Framework for Dealing with Strongly Controversial Issues*

NOTE: The framework will work best in groups of no more than 12-15.

The facilitator's role consists of:

- A. Creating a conducive environment for good discussion
- B. Keeping the group on task, but with some flexibility
- C. Ensuring equal access to participation by all group members
- D. Guiding the discussion to make the best use of the time available
 - 1. Set a relaxed but focused tone for the discussion. Be clear about the purpose, spirit, and process of the meeting. Explain your role as discussion guide, not participant. (Discipline yourself to refrain from adding your own comments or expressions of agreement or disagreement with what is said.)
 - 2. Affirm participants as they take part—this encourages more participation by others. Don't let one or two persons dominate the discussion; specifically invite comments from persons who have not spoken much (“I'd like to hear from some of you who have not spoken yet”).
 - 3. Ask clarifying questions to help participants explain more fully what they are saying. Encourage participants to ask each other questions for clearer understanding. Restating or paraphrasing briefly after someone speaks can also be helpful in clarifying.
 - 4. When you are moving from one question to the next, summarize very briefly the comments or themes that emerged in discussing the questions you are just completing.
 - 5. When the conversation gets off the topic, bring it back to the question at hand.
 - 6. Encourage expression of all viewpoints present. Accept disagreement as normal and healthy rather than as threatening. Encourage mutual respect in the midst of disagreement.
 - 7. Keep track of the time and try to ensure that the group has a chance to talk about all of the questions.