

Facilitator Guidelines

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

We offer these suggestions to provide a safe and welcoming group in which you may explore the issues of faith and theology that emerge from the symposium on Radical Abundance: a theology of sustainability. Your group may wish to modify these suggestions in the light of its particular needs, experience and circumstances.

Create a group where everyone counts:

- Share your thoughts, feelings, experiences, and questions as openly as seems appropriate
- Speak briefly and to the point so that others may have an equal opportunity to offer their contributions
- Be free to remain silent and do not press others to speak if they are not willing or ready to do so
- Listen to others to understand their points of view and know them better as well as to clarify your own positions. Avoid trying to convince others that you are right.

Speak for yourself, not others. Some examples of “do’s” and “don’t’s” are:

- a. I think that... (not Christians believe...)*
- b. I feel, glad, sad, mad, scared (not Most people feel that...)*
- c. I wish that... (not Everyone wants...)*
- d. I notice that... (not It is obvious that...)*
- e. My practice is... (not All civilized people...)*

Maintain confidences:

- Keep to yourself who said what or reveal personal details contributed by others
- Feel free to share the topics that were discussed and their impact on you

Adapted from John M. de Beer, “Guidelines for Connect Groups.” 10/1/05

Facilitator Materials - Day 1

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

Wednesday January 21, 2008

5:30-6:30 pm (EST) / 4:30-5:30 pm (Central)

Purpose: This session, which takes place prior to the sermon by Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis, is the initial opportunity to meet others in our reflection group and establish group guidelines. It is a time to prepare to engage the topic of the Trinity Institute 39th National Theological Conference, Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability.

Goals:

- Meet our companions and begin building community
- Offer norms for our conversation so as to create a safe space
- Reflect on our experience of God's splendor in creation.

Plan: Total time 1 hour

3 Minutes: Welcome everyone and offer an opening prayer by Sr. Miriam MacGillis (see reverse)

10 Minutes: Ask persons to introduce themselves (name, home), and to name their expectations for this conference

10 Minutes: Review the schedule for the conference and set norms for the group's life

30 Minutes Total

Allow about 5 minutes of silence for each person to recall a spiritual experience or deeply meaningful experience of the natural world. The experience can be recent or from their past, from adulthood, adolescence or childhood. It can be a large-scale experience of something massive, or a subtle, quiet experience. Recall what it felt like, how it feels now in remembering it.

By mutual invitation, use the remaining 25 minutes for sharing and invite the group to relate these stories to one another.

5 Minutes: Summation – Name the common themes people have heard in these stories.

2 Minutes: Final questions

Go to the Opening Eucharist together.



Sr. Miriam MacGillis

Holy One. You of All Names and of No Name.

We come into this space and time with our minds and hearts and energies aligned with you and your desire for our precious planet of life.

Grant us the wisdom, the generosity of spirit, and the courage to gaze back at you through the vast revelations of yourself imprinted in the journey of your universe and in this tiny solar system which binds us to the single web of life brought forth in Earth. May we hold no vision smaller than this revelation as we place ourselves together to search for your Light in the midst of the darkness of these days. May we search for no wisdom or prosperity smaller than the unity, truth, beauty, and goodness in which the mystery of life has been granted to the single Earth Community.

Amen

Facilitator Materials - Day 2

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

Thursday January 22, 2009

11:00 am–12:15 pm (EST) / 10:00–11:15 am (Central)

Following the presentation by Timothy J. Gorringe

Purpose: In this session we have an opportunity as a community to engage with Timothy Gorringe's theological perspectives.

Goals

- Identify and discuss the implications of Gorringe's theology of the built environment.
- Offer our own ideas about a theology of the built environment.
- Consider what Gorringe's Trinitarian theology means for us and our communities.

Plan: One hour and fifteen minutes

10 Minutes: Gathering & opening prayer provided by Timothy Gorringe (see reverse)

Questions to consider

20 Minutes: What did you hear Timothy Gorringe say about how religious visions and values shape our relations with the natural and built environments?

20 Minutes: How does what you have heard challenge or affirm your own understanding of the interconnectedness of self, communities, and the global environment?

20 Minutes: What insights or connections to your own context have you gained from this presentation and conversation?

5 Minutes: Close

Timothy J. Gorringe

Confession

Leader O God, your fertile earth is slowly being stripped of its riches

All OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE

Leader O God, your living waters are slowly being choked with chemicals

All OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE

Leader O God, your clear air is slowly being filled with pollutants

All OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE

Leader God our maker, so move us by the wonder of creation

All THAT WE REPENT AND CARE MORE DEEPLY

Leader So move us to grieve the loss of life

All THAT WE LEARN TO CHERISH AND PROTECT YOUR WORLD

Prayer of gratitude and concern by one of the group

Leader This we know, the earth does not belong to us

All WE BELONG TO THE EARTH

Leader This we know, all things are connected

All LIKE THE BLOOD THAT UNITES ONE FAMILY

Leader This we know, we did not weave the web of life

All WE ARE MERELY A STRAND OF IT

Leader This we know, whatever we do to the web

All WE DO TO OURSELVES

Leader Let us give thanks for the gift of creation

ALL LET US GIVE THANKS THAT ALL THINGS
HOLD TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Blessing

Leader Bless to us, O God,

The moon that is above us,

The earth that is beneath us,

The friends who are around us,

Your image deep within us

ALL AMEN

– from the Iona Creation Liturgy, suggested by Timothy Gorringe



Facilitator Materials - Day 2

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

Thursday January 22, 2009

3:45-5:00 pm (EST) / 2:45-4:00 pm (Central)

Following the presentation by Néstor O. Míguez

Purpose: This session provides an opportunity to explore the theological positions of Néstor O. Míguez, who views creation as open and egalitarian and links the marginalization of people to the abuse of the planet.

Goals:

- Identify the significant elements of Míguez's analysis.
- Hold a thoughtful discussion of the implications of this analysis for the way we live in the global north.
- Name roles the church can play in leading society to address these issues.

Plan: 1 hour and fifteen minutes

10 Minutes: Gathering & opening with prayer provided by Néstor Míguez (see reverse)

Questions to consider:

20 Minutes: What do you identify as the most significant elements of the theological vision and analysis that Míguez articulates?

20 Minutes: Where have we seen economic systems treating people, their communities, and the environment solely as means instead of ends, exploiting people and the planet?

20 Minutes: What are some of the things churches can do to lead society to address these issues?

5 Minutes: Close – Do a lightning round asking:

What can we do as individuals?

Néstor O. Míguez

Megalópolis

Joao Dias de Araujo (Brasil)

Today, we live in large cities
Where there are thousands who must struggle
In the midst of sleeplessness and oppressive work
To earn their daily bread.

In immense cities that are growing
There are thousands without faith and love
Who need the grace of Christ
The vision of a better life.

In modern, noisy cities
There are millions eager for light
Many who know nothing
Of the redeeming power of Jesus.

In large modern cities
Where there is crime, money, dreams
As children of God we are set apart
For a signal of a new creation.

They grow, they grow, gigantic cities,
Skyscrapers that cover the sun
But in them shines forth the light
That, through Christ, comes to us from God.

English Translation: James P. Melchiorre

Facilitator Materials - Day 3

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

Friday January 23, 2009

10:45 am–12:00 pm (EST) / 9:45–11:00 am (Central)

Following the presentation by David C. Korten

Purpose: David C. Korten offers a critique of an economy that he sees as having failed environmentally, socially, and now financially. In addition to this well-defined critique he describes some of the features needed to create an environmentally and socially sustainable world. This session provides an opportunity to engage his critique and reflect on his vision of today's "epic convergence that creates an opportunity to navigate to a new level of species maturity."

Goals:

- Identify the most important aspects of Korten's analysis and vision.
- Explore how Korten's presentation corresponds to Míguez's.
- Reflect on our connections to the themes Korten raises.
- Consider what changes will be necessary to help bring this vision into being.

Plan: One hour and fifteen minutes

10 Minutes: Gathering and opening prayer provided by David C. Korten (see reverse)

Questions to consider:

10 Minutes: In your own words what do you think are Korten's most important points?

10 Minutes: What connections do you see between the analyses offered by Korten and Míguez?

15 Minutes: What do you see as urgent in their analyses, and what are some of the most meaningful opportunities you hear?

15 Minutes: What are some specific new steps that churches and individuals can take now to seize the opportunity to help create an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable society?

15 Minutes: Check In: These have been challenging, substantive conversations. What are some of the reactions you are having?

5 Minutes: Close

David C. Korten

Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet* On Buying and Selling

And a merchant said, "Speak to us of Buying and Selling."

And he answered and said:

To you the earth yields her fruit,
and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands.

It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied.

Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice,
it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.

When in the market place you toilers of the sea and fields and vineyards meet the weavers
and the potters and the gatherers of spices, -

Invoke then the master spirit of the earth, to come into your midst
and sanctify the scales and the reckoning that weighs value against value.

And suffer not the barren-handed to take part in your transactions,
who would sell their words for your labor.

To such men you should say,

"Come with us to the field, or go with our brothers to the sea and cast your net;

For the land and the sea shall be bountiful to you even as to us."

And if there come the singers and the dancers and the flute players - buy of their gifts also.

For they too are gatherers of fruit and frankincense, and that which they bring,
though fashioned of dreams, is raiment and food for your soul.

And before you leave the marketplace, see that no one has gone his way with empty hands.

For the master spirit of the earth shall not sleep peacefully upon the wind
till the needs of the least of you are satisfied.

Facilitator Materials - Day 3

Reflection Groups

Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability

Friday January 23, 2009

2:45-4:00 pm (EST) / 1:45-3:00 pm (Central)

Following the presentation by Majora Carter

Purpose: This session provides an opportunity to discuss the implications of Majora Carter's presentation about developing a sustainable community in the South Bronx, New York, and launching a national green jobs initiative.

In addition, as we conduct our last group discussion and prepare to hear from the panel, it is an occasion to discuss what we have learned during the conference.

Goals:

- Identify the elements that constitute Carter's vision of a sustainable community.
- Imagine how we might move from this inspiring example and apply it to our contexts.
- State key learnings from this conference and what initial steps toward leadership and change we are willing to make.
- Take time to offer appreciation to our fellow group members.

Plan: One hour and fifteen minutes

5 Minutes: Gather and offer prayer provided (see reverse)

Questions to Consider

15 Minutes: What are the most important elements of Carter's vision of a sustainable community?

20 Minutes: What are some ways churches can promote the creation of sustainable communities?

15 Minutes: What are the most important things you have learned from this conference?

10 Minutes: Share what initial steps toward leadership and change you might make.

5 Minutes: On an index card, write one thing you intend to do as a result of this conference.

5 Minutes: Invite group members to offer appreciation to one another.

Go to the closing panel discussion, "Radical Abundance and Reality."

Majora Carter

Let us pray. As we end our time together.

Let us be at peace within ourselves.

Let us accept that we are profoundly loved and do not need to be afraid.

Let us be aware of the source of being that is common to all our lives.

Let us be filled with the presence of great compassion.

Let us remember in our prayers those on whose behalf we are working.

May God kindle in us the fire of love to bring us alive and give warmth to the world.

May the peace of God in Christ be with us all for evermore.

Amen

Adapted from the New Zealand Prayer book