

Contemplative Dialogue at the LCWR Assembly

Contemplative dialogue is a way of being together that opens us to perceiving the in-breaking of the Divine within a community. It offers a means of readying the ground for collective transformation.

Contemplative dialogue is a practice that engages us in seeing not only the whole, but seeing from the whole. It is the recognition of our interdependence and engages us in the good and sometimes hard work of opening ourselves to other ways of seeing than our usual patterns allow.

The main movement of contemplative dialogue is from I to We and back to I again – a continual flow engaging the personal and the collective. This movement from I to We is not about "group think" or about moving to consensus too quickly for the sake of coming to closure. The movement back to I again is so we are integrating what we have learned at a more personal level. Both the I and the We are changing and expanding in this back-and-forth exchange.

Some Simple Guides to Contemplative Dialogue

1. Do not take your own position or present thinking as final. The point is to arrive at what we do not yet know or to arrive at what we already know with added wisdom.
2. Speak briefly sharing your thinking/feeling at this point in time. The point is not to impose your thinking/feeling on others but rather to expose it for others to see.
3. Practice the discipline of really listening before formulating any response or moving to further reflection. As you listen, look at the person who is speaking.
4. Create bridges to another person's thinking/feeling so that the conversation itself models group conversation and not merely individual conversations by people occupying the same physical space.
5. Be comfortable with spaces and silence in the conversation.
6. Be aware of your own particular patterns that prevent deeper listening -e.g., a bias toward an idea or person speaking, a history with the present conversation.
7. Notice in your body when you sense a different kind of energy signaling that something is happening. Pay attention to that to discover its message.
8. Ask yourself, what is the discovery or meaning unfolding among us? What new possibility might be rising?
9. Christina Baldwin, in her resource, *The Circle Way*, suggests that we simply:
 - a. Listen with Attention -noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
 - b. Speak with Intention -respectful of the learning process for all members of the group
 - c. Contribute to the well-being of the circle –remaining aware of the impact of our contributions