Desert Southwest Annual Conference  
The Rev. Gina Gilland Campbell  
and The Desert Southwest Conference District Superintendents  

Listening with Love: A Conversation

Preparatory Prayer

Creator of love and life, as we prepare for our Church Conference we pray to you for wisdom, for a listening heart, for the flourishing of Christ’s holy church in this place, for the increase in our love for others in the name of Christ, and for the light of Christ to shine brightly in this local community to folks who may never enter our doors. This I pray with a humble heart. Amen and amen.

Arrival - As you arrive write on two or three post-it notes your responses to following prayer and place them somewhere around the candle/worship focus table. These will be used in the closing of the conversation. “Lord, what do you desire to do through ____ UMC in this time and this place?”

Welcome

Vote on Pastoral Compensation

Statement of Purpose and Introduction to the Process

Opening Worship

Lighting of the Christ Candle
Scripture Focus - The Great Commandment

Reader 1 from the Local Church - Mark 12:28-34 (NRSV)

One of the scribes came near and heard Jesus and the Sadducees disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, the scribe asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to Jesus, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to the scribe, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”
Our Baptismal Covenant

(Reader #1)
Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?

(Readers #2 & #3)
With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

Sacred Play – Spirit of the Living God with movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to the Song</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of the living God</td>
<td>Raise arms swirling them like fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall afresh on me</td>
<td>Hands down slowly with fingers wiggling slightly - hands/fingers turned toward self</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spirit of the Living God</td>
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<td>Fall afresh on me</td>
<td>Hands down slowly with fingers wiggling slightly - hands/fingers turned toward self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melt me</td>
<td>Bring both hands together in front of body, palms facing in, with a little space between them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mold me</td>
<td>Do a “molding” motion with hands, with space in between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill me</td>
<td>Bend knees and bend down slightly as hands reach up in a cupped position (looks like shape of a chalice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use me</td>
<td>Both arms/hands reach out in front of body and come down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of the Living God</td>
<td>Raise arms swirling them like fire</td>
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Directions for our Holy Conversations

- Each person will speak only once – and using very few words – until everyone has the opportunity to speak.
- We will reverence one another’s speech by holding a few moments of silence between speakers.
- We know that we will disagree. That does not mean we cannot remain in holy conversation with one another.
- We will use only statements that begin with “I”.
- We will speak only from our own hearts; not quoting from any source.
- If we refer to the Bible, we will say, “I believe the Bible says…”
- We will speak for the benefit of the body of Christ – in ways that profit the work of the entire body gathered in this place.
Conversations Around the Table
1. In what ways do I experience God at ______ UMC?
2. What of the ministry of Jesus Christ will go missing in our local community if _____UMC is no longer here?
3. What are the two most important things you pray that the people of _________ UMC will be known for this this community?

One Last Question
4. What 1% change in my own way of participating in the life of _____ UMC am I willing to make in order that we may flourish as a vibrant body of Christ?

Next Steps to Develop Your Congregational Statement of Identity
• Expand the experience we have shared together by sponsoring 2-3 listening sessions at different times and on different days of the week. Share the identity statement created at this session and invite dialogue. The goal is to have as many members/constituents of the church as possible participate in a session.
• For persons or groups who cannot attend one of the listening sessions and yet would like to offer comments, request a visit with the pastor or with a member of the leadership team. All members of the church leadership team will speak to 2-3 people in the community who are not church members and whom you do not know very well and ask the following question. “What does this community need that a community of faith might be able to provide?”
• All members will report back to the leadership group. Conversation should follow to articulate differences and similarities in the congregation’s own perception of their identity and what they discover in these conversations. Any differences in self-perception and community perception should receive due consideration for what the congregation might learn about their presence in the life of the greater community.
• The ultimate goal is to adopt a statement of identity for this congregation. If we know our identity, we will be able to make any decision we need to make in the future. Clarity will allow us to move forward in ministry and mission in the name of Jesus. Clarity and agreement about who we are will serve as a calming response to the anxiety any change in the structure of our denomination might raise.
• The statement should be presented to a church wide meeting open to all persons. Congregations may choose a hand count, a written ballot to be counted in everyone’s presence, or another manner agreed upon by the leadership team.

Closing Worship
Post-It Note Prayers

Closing Prayer

Benediction