



## **Imagining Justice in Baltimore Community Conversations Participant Commitments**

Each of us agrees to:

1. Listen. If you can really hear what others are saying the group's discussion will be more interesting and an opportunity for learning. Ask clarifying questions. Don't smooth over differences. Share the airwaves and refrain from interrupting others.
2. Speak as honestly as possible, using "I" statements, rather than speaking on behalf of a group or a tradition; we don't expect you to represent the entirety of your tradition. People in the group want to hear what you really think, not what you think you should say.
3. You will experience a range of emotions in these conversations. Notice your own responses to what is going on and, upon reflection and when appropriate, share them with others.
4. Be open to new viewpoints and new ideas. Each of us comes to our sacred texts and traditions with different perspectives. Try to give all interpretations a hearing.
5. Reaching consensus is not the goal of the table discussions. Learning, sharing, and interreligious understanding are the goals. How you say things may be as important as what you say. Try to say "I don't agree with you" instead of "You are wrong."
6. There should be no proselytizing – hidden or overt – in this setting.
7. To the extent possible, attend all sessions, arriving at the scheduled time with only pen and paper in hand. Please limit the use of phones, computers, and other communication devices.
8. Maintain confidentiality. You may speak about your learning here but do not attribute what you have heard at your table to specific people on social media and in other public forums.
9. We agree to

### **Possible Obstacles to Interreligious Dialogue**

- Fear that someone will try to convert us, or that we will have to change our beliefs
- Fear that we will appear unknowledgeable about our own religious tradition and/or about other religious traditions
- Fear that we will offend others or that we will be offended
- Fear that interreligious dialogue is not sanctioned by our traditions
- Fear of being perceived as insufficiently religious or inauthentic
- Fear that...

## Dialogue

**Dialogue is the mutual understanding of each other's point of view.**

I listen to learn. I take seriously someone else's point of view.

I listen for strengths, so that I may affirm and learn from others.

I speak for myself. I use my own experiences and point of view. I try to examine my own assumptions.

I ask questions to clarify and increase my understanding of someone else's point of view (I try to suspend judgment and give others a fair hearing).

I allow others to complete a thought. I wait until they are finished to respond.

I actively listen when others are speaking to learn and understand.

I respect others' experiences as true and valid for them. I desire to learn from these experiences to come to new understandings of my own.

I welcome the expression of feelings in dialogue.

I recognize the need for silence in dialogue – to reflect, regroup, and recharge.

I look for ways to keep conversation going, even when I am uncomfortable.

## Debate

**Debate is the successful argument of my position over that of another.**

I listen to counter. I am closed to someone else's ideas.

I listen for weakness, so that I may discount and devalue what I hear.

I speak for others. I assert my assumptions about others' experiences and motives, in an effort to prove that I am right.

I ask questions to control the conversation, or to confuse. I look for ways to affirm my point of view. My goal is to win the debate.

I interrupt others, or change the subject.

I listen only to formulate a counterpoint.

I interpret others' experiences as naïve, incorrect, or distorted (while championing my own). I desire to bring others to my point of view.

I distrust the expression of feelings as manipulative, or as less than legitimate in conversation with others.

I use silence to insert my point of view or gain an advantage.

I look for ways to end the conversation when I am uncomfortable.